

Teaching the nation's past: Irish history in secondary schools, 1924-1969

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Doctorate of Philosophy
School of Histories and Humanities
University of Dublin, Trinity College
2019
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Declaration

I declare that this thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this or any other university and it is entirely my own work.

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Summary

This thesis considers the teaching of Irish history in Irish secondary schools post-Independence. It analyses the version(s) of the past set for study, taught in schools, and learned by students in the Irish Free State and beyond. It tracks history as a subject, and specifically Irish history within this, from 1924, when the Department of Education was first founded, until 1969. It contends that a narrative of Irish history was promoted in secondary schools which tended to focus on a traditional ‘Great Man’ approach to history with a strong emphasis on high politics, and on religion. This narrative was not as simplistic however as previously assumed. By taking the differing emphases in the major textbooks into account, and appreciating how the Certificate examinations were not solely focussed on promoting a militant version of Irish Catholic history, it challenges the received understanding of Irish history as taught in secondary schools during the period under investigation.

As part of its investigation, it examines three key research questions: Firstly, what Irish history was taught, how it was taught, and why? Secondly, what cultural and political ideologies influenced the teaching of Irish history during this period? Finally, how did policy and official rhetoric relate to practice, and the reality of history at school-level.

This study examines the curriculum set by the Department, how this developed over time, alongside the political, contextual and social forces which shaped these developments during this period. It also features the first comprehensive breakdown of the Certificate examination questions, which, as demonstrated in Chapters 5-7, increasingly dictated classroom teaching throughout the period. Moreover, the in-depth analysis conducted in Chapter 4 of the main school textbooks allows previously made claims to be quantifiably measured, and provides the most detailed examination of the Irish history school textbooks in use between 1921 and 1969 heretofore completed.

This thesis also analyses issues of policy versus practice, moving beyond history as officially prescribed, and onto it as a subject in and of itself, in schools of all denominations. It highlights the official rhetoric as to Irish history’s purpose and importance, before considering

this against the classroom realities, and the constrained context in which teaching occurred. It analyses issues of textbook production and usage, Church-State relations, policies relating to the Irish language, and teacher training and methods.

Acknowledgments:

I would sincerely like to thank my supervisors Professor Patrick Geoghegan and Dr John Walsh for their advice, support and guidance throughout this study.

I am grateful to the Department of Education, whose funding under the Gaeltacht Scholarship allowed me to continue my studies to postgraduate level, and to the Irish Research Council for funding the final year of this study.

To all the staff between the School of Education, and the School of Histories and Humanites who helped me during this journey, and who provided me with the opportunity to teach and to learn over the last number of years.

To Seosamh Ó Murchú from An Gúm, as well as Moira Leydon and the staff in the ASTI who opened up their archives to me in the summer of 2016.

To my fellow postgraduate students, and my good friends both inside and outside TCD; thank you for for the coffees, lunches, or more usually pints, which got me through the last four years. Special thanks to Nora Ní Mhaolrunaigh, Eoin McShane, Teddy Coulter, Stephen O'Neill, Eamonn Carroll, Ben O'Donovan Schalk, Conor Joy, to Luiz Alvarez for keeping me caffeinated, to Andrew Gibon in the office and to everyone else for understanding the craic.

I would like to especially express my utmost appreciation for Cara Sturgess, who has been alongside me throughout this whole journey, who put up with the late nights and lack of holidays, and who believed in me and never doubted that this day would come. Thank you beyond words.

Do mo dheardáireacha, Eoin is Tomás, is mo dheirfiúr Nóirín, a bhí mar fhoinséatacaíochta dom, go minic i ngan fhios dóibh, ach i gcónaí im chroí is m' intinn.

Ba mhaith liom fíor-bhuíochas a gabháil le m' athair, a d'oibrigh go cruaidh diograiseach ar feadh na mblianta chun na deiseanna atá faghta agam a thabhairt dom. Ar deireadh, ba mhaith liom buíochas a ghabháil le mo mháthair, a spreag i gcónaí mé chun leanúint ar aghaidh le mo chuid taighde, a bhí toilteannach mo thráchtas a léamh, agus a léirigh tábhacht an oideachais dom i gcónaí ina cuid cainte is a cuid oibre.

Go raibh maith agaibh go léir.

List of Abbreviations:

ASTI	Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland
BMH	Bureau of Military History
CBS	Christian Brothers' School
CEC	Central Executive Committee
CHA	Catholic Headmasters' Association
CCSS	Conference of Convent Secondary Schools
ISA	Irish Schoolmasters' Association,
NLI	National Library of Ireland
NUI	National University of Ireland
SJ	Society of Jesus
TCD	Trinity College Dublin
TD	Teachta Dála
UCC	University College Cork
UCD	University College Dublin
UCG	University College Galway
VEC	Vocational Education Committee

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Introduction:

What we teach shows what we value. The image that we have of ourselves, and the image which we create for others, is associated with the history learned in school.¹ In a 1973 *Irish Times* article on her own former experience as a history teacher in Ireland, writer Maeve Binchy noted the “fearsome responsibility” which her post entailed, and the danger that teachers tended “to pass on your own prejudices, attitudes and even misconceptions to people who are in no position to argue with you.” Unlike historians, or even undergraduates in Universities, secondary school students “haven’t read the latest research, they don’t subscribe to History Today, their only comeback is what you said last week or what the text books says.” This position of innocence and vulnerability is all the more alarming when one viewed the history teacher, as Binchy did, as “the last link between a child and his or her ideas about our past and culture.”² Binchy’s analysis captures the essential truth of history in secondary schools. Its awareness was among the driving forces behind this thesis.

This thesis contends that a narrative of Irish history was promoted in secondary schools which tended to focus on a traditional ‘Great Man’ approach to history with a strong emphasis on high politics, and on religion. This narrative was not however as simplistic nor as xenophobic as previously assumed. The traditional perception that Irish history as taught in schools was “not a subject, but a creed, not a discipline but a weapon”⁴ fails to take the differing emphases in the major textbooks into account, or appreciate how the Certificate examinations were not solely focussed on promoting a militant version of Irish Catholic history. Moreover, the emphasis in the

¹ This contention that once can gain an insight into the depiction that a society wishes to project of itself by analysing what is set for study in a history programme has been widely argued See for instance, Marc Ferro, *The use and abuse of history, or, How the past is taught to children* (Rev. ed, London, 2003), p. 7; John O’Callaghan, *Teaching Irish independence: history in Irish schools, 1922-72* (Newcastle, 2009), p. 9; Karin Fischer, ‘L’histoire irlandaise à l’école en Irlande, 1921-1996’ (Unpublished PhD thesis, Université de Lille, Lille, 2000), pp 18–19; and more generally, Donald H. Akenson, *A mirror to Kathleen’s face: education in independent Ireland 1922-1960* (Montreal ; London, 1975).

² Maeve Binchy, ‘Bias in History Teaching?’ in *Irish Times*, 29 Aug. 1973.

⁴ John O’Donoghue, ‘A Critique of the Theory Underpinning the Junior Certificate Course in History and the Reality for Pupils in the Classroom’, in Áine Hyland, (ed.) *Issues in Education*, Vol.2, (Dublin, 1997) p. 99: See also Mathew James Garrison, ‘Struggles of immigration at the doorstep of Irish education: the historical perspectives of Irish and international pupils in secondary schools in Ireland’ (Unpublished PhD thesis, TCD, 2009), p. 172.

history curriculum was not solely on Gaelic and religious narratives, but was also, to a considerable extent, on providing moral and civic ‘lessons.’ To establish these, the thesis considers the teaching of Irish history in Irish secondary schools from a number of perspectives. It analyses what version(s) of the past was set for study, taught in schools, and learned by students in the Irish Free State and beyond. It tracks history as a subject, and specifically Irish history within this, from 1924, when the Department of Education was first founded, until 1969 when a new era of history teaching emerged. This was represented by a change in syllabus, and a dramatic introduction of new textbooks, coinciding with the wider ‘modernisation’ of Ireland.⁵ This study examines the curriculum set by the Department, how this developed over time, alongside the political, contextual and social forces which shaped these developments during this period. In this decade of commemorations, when history is so often to the forefront of national politics as well as public discourse, an examination of how the Irish past was taught in the wake of independence is not only relevant but culturally significant as well.

This thesis also analyses issues of policy versus practice, moving beyond history as officially prescribed, and onto it as a subject in and of itself, in schools of all denominations. It highlights the official rhetoric as to Irish history’s purpose and importance, before considering this against the classroom realities. It analyses issues of textbook production and usage, the Certificate examinations, Church-State relations, policies relating to the Irish language, and teacher training and methods. The ways in which the curriculum was engaged with is highlighted making this a study not only of politics, state-building and ideology, but a study in publication, examination and education also.

The teaching of Irish history was crucial to the ideology of the new Free State government, and its political agenda. The power of the State to set the curriculum and examinations, as well as inspect the schools resulted in a considerable degree of uniformity in

⁵ For an analysis of the 1960s as a watershed moment in Irish history see Enda Delany, ‘Modernity, the past, and politics in post-war Ireland’ in Thomas E. Hachey (ed.), *Turning points in twentieth-century Irish history* (Dublin, 2011). See also Carole Holohan, *Reframing Irish youth in the sixties* (Liverpool, 2018), p. 3. For a challenge to the view that Ireland experienced dramatic ‘modernisation’ during the 1960s see Mary E. Daly, *Sixties Ireland: reshaping the economy, state and society, 1957-1973* (Cambridge, United Kingdom, 2016).

educational programmes across the country. This study demonstrates the development of how Irish history was taught in secondary schools across the first two generations of post-Independence Ireland, emphasising the changes which occurred, rather than being a simple case study of Irish history and Gaelicisation.

In line with the recommendation of the 1921-22 Dáil Commission on Secondary Education, and following on from the ‘Intermediate Education (Amendment) Act’ of 1924, History⁷ became a mandatory part of the secondary school Intermediate programme for the first time in 1924, with Irish history comprising fifty percent of the course. This mandatory status had the further effect of History being a very popular choice when it came to the Leaving Certificate, owing to the influence which earlier subject study had in shaping subject choice for those who continued onto the higher courses.⁸ The great majority of students who attended secondary school during this period studied Irish history. Discussing her experience at an all-girls school in Dublin in the late 1960s, Gail Wolfe, a retired secretary, noted how “I remember that Irish history in secondary school was a long procession of endless battles being fought by the Irish and lost.” She recalled that the Irish Civil War was not engaged with, and that while history was her favourite subject, Irish history seemed boring to her “at least that is how it seemed to 16/17 year olds!” As she continued “Perhaps it was that Irish history was identified with the language and I disliked Irish at school.”⁹ Leaving the pitfalls of oral history aside, her account touches on a number of critical issues in terms of approaches to teaching, the narrative structuring of the curriculum, the interconnection of Irish history with the language, as well as what is included (or not) in the official programme for teaching.

⁷History was connected with Geography as an examination subject for the Intermediate Certificate following the 'Intermediate Education (Amendment) Act 1924' throughout this period.

⁸ See for example, *Report of the Department of Education, 1941-42* (Dublin, 1943), p. 105, and figures which show that of the 3,627 students sat for the leaving certificate, 3,221 sat for history, or just under 89% of the total. Here is a good example of how, despite not being a mandatory subject for Leaving Certificate, the mandatory status at intermediate certificate played a massive role in later subject choice. For a wider discussion on the factors which influence subject choice at Leaving Certificate level see Anne Marie Guinan, ‘Who, What and Why... Subject Choices for Senior Cycle in a Second Level School’ (M.Ed thesis, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, 2001).

⁹ ‘History in Education’ Questionnaire about School History, received 8 February 2016.

This study was completed under the co-supervision of the Department of History, and the School of Education at Trinity College Dublin. While it follows an historical archival based approach, it also draws on literature, approaches and theories from education. It provides the first full-length consideration of the teaching and learning of Irish history in the aftermath of independence. As part of this, it examines three key research questions: Firstly, what Irish history was taught, how it was taught, and why? Secondly, what cultural and political ideologies influenced the teaching of Irish history during this period? Finally, how did policy and official rhetoric relate to practice, and the reality of history at school-level? This work examines the political forces and contexts which shaped education in general and ‘History’ in particular. It examines the various agendas regarding the teaching of history, from the official, religious, and academic perspective, and their development over time. A close connection exists between the nation-state and school historiography.¹⁰ Nation states, it has been argued, tend to be dedicated to the idea of forging collective meaning and establishing common values through education.¹¹ Regimes, it has been argued “may not have total control over what historians write, but they usually have control of what is taught in schools...history teaching is of additional importance because it supports the narrative, and hence the legitimacy, of the regime itself.”¹² Consequently, this thesis explores the role of Irish history in relation to the chief educational goal of the Department of Education: the policy of Gaelicisation, and the attempt to establish the newly independent Irish nation as a traditional and culturally separate nation in the aftermath of British rule.¹³

¹⁰ Hanna Schissler and Yasemin Nuhoglu Soysal, ‘Teaching Beyond the National Narrative’ in Hanna Schissler and Soysal (eds), *The nation, Europe, and the world: textbooks and curricula in transition* (New York ; Oxford, 2005), p. 1.

¹¹ Ibid., pp 1–2. For more on the concept of the nation-state and education see John W. Meyer, Francisco O. Ramirez and Yasemin Nuhoglu Soysal, ‘World Expansion of Mass Education, 1870-1980’ in *Sociology of Education*, lxv, no. 2 (1992), pp 128–149.

¹² Margaret E. Smith, *Reckoning with the past: teaching history in Northern Ireland* (Lanham, Md., Oxford, 2005), p. 15.

¹³ This reflects conclusions reached internationally, which identify the teaching of history as important to the creation of a national identity in ‘new’ nations. See Tony Taylor and Robert Guyver (eds), *History wars and the classroom: global perspectives* (Charlotte, NC, 2012). See also Peter Yeandle, *Citizenship, nation, empire: the politics of history teaching in England, 1870-1930* (Manchester, 2015), p. 10.

Excellent work has been done on the teaching and learning of history in Ireland, notably by Alan McCully and Fionnuala Waldron, whose 2013 article traced the evolution of history education, north and south, since partition in 1921.¹⁴ They identify, analyse and compare the educational and political imperatives of each State, and the divergences between the respective history curricula and between the underpinning ideologies and practices in operation. The predominant focus of their work was on primary school, and history teaching during the period of compulsory education (5/6 years to 14 years). A significant gap in knowledge is evident when it comes to post-primary level, which this work aims to develop. Over seventy years after J.C. Beckett cited “the need for a full-length guide to the subject”¹⁵ few studies have been completed relating specifically to the teaching of Irish history, the textbooks used, and curricular development, for those who preceded beyond the national school.

It is not however a completely neglected field. Throughout the 1970s, a number of published lectures, responses, and pamphlets emerged as to the teaching of Irish history, namely those of John Magee,¹⁶ H. Rex Cathcart,¹⁷ and Kenneth Milne.¹⁸ More recent works have added important and necessary corrections to these earlier interpretations. Articles and chapters by Gabriel Doherty,¹⁹ Roy Foster,²⁰ and Sean Farrell Moran,²¹ as well as M.A. theses such as John O’Callaghan’s (published) *Teaching Irish Independence*²² have considered Irish history in secondary schools, though generally as part of wider considerations. Karin Fischer’s PhD thesis

¹⁴ Alan McCully and Fionnuala Waldron, ‘A Question of Identity? Purpose, Policy and Practice in the Teaching of History in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland’ in *International Journal of Historical Learning, Teaching and Research*, xi, no. 2 (2013), pp 145–158.

¹⁵ J. C. Beckett, ‘Review of The Teaching of History’ in *Irish Historical Studies*, ii, no. 8 (1941), p. 463.

¹⁶ John Magee, *The teaching of Irish history in Irish schools* (The Northern Teacher, Belfast, 1970).

¹⁷ H. Rex Cathcart, *Teaching Irish history: Wiles Week open lecture* (Belfast, 1978).

¹⁸ Kenneth Milne, *New approaches to the teaching of Irish history* (Teaching of history pamphlets, no. 43, London, 1979).

¹⁹ Gabriel Doherty, ‘National Identity and the Study of Irish History’ in *The English Historical Review*, no. 441 (1996), pp 324–349; Gabriel Doherty, ‘The Irish history textbook, 1900–1960, problems and development’ in *Oideas*, no. 42 (1994), pp 5–25.

²⁰ Roy Foster, ‘History and the Irish Question’ in Ciaran Brady (ed.), *Interpreting Irish history: the debate on historical revisionism 1938–1994* (Dublin, 1994), pp 122–145.

²¹ Séan Farrell Moran, ‘History, memory and education: teaching the Irish story’ in Lawrence W. McBride (ed.), *Reading Irish Histories: Texts, contexts, and memory in modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2003), pp 212–220.

²² O’Callaghan, *Teaching Irish independence*.

'L'Histoire Irlandaise à l'École En Irlande, 1921-1996, as well as her numerous articles, provide an excellent methodological example to compare the teaching of history in both Northern Ireland, and the Free State/Republic of Ireland.²³ She focusses on history at primary and early secondary level, as the majority of pupils until the 1960s ended their education by the age of 14. However, this would suggest a basic continuation between the various levels of the Education system. This proved untrue, with the different levels under the Department of Education operating autonomously from one another for the most part, particularly between primary and second-level. Her work does not feature a major investigation of the Certificate examinations, nor does she focus much on how teachers actually viewed their subject. This thesis draws upon a wider range of sources. Also, unlike her comparative approach, this study maintains a predominant focus on the Free State/Republic, and on Irish history at secondary school, allowing for a more in-depth discussion.

Diarmuid Ferriter in his recent work *A Rabble and Not a Nation*,²⁴ concerned as it was with the revolutionary period and its historiography, featured a short chapter on history education in Ireland. It focussed on how 1913-23 was engaged with in the school curriculum and in the popular textbooks used in the post-Independence period. It did not offer an overview of history as a subject in its own right. Likewise, a 1988 PhD thesis by Brian Mulcahy considered how nineteenth century Irish history was engaged with in twentieth century school textbooks.²⁵ The foundational works of Coolahan, Akenson, and Ó Buachalla from the late 1970s and early 1980s

²³ Fischer, 'L'histoire irlandaise à l'école en Irlande, 1921-1996'. Karin Fischer, 'School Textbooks and their place in twentieth-century Irish History' in Jacqueline Genet, Sylvie Mikowski and Fabienne Garcier (eds), *The Book in Ireland* (Revised ed. edition, Newcastle, 2006), pp 188–205; Karin Fischer, 'Another Irish Nation: Some Historiographical Variations as Found in Late Nineteenth-Century and Early Twentieth-Century Schools' in *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, xxx, no. 1 (2004), pp 41–47.

²⁴ Diarmaid Ferriter, *A nation and not a rabble: the Irish revolution, 1913-23* (London, 2015).

²⁵ Brian Mulcahy, 'A Study of the Relationship between Ireland and England as Portrayed in Irish Post-Primary School History Textbooks, Published since 1922, and Dealing with the Period 1800 to the Present' (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Hull, 1988).

still remain the central works on Irish education in general,²⁶ while the more recent works of Tom O'Donoghue provide much of the contextualisation for this study.²⁷

There have been numerous publications in recent times regarding history teaching in the modern world. Husbands, Kitsen and Pendry *Understanding History Teaching: Teaching and Learning about the Past in secondary school* (Berkshire, 2003) offers a detailed analysis of history in the secondary school context, specifically of how history teachers “deploy their professional expertise, their understanding of the nature of history as an academic and school subject, and their understanding of their pupils, to generate a variety of cognitive and affective outcomes from the learning and study of history.”²⁸ Their work focuses on practical pedagogy, and the contemporary challenges of teaching history. It is not a study of how history was taught in the past. Likewise, the 1994 edited collection *Teaching and Learning of History* by Leinhardt, Beck and Stainton provides a collection of interpretative essays on how school history was engaged with in the United States, while serving as a tool for practitioners concerned with improving instruction in history.²⁹ This differed from this research in terms of context, both geographically and historically.

This thesis is informed by international sources. Gregory Wegner's works on history curriculum in pre- and post-Nazi Germany,³⁰ Keith Barton on America and Northern Ireland,³¹

²⁶ John Coolahan, *Irish Education: Its History and Structure* (Dublin, 1981); Akenson, *A mirror to Kathleen's face*; Séamus Ó Buachalla, *Education Policy in Twentieth Century Ireland* (Dublin, 1988).

²⁷ Thomas A O'Donoghue, *The Catholic Church and the secondary school curriculum in Ireland, 1922-1962* (New York, 1999); Tom O'Donoghue and Judith Harford, *Secondary School Education in Ireland: History, Memories And Life Stories, 1922-1967* (London, 2016).

²⁸ Chris Husbands, Alison Kitson and Anna Pendry, *Understanding History Teaching: Teaching and Learning about the Past in Secondary Schools* (Berkshire, 2003), p. 5.

²⁹ Gaea Leinhardt, Isabel L. Beck and Catherine Stainton (eds), *Teaching and Learning in History* (New Jersey, 1994).

³⁰ Gregory P. Wegner, ‘Germany's Past Contested: The Soviet-American Conflict in Berlin over History Curriculum Reform, 1945-48’ in *History of Education Quarterly*, xxx, no. 1 (1990), pp 1–16; Gregory P. Wegner, ‘The Legacy of Nazism and the History Curriculum in the East German Secondary Schools’ in *The History Teacher*, xxv, no. 4 (1992), pp 471–487; Gregory Wegner, *Anti-Semitism and Schooling Under the Third Reich* (2014).

³¹ Keith C. Barton, ‘Wars and rumors of war: Making sense of history education in the United States’ in Tony Taylor and Robert Guyver (eds), *History wars and the classroom: global perspectives* (Charlotte, NC, 2012), pp 189–204; Keith Barton and Linda S Levstik, *Teaching history for the common good* (Mahwah, N.J. ; London, 2004); Keith C. Barton and Alan W. McCully, ‘History, identity, and the school curriculum in Northern Ireland: an empirical study of secondary students' ideas and perspectives’ in *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, xxxvii, no. 1 (2005), pp 85–116.

and especially David Cannadine et al's important study of history education in England³² and Elizabeth Smith's *Reckoning with the past: teaching history in Northern Ireland*³³ among others provide a template and methodological example from which to analyse the Irish context.

This study builds on this wider literature, whilst offering a distinctive contribution to scholarship in the field. It provides a wide-ranging consideration of Irish history as officially prescribed, as outlined in the textbooks used, and as considered by teachers working during this period. This work provides a complete investigation of Irish history from an official sense, while also offering insights into how the official material was engaged with. This work features the first comprehensive breakdown of the Certificate examination questions, which as demonstrated in chapters 5-7, increasingly dictated classroom teaching throughout the period. Moreover, the in-depth analysis conducted in Chapter 4 of the main school textbooks allows previously made claims to be quantifiably measured, and provides the most detailed examination of the Irish history school textbooks in use between 1921 and 1969 heretofore completed. The use of the files of An Gúm, the publication branch of the Department of Education brings to light many previously unused documents. The thesis also makes considerable use of the internal archives of the Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland (ASTI), examining many documents for the first time, while reinterpreting others, considering how they related to the teaching of history. These allow for a greater understanding of history teachers, teaching, and textbooks during this period.

Parameters of work:

While a study of how history was taught and used across Ireland both North and South after partition would be useful, this would require a different methodology and approach than that adopted, and would have changed the nature of this study. It would have led to different research questions, beyond the scope of this enquiry. In addition, it would not necessarily add greater insight into what, how, and why Irish history was taught in secondary schools, owing to its more

³² David Cannadine, Jenny Keating and Nicola Sheldon, *The right kind of history: teaching the past in twentieth-century England* (Basingstoke, Hampshire, 2011).

³³ Smith, *Reckoning with the past*.

comparative, rather than in-depth nature. Instead, this thesis confines its study to the Free State/Republic recognising that the two education systems on the island operated independently from one another, and were different in many important respects, not least their administrative structures. This was in line with the work of Sheelagh Drudy and Kathleen Lynch.³⁴ References to ‘Irish education’ therefore refer to education within the independent Irish state.

Similarly, developments across Europe as to how national history was being taught, especially in emerging nations in the post-World War One period, though outside the primary focus of this thesis, is an area in need of further consideration, and scholarship.³⁵ Thomas Nygren’s study of history teaching in Sweden from the late 1920s to the 1960s offers one example of such scholarship. His 2011 article discusses the interwar and postwar period and the transformation of history teaching in Sweden.³⁶ It highlights, *inter alia*, an awareness of international recommendations as to history teaching, namely the directives published by the League of Nations, (and later UNESCO) to use history teaching to promote greater international understanding to ensure peace in a post-conflict Europe. It also highlights some of the tensions between member states as to such calls. Certain similarities with the Irish context were evident, namely the belief as espoused in the 1935 curriculum, that the uppermost goal for history teaching in Sweden was “to awaken love for one's country, to lay the foundations to be a good citizen and inculcate the importance of humanity and objectivity in one's understanding and judgment.”³⁷ It contrasted with the Irish context elsewhere. For instance, despite the above stress laid on fostering citizenship and patriotism through the history programme, Swedish history was relegated to a lesser position of prominence within the subject, being combined with general history as one

³⁴ Sheelagh Drudy and Kathleen Lynch, *Schools and society in Ireland* (Dublin, 1993), p. x.

³⁵ For a more international approach, consider for example, the recent publication, Susanne Popp, Katja Gorbahn, and Susanne Grindel (eds.). *History Education and (Post-)Colonialism*, (Bern, 2019); For European-wide scholarship consider for instance, the 1965 Council of Europe final report on the “Course on History Teaching in Secondary Schools.” in *Internationales Jahrbuch Für Geschichts- Und Geographie-Unterricht*, vol. 10, 1965, pp. 119–142.; which compared the purpose of history teaching in all member states. See also Maitland Stobart, ‘The Council of Europe and History Teaching’ in *Internationales Jahrbuch Für Geschichts- Und Geographie-Unterricht*, vol. 15, 1974, pp. 230–239

³⁶ Thomas Nygren, ‘International Reformation of Swedish History Education 1927–1961: The Complexity of Implementing International Understanding’, in *Journal of World History*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (June 2011), pp. 329–354

³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 341

module for study in 1928, while hours of teaching were lessened in the upper secondary school.³⁸ These examples demonstrate how there is scope for comparative work between these other European nations and Ireland, in order to assess any claims of Irish exceptionalism.

This study confines its scope to secondary schools. This is not coterminous with Post-Primary education however. Following the Vocational Education Act of 1930, vocational education was given official status as a recognised part of the Post-Primary system. These are not included in this study, owing to the fact that the traditional ‘grammar’ school’ subjects -Latin, Greek, and importantly, History- were excluded from their curriculum, with senior Church officials stifling any attempts to introduce such subjects, in the interest of the secondary schools under their control.³⁹ Vocational Education also catered for far less students than the traditional secondary schools.

An additional justification for prioritising secondary school comes from an unlikely source, the Governmental ‘Notes for Teachers-History’ issued in 1932, and re-issued continuously and without edit until the early 1960s. This document noted, *inter alia*, how the Government accepted that students in primary school would not have a wide understanding of history, due to its complexity. As stated,

Even in the highest standards of primary schools... it is not possible to expect any deep grasp of real historical issues. It will be sufficient if the pupils are enabled to follow in a very simple way, the gradual development of civilisation from remote times to the present day, using the chief events as rungs of an ascending ladder...⁴⁰

³⁸ Ibid, p. 340; This has been perceived as an attempt to lessen the conservative element of school, as “The subject of history was considered to be a bearer and mediator of right-wing ideas.”; School hours were increased in 1933, following intense debate in the press, and pressure from teachers and parents alike.; The article also touches on the difference between students’ and teachers’ interest in specific topics, highlighting a potentially contentious generational gap, with the more nationalist focus of teachers contrasting with the supposed preference of students towards international history, during this period.

³⁹ National Library of Ireland. ‘Minutes of the Commission on Vocational Organisation’. Ms. 923, 2, 596-614; Ms. 928, 2197-221; Ms. 935, Memo No. 59; Ms. 939, Memo No. 160. - These numerous minutes and memos testify to the above point, with regards to Church intervention to stifle change in the 1930s and 1940s.

⁴⁰ Department of Education, *Notes For Teachers- History*, (Dublin, 1934).

This adds more importance to the history taught in secondary schools as it was accepted that, before this, pupils were not intellectually developed enough to study the subject in any serious way. This line of argumentation had been outlined three years previously in a 1929 *Irish Times* article which contended that “the mind of youth developed late in relation to the acquisition of knowledge of such subjects as history and geography.” They contended that “it was as useless to try and instil a competent knowledge of these subjects in the youthful mind as to attempt to instil a knowledge of the philosophy of Einstein.”⁴¹ This is important in demonstrating the general mindset of that time.

Official reports also noted how secondary teachers did not expect students to progress from primary school with much actual historical knowledge. In England in the wake of the First World War, one particular committee, charged with considering how to improve the link from history teaching in elementary to secondary schools concluded that secondary school history teachers would be content if children came to them ‘with an interest in the subject, with some respect for the past and a desire to know more about it.’ As David Cannadine commented on the situation, “If they had some grasp of the great events in British history, all the better. What was expected and desired though was a simple interest in the subject, not a great awareness of the facts.”⁴² In this, the Free State was no different.

Secondary education was beyond the reach of the majority of students in Ireland between the 1920s and late 1960s due to its private nature, and corresponding fees. A very real class dimension was at play. Those children who were taught Irish history in secondary schools - beyond the select few who received local authority scholarships- were the sons and daughters of the middle and upper classes. Those educated in these schools (though fewer in numbers) would progress to form part of the social, professional and political elites. What version of their nation’s past they were taught in schools, and how is then important.

⁴¹ *Irish Times*, 31 May 1929.

⁴² Cannadine et al., *The right kind of history*, pp 73–4.

Methodology:

This thesis, by definition, employs the historical method of archival research and desk-based enquiry. It engages in source criticism, and qualitative analysis of empirical data. This research relies on document analysis, drawing upon a wide range of archival, printed, and unpublished sources. It analyses official curricular documents, examination papers, departmental files, the use and production of school textbooks, along with the files of various teacher unions, religious orders, political debates, newspaper reports, and a select number of surveys as its primary source material. A host of relevant secondary sources are also analysed. The work of Marc Depaepe on 'educationalization', alongside an understanding of the 'grammar of schooling'⁴⁵ have also offered valuable theoretical insights in informing the research approach.

'Educationalization', the concept of attempting to use schools and the education system to implement social change⁴⁶ can most certainly be applied to the official rhetoric concerning education in the Irish Free State/Republic. This process can be seen as occurring in two distinct waves; the initial citizenship building phase, and later the 'modernisation' phase. The new Free State government were involved in the 'educationalization' of the post-colonial struggle, in order to establish a separate and legitimate national identity in the wake of independence and reverse the Anglicisation 'inflicted' upon Irish society throughout the nineteenth century and "re"-gaelicise the nation.⁴⁷ Schools were expected to take the reins in driving this goal, and help create 'Irish' subjects of the school-going population. In the second phase, education (as an institution, rather than individual subjects) was to help modernise the Irish economy and drive a shift in

⁴⁵David Tyack and William Tobin, 'The "Grammar" of Schooling: Why Has It Been So Hard to Change?' in *American Educational Research Journal*, xxxi, no. 3 (1994), pp 453–479; David Tyack and Larry Cuban, *Tinkering toward utopia: a century of public school reform* (Cambridge, Mass. ; London, 1995).

⁴⁶Marc Depaepe and Paul Smeyers, 'Educationalization as an Ongoing Modernization Process' in *Educational Theory*, lviii, no. 4 (2008), pp 379–389.

⁴⁷N.A.I./An Gúm/G0008 (1), Letter 30 July 1924, Eamon Ó Donnchadha (Lecturer in UCC) to Seosamh Ó Néill, (Secretary for an Roinn Gaeilge (soon to be Department of Education)): who called on the Minister for Education to reverse the effects of the Anglicisation of education, by means of the same techniques which caused it. “[D]íreach fé mar do dheintí anseo fadó nuair a cuireadh chun oideachais an Béalra do bhunú insna scoileanna náisiúnta...Badh chóir go bhféadfaí é sin (An scéim a chur i gcríoch)...don aith-iomp[ú] ar oideachas as Gaedhilg.”

national ideology by way of increased governmental investment in the field, and increased attendance, thus developing the ‘knowledge economy’.

This research engages in a considerable textbook analysis. As defended by Carsten Heinze, methodologically well-grounded historical textbook research is only possible if one has an understanding of the context in which textbooks acquire meaning. Textbooks can then be understood as an element of the ‘grammar of schooling’ and from the perspective of discourse and theory, as a “point of intersection between discourse and its corresponding teaching practice.”⁴⁸ Chapter 4 also looks behind the texts at their authors. This offers an insight not only into what was being taught to children, but also into who was telling the national story. This is especially important considering the generally held perception that history textbooks appear as a “transcendental source” of knowledge,⁴⁹ being written in a style that disguises their subjectivity and conceals issues of choice and bias, and are seen as repositories of “‘true’ and ‘valid’ knowledge” which transcribe ‘official truths.’⁵⁰

As part of its study, this work compiled and thematically coded data from textbooks, examination papers and annual inspectorate reports. Each report from the inspectorate from the early 1930s until the early 1960s were translated from Gaelic script to English in order to prepare it for analysis. As the material was read, any new themes which emerged were noted, and additional codes created for them. By examining two aspects of the codes; first, their frequency throughout the data, and second, the ways in which the content of each code changed over time, it was possible to analyse and distil this raw data, before using it to inform the overall writing. This enabled an examination of portrayals of Irish history in general, and on a more detailed level, demonstrated how there was a slight difference in portrayals of Irish history for those attending school until completion, and those who ended at the Intermediate Certificate level.

⁴⁸ Carsten Heinze, ‘Historical Textbook Research: Textbooks in the Context of the “Grammar of Schooling”’ in *Journal of Educational Media, Memory & Society*, ii, no. 2 (2010), pp 122–131.

⁴⁹ Maria Grever and Tina van der Vlies, ‘Why national narratives are perpetuated: A literature review on new insights from history textbook research’ in *London Review of Education*, xv, no. 2 (2017), p. 288.

⁵⁰ Ibid. See also David Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 116.

Outline of Chapters:

It was important to give a strong background of the educational structure behind the particular subject. Chapter 1 places the history curriculum in the context of what was happening in education more broadly, looking at changes in educational policy and the structure of secondary education in general. This is done to avoid studying history teaching in a vacuum.

Chapter 2 focusses on the official purpose of History teaching in Ireland from the 1920s to the late 1960s. Its overall goal is to outline the public discourse on Irish history in secondary school, in terms of how the subject was viewed and what it was to represent.

Chapter 3, which predominantly utilised the ‘Rules and Programmes’ and official syllabuses issued annually by the Department of Education for its source material, provides a detailed study of the curriculum as it related to Irish history between 1924 and 1969. It also considers how Irish history was promoted in other subjects within the curriculum, namely English, Irish, and Geography. It finds that a more overt nationalistic rendering of Irish history was promoted in these other subjects than in history itself.

Chapter 4 establishes which textbooks were used in schools at this time, and by analysing these specific works, and cross-comparing them, outlines the central themes and topics, to see whether a consistent narrative of the Irish past was being promoted through these texts. This chapter also considers, *inter alia*, issues of translation, textbook historiography, and gender representations in history. Owing to the significant number of untrained and unregistered teachers working in this earlier period, (as discussed in Chapter 8), a reliance on textbooks by teachers was commonplace, thus granting more weight to what these texts said and how.

Chapters 5 and 6 respectively offer a comprehensive analysis of every question asked on Irish history in the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate examinations. These chapters identify which aspects of the wider curriculum were repeatedly engaged with, and therefore considered as most important by the Department of Education. It then considers these by period, to gauge the effect that context had on what aspects of Irish history were popularly stressed, and finally by theme, to better understand the official narrative, and what it represented.

How history teachers, particularly members of the ASTI, viewed this material, and the examination system in general is the focus of Chapter 7. This develops the overall thesis from a study of what was being taught, into how this material was engaged with, and how policy transferred into practice.

Chapter 8 outlines what ‘good’ history teaching was understood to be, as well as discussing the major issues which hindered effective teaching of Irish history during this period. These included the large number of untrained teachers working, issues of pay and status, inadequate facilities, as well as material conditions within the classroom such as the insufficient use of teaching aids, and the massive pressure under which history teachers worked, such as insufficient time allocation.

Having looked at the challenges and conditions under which history teaching was conducted, the thesis then examines how teachers themselves were trained in Chapter 9. It considers the undergraduate courses in history taught in the four universities in operation in the Irish Free State/ Republic: TCD, University College Dublin, University College Cork, and University College Galway, as well as the courses for the Higher Diploma in Education. What teachers learned would have a bearing on what, and more importantly how they would teach Irish history once they began work in the classroom.

Chapter 1: Educational and Socio-political Context, 1922-69:

It has been argued that the Education system of any given State offers a reflection of the wider socio-political context.¹ By looking at the schools and at what young people are taught, one can see a consensus view of the knowledge which a society considers important for them to have, and from this, the values and beliefs of that society.² An understanding of the education system in its totality is necessary as a way of interpreting the wider society. This chapter discusses the major events in Irish Education from 1924-69, as well as the major events politically and socially which had a bearing on Irish society in general. It allows us to understand how the Irish education system evolved after independence, who was being educated, the status of Education in government, and where history fits into this wider system. No study of how Irish history was taught in secondary schools should be completed without an understanding of the wider educational structures and context in which history was taught, as well as the wider socio-political context in which the education system existed. History, as has been noted, is always based on selection, and as education does not exist in a vacuum, politics, culture and the wider society will influence curriculum development and teaching.³

This chapter discusses the general structure of education throughout the period. It briefly discusses the running of secondary schools in the Irish Free State/Republic and the centrality of the Religious Orders as providers of secondary education. Finally, it moves more specifically onto how this wider context effected the history curriculum in general, and Irish history in particular in the following chapter. It highlights the centrality of religion to secondary education during this period. It also argues that while the general structures that were adopted owed their origins to pre-Independence British models, these structures were adapted to suit the specifically Irish context and needs. This chapter also demonstrates the importance of contextualising a study

¹ See for example Akenson, *A mirror to Kathleen's face*.

² O'Callaghan, *Teaching Irish independence*, p. 9.

³ Ian Grosvenor and Kevin Myers, 'Engaging with History after Macpherson' in *Curriculum Journal*, xii, no. 3 (2001), p. 287. See also, Garrison, 'Struggles of immigration at the doorstep of Irish education', p. 149.

on the teaching of Irish history as a school subject, as the overall structure was crucial to both the form which the teaching of Irish history took, and its purpose in secondary schools.

Though certain key players self-identified as “the most conservative-minded revolutionaries that ever put through a successful revolution”⁴, the 1920s Irish Free State was in fact a time of significant change, both politically and socially.⁵ The cultural nationalist movement of the preceding decades as well as the political developments in the immediate post-War of Independence and Civil War period have been widely discussed amongst academics.⁶ In terms of social and economic development, the establishment of the Shannon Hydroelectric Scheme in 1925 meant that the Free State was beginning to experience the transformative effects of rural electrification. The popularisation of the wireless radio and the establishment of national radio broadcaster 2RN in January the following year enabled news to spread more rapidly than ever before,⁷ while the emergence of the automobile as a mode of transportation was beginning to redefine local social structures. In a particularly striking instance, the annual Department of Education Report of 1926-7 highlighted the government’s increasing worry that the connection between teacher and parent, embodied in the premise of *in loco parentis* was being affected by the emergence of the motorcar into rural Ireland, with the link between school and the wider community being seemingly lessened by this new found mobility.⁸

This last example touches on changes occurring within Irish education at the time. The beginning of the Free State saw significant developments in terms of educational legislation,

⁴ These words were uttered by Vice-President of the Executive Council Kevin O’Higgins, Dáil Éireann Debate, Vol. 2 No. 35, 1 March 1923, Col.1909.

⁵ Jason Knirck, *Afterimage of the Revolution : Cumann na nGaedheal and Irish Politics, 1922-1932* (Madison, WI, 2014).

⁶ For an overview of this period see Joseph Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985: Politics and Society* (Cambridge, 1989). See also John Hutchinson, *Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism: The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State* (2012); Timothy G. McMahon, *Grand Opportunity: The Gaelic Revival and Irish Society, 1893-1910* (2008).

⁷ Richard Pine, *2RN and the origins of Irish radio* (Dublin, 2002). John Horgan, *Irish media: a critical history since 1922* (London, 2001).See also Chris Morash, *A history of the media in Ireland* (Cambridge, 2010), pp 131–59.

⁸ Department of Education, *Report, 1925-7*, (Dublin, 1928), p.46; “Ta rud nuadh le tabhairt fé deara ó thainig ré na ngluaisteán- go bhfuil fonn ar na h-oidibh imtheacht as na sraid-bhailtibh agus dul ehn comhnuidhthe insna bailtibh móra. B ’fheidir nach togtha ortha e sin acht baineann se de ’n dluth-cheangailt a bhiodh ann idir oidibh agus tuismightheoiri, idir seoil agus ceanntar na scoile.”

especially in relation to second-level. The first major Education initiative which the Cumann na nGaedheal government saw through was the Intermediate Education (Amendment) Act, 1924. Briefly, this entailed the abolition of the former three-tiered examination system, in favour of two: the Intermediate Certificate, to be taken after four years study, and the Leaving Certificate, to be taken after two further years. The Department set the syllabus for these examinations, giving them some degree of control over what was taught in the privately-run denominational schools. Furthermore, the Payment-by-results scheme, enacted in 1878,⁹ whereby teachers' salaries were dependent on the performance of individual students at a general public examination, was replaced by a system of capitation grants, in which governmental funds were allocated according to the amount of attending pupils. The state agreed to pay a share of teachers' salaries, provided that they were properly qualified. This was intended to raise the quality of teaching in schools.¹⁰

This act was coupled with the Ministers and Secretaries Act of 1924, which, *inter alia*, created the Department of Education, and brought primary, secondary and vocational/technical education together under one centralised system. In no uncertain terms, Eoin MacNeill, Minister for Education argued that "notwithstanding the purely technical appearance of this Bill, it is, in fact, a revolutionary measure", describing the 1924 Education act as "the legislative completion of a revolution in the system and the basis of secondary education, as it has existed since the passing of the Intermediate Education Act of 1878."¹¹ The Departmental report of the same year further declared that while the Payment-by-Results system "has long been abandoned in other countries and repented" and while "unavailing attempts to replace it by a system more in accordance with modern ideas has been made from the year 1909 on" that "Not until the setting up of a National Government was it possible to carry through this much needed reform."¹²

To properly appreciate these long-overdue reforms, it is necessary to outline the system previously in place. The Intermediate Education system introduced in 1878, was implemented

⁹ For more on the Payment-by-Results Scheme see John Coolahan, 'Payment by Results in the National and Intermediate Schools of Ireland', Unpublished MEd Thesis, (Trinity College Dublin, 1975)

¹⁰ Mary N. Harris, and Brian Fallon, 'Ireland: Culture and Religion, 1912-49', UCC Multitext Project in Irish history, http://multitext.ucc.ie/d/Ireland_culture_religion_1912-49, viewed 15 April 2015.

¹¹ *Dáil Debate*, Vol. 8, No.5, 4 July 1924, cols.505-7.

¹² *Report of the Secondary Education Branch for the Year 1924*, p. viii.

throughout the island of Ireland. It was established, according to the 1924 Department of Education report “purely as an examination system”, and it functioned as such with little further development for over a quarter of a century, confining itself to holding annual examinations in four Secondary standards or ‘Grades’” and paying grants to the schools based on the amount of pupils who passed these examinations.¹³ In 1898, aware of the defects of this system whereby a student’s results defined whether a school received funding or not, the Intermediate Education Board sent a representation to the Government calling, *inter alia*, for capitation grants to be initiated. As a result of this deputation, a Commission was established to investigate the matter. Consequently, an Act was passed in 1900 which empowered the Board to appoint inspectors, though no change was made as to the system of payments-by-results. Moreover, this system of inspection was not brought into effect, despite being legislated for, until 1909.¹⁴ Thereafter however, Intermediate inspectors maintained a good degree of control. As regards history, this control was most evident with regards to the history textbooks which were allowed for use in schools. No noticeable change occurred thereafter until 1924.

While it is true that this system was not replaced until after independence, this delay was more due to internal opposition than to an obstinate foreign oppressor as the earlier wording would indicate. While the 1924 measures could be portrayed as ‘revolutionary’, being the first major education Acts of the new State,¹⁵ there was in fact, very little that was original in its terms and conditions. The Intermediate Education (Amendment) Act, 1924, drew extensively from the report of the Dáil Commission of Secondary Education,¹⁶ which itself heavily mirrored the recommendations of the 1919 Molony Report, commissioned and submitted under the British Board of Education. The MacPherson Bill, informed by the Molony Commission, had been unequivocally rejected by the Catholic Church authorities who described it as “a brazen-faced attempt of a hostile government to impose on the mind and soul of an intensely Catholic people

¹³ Ibid, p. 46

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 47

¹⁵ *Dáil Debate*, Vol. 8, No.5, 4 July 1924, cols.505-7.

¹⁶ Coolahan, *Irish Education*, p. 75.

the deadly grip of foreign fetters.”¹⁷ This was significant considering how the Catholic Church was the major provider of secondary education at the time, both male and female.¹⁸ The MacPherson Bill was withdrawn in December 1920 and was “the last effort at educational legislation for the whole island.” As John Coolahan noted however “An undoubted factor against the success of the bill was the imminence of some form of home rule legislation and the idea that a large-scale recasting of the educational system should be left to the new administration.”¹⁹

Despite this, the Molony Report provided the blueprint for the dramatic structural overhaul of 1924,²⁰ which was received with Church acceptance, or at least, by acquiescence. It would appear that what was at issue previously was not the recommendations of the Molony Report, but the origins of it. Church authorities were not inherently against a co-ordinated system of primary and second level education, but a British centralised system. The reaction of the Catholic hierarchy suggests as much when they declared that “the co-ordination of the different branches of education on these lines, if it were true progress, would command our cordial support, but to discontinue the Semi-Independent Boards...for the purpose of placing education, not to Irish, but to British public opinion would be an altogether retrograde proceeding, at variance no less with Irish feeling and Irish national rights than with Irish educational interests.”²¹

There was a definite difference between what was being attempted in these measures and what actually occurred. The Department of Education was established ostensibly to centralise all branches of education under one umbrella organisation. A defining feature of the education system which emerged in 1924 however was the lack of interplay, unification, and co-operation between each level of the system. What emerged was a structure where “the three systems remained distinct and administratively incompatible entities.”²² This acknowledgment enables

¹⁷ John Cunningham, *Unlikely Radicals: Irish Post-Primary Teachers and the ASTI, 1909-2009* (Cork, 2010), pp 42–3.

¹⁸ J.H. Whyte, *Church and state in modern Ireland, 1923-1979* (2nd ed, Dublin, 1980); O'Donoghue, *The Catholic Church and the secondary school curriculum in Ireland, 1922-1962*.

¹⁹ Coolahan, *Irish Education*, p. 73.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 75.

²¹ Irish Catholic Directory (1920). ‘Record of Documents for 1919’, 29 April, 1919; See also Patrick J. Wall, ‘The Bishops and Education’ in *Oideas*, no. 25 (1982), pp 5–7.

²² Akenson, *A mirror to Kathleen's face*, p. 33.; See also Antonia McManus, *Irish education: the ministerial legacy, 1919-99* (Dublin, 2014), pp 38–9.

this study to focus exclusively on secondary education, despite it being only a constituent branch of the education system in total.

In the following four decades, the Irish education system experienced very little structural change, with no major legislative initiatives pertaining to secondary education, beyond the Vocational Education Act of 1930. No major alterations were seen until the 1960s and the introduction of both the Community and Comprehensive School models, followed soon after by the announcement of Minister for Education Donogh O’Malley of ‘free secondary education’ in 1967.²³

In a short period thereafter, a dramatic overhaul occurred, involving more centralised and increased regulation, a gradual dilution of church authority, and an increased governmental concern (and funding) for education in general. Reforms of the structure of the examination system, which began in the late 1960s, had been completed by the mid-1970s, through an introduction of a new gradation scheme. The former ‘pass’ or ‘fail’ system was abolished, being replaced with a lettering system, with students now being given an individual grade for their results.²⁴ This was the first significant structural change since the Intermediate Education (Amendment) Act of 1924 with regards to exams, and provides a fitting historical position to book end this part of the discussion.

These examples at first seem to support the assertion that in the post-Independence period a “post-colonial overhang affect[ed] Irish policy-makers and bureaucrats in their educational policies and practices”²⁵ and that the system which emerged was closely bound to the British model. Recent scholarship has challenged this thesis, namely in relation to the extent to which the structure of Irish education from the early years of independence until the mid-1960s, and

²³ This proposal entailed that school fees were abolished in comprehensive schools, vocational schools, and secondary tops, and a supplemental grant was made to secondary schools to discontinue charging fees. The Government agreed to pay £15 to £25 for each pupil attending schools (depending on previous entrance fee), which was raised to £50 per pupil in 1975.

²⁴ See Mulcahy, *Curriculum and Policy*, pp 38-9

²⁵ David Limond, “[An] historic culture … rapidly, universally, and thoroughly restored”? British influence on Irish education since 1922’ in *Comparative Education*, xlvi, no. 4 (2010), pp 449–462.

associated curriculum changes, were very different from the situation in Britain at the time.²⁶ Despite this critique, the basic premise that the structure of secondary education as implemented through the 1924 Act was not a radical reconsideration of secondary education, but an amendment to the old system is important to recognise; a decision not to start completely anew, but to remould what had been inherited to fit the desires and contextual needs of the new State. An issue arises when one contrasts the overall purpose to which this education system was to serve in the new State, with the status of the Department of Education as a branch of government. However, before this issue can be addressed, it is first necessary to outline the function of the Department of Education with regards to secondary schools.

Role of state in secondary education provision:

In terms of the Department of Education's general function as to secondary education, it was acknowledged that "The state at present inspects those schools regularly and exercises a certain amount of supervision through its powers to make grants to schools as a result of these inspections, but it neither founds secondary schools, nor finances the building of them, nor appoints teachers, or managers, or exercises any power or veto over the appointment or dismissal of such teachers or the management of schools."²⁷ It did affect a certain degree of control over secondary education, particularly over the curriculum- firstly through setting the programme for public examinations, secondly, through regulations as to granting recognised status to schools to be allocated financial aid and thirdly through regulations concerning the qualifications of teachers who would receive a state salary, under the auspices of capitation grants.²⁸

The State did not engage in the direct provision of secondary education, which was the exclusive purview of the religious authorities, between Catholic and Protestant.²⁹ This should not

²⁶ Tom O'Donoghue and Judith Harford, 'Contesting the Limond thesis on British influence in Irish education since 1922: a comparative perspective' in *Comparative Education*, xlviii, no. 3 (2012), pp 337–346.

²⁷ *Report of the Department of Education for the School Year 1924-25 and the financial and administrative years 1924-25-26* (Dublin, 1926), p. 7.

²⁸ Coolahan, *Irish Education*, p. 74.

²⁹ The term 'Protestant' is used here, for ease of expression, to represent the various non-Catholic Christian denominations, between Church of Ireland, Methodist, and Presbyterian. This study does not however assume that they were of the same faith, and acknowledges their differences from one another.

be seen as a takeover by the Churches in the post-Independence period, but more a consolidation of their already dominant position. Over the first four decades after Independence, the Catholic Church continued to maintain its dominant role in Irish education, irrespective of the political party in power,³⁰ with secondary schools remaining private property. As Seosamh Ó Néill, former Secretary of the Department of Education noted in his comparative study of Church and State in relation to Departments of Education internationally, “Most Departments of Education are newcomers in the field of Education- upstarts... compared with the Churches, since the latter have been dealing with Education for centuries while few of the Departments of Education can trace their origin farther back than the nineteenth century.”³¹

Fig. 1.1: Breakdown of each Minister for Education, and their terms in office:

Eoin MacNeill	30/08/1922	24/11/1925	Cumann na nGaedhal
John M. O’Sullivan	28/01/1926	09/03/1932	Cumann na nGaedhal
Thomas Derrig	09/03/1932	08/09/1939	Fianna Fáil
Sean T O’Ceallaigh	08/09/1939	27/09/1939	Fianna Fáil
Eamonn De Valera	27/09/1939	18/06/1940	Fianna Fáil
Thomas Derrig	18/06/1940	18/02/1948	Fianna Fáil
Gen. Richard Mulcahy	18/02/1948	14/06/1951	Fine Gael
Sean Moylan	14/06/1951	02/06/1954	Fianna Fáil
Gen. Richard Mulcahy	02/06/1954	20/03/1957	Fine Gael
Jack Lynch	20/03/1957	24/06/1959	Fianna Fáil
Patrick J Hillery	24/06/1959	21/04/1965	Fianna Fáil
George Colley	21/04/1965	13/07/1966	Fianna Fáil
Donogh O’Malley	13/07/1966	10/03/1968	Fianna Fáil
Jack Lynch	11/03/1968	26/03/1968	Fianna Fáil
Brian Lenihan	27/03/1968	02/07/1969	Fianna Fáil

Between 1932 and 1957, regardless of which political party was in control of the Department of Education, no major policy changes occurred. This ‘conservative consensus’, as termed by John Walsh,³² has been attributed by Ó Buachalla to “the declining social radicalism of Fianna Fáil and the aggressive education policy pursued by the Catholic Church” and resulted in the State acknowledging the church-dominated status quo while being “equally committed to

³⁰ Whyte, *Church and state in modern Ireland, 1923-1979*, p. 21.

³¹ Joseph O’Neill, ‘Departments of Education: Church and State’ in *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, xxxviii, no. 152 (1949), p. 421.

³² See John Walsh, *The politics of expansion: the transformation of educational policy in the Republic of Ireland, 1957-72* (Manchester, 2009).

avoiding church-state conflict on education.”³³ During this period there were four Fianna Fáil ministers for Education, while Fine Gael’s Richard Mulcahy served two separate terms, between 1948-51, and 1954-57.

In the first years of the Free State, Minister Eoin MacNeill expressed approval for the domination of the religious orders as regards the Irish Education system, declaring that “The principles of education found in the historic practice of the Church and in the writings of Catholic thought are the soundest guides to an Irish educational policy.”³⁴ Moreover, beyond the generally accepted deference to Church authorities, MacNeill was against the notion of having a strong centralised system, in line with the consensus that the state had only a subordinate role to play in education, especially second-level education. The role of the government as to education he argued, was solely to assist the parent.

No matter what the form of government is, the average governing person desires to govern beyond the proper ends of government, to impose his will on others, and to control his liberty unduly. This is probably a greater evil in matters of education than in any other sphere of government. It is very hard for a person in governmental control of education to realise that his proper function is to assist the parent.³⁵

MacNeill argued that the only way to avoid abuse of the function of supervision by the state is to continually “keep before the mind of the public the right and duty of parental control, the right of association, the right to State assistance, and the wrong and danger of undue interference with these rights on the part of the State.”³⁶ The State aided the parent then, not by taking control of the centres of education where parents chose to send their children, but by allowing parents the freedom to decide where their children went, free from direct governmental interference. Following an acceptance by parents of the need of some outside intervention to provide an adequate schooling for children, “the State” MacNeill stated

³³ Ó Buachalla, *Education Policy*, pp 277–8.

³⁴ UCDA/MacNeill Papers/LA1/Q/339, no date, but presumably 1922-5, as suggested by internal evidence, and as it was grouped among other papers from that period.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

“becomes the lieutenant and agent of the parental right” and were performing “a duty not...exercising a right.”³⁷ State involvement in education was not to encroach beyond this level.

Unfortunately, in contrast to MacNeill’s earlier statements, parental influence in post-primary education was almost non-existent during the period. This was due to this delegation of responsibility to the churches and religious orders to educate their children and the degree of deference with which the Catholic Church in particular was held. As highlighted by Fr. Perrot S.J. of Mungret College, Limerick in a speech directed at parents in 1959,

Parents are too slow to criticise either the schools or the State. They are slow to criticise the schools perhaps because they are conducted by religious or priests for the most part. They are slow to criticise the State perhaps because so many of them depend on that State for their livelihood. If that is so we are in a serious condition. We talk of the tyranny of custom. We could also talk of the tyranny of system. We need organisations to bring the parents and the teachers together. We want to hear the parents.³⁸

A similar conclusion was reached five years previously by secondary school inspector Mícheál Ó Siadhail (discussed in greater length in Chapter 4) who, *inter alia*, advocated a change of system, whereby parents and teachers would have more of a role in deciding syllabus content.³⁹ This deficit of parental involvement in the education of their children resulting in what was taught being more in keeping with the expressed wishes of the Churches and the Department of Education, and can be judged accordingly.

Status of education in government:

Notwithstanding, the subordinate position of the State in providing secondary education was further compounded by the fact that Education in and of itself was a minor brief in government. The Free State (and Republic of Ireland) experience mirrored that of other countries at this time. In England, from 1900 to the mid-1940s, very few governments were especially

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Gerard Beggan, ‘Education in Clare-Connacht in the Nineteen Fifties: A Perspective Constructed from News Items in the Provincial Press’ in *Oideas*, no. 30 (1987), p. 71.

³⁹ N.A.I./GAEL/AN GÚM/G072: Letter from Mícheál Ó Siadhail to Seán MacLellan, and the Chief Inspector, M[éan].O[ideachais], Seoirse Mac Niocaill, 21 Oct 1953.

interested in education. As David Cannadine has noted on the English context “most administrations before the Second World War did not seriously expect to be interested in education, and did not claim that they were;...Many prime ministers have regarded education as a low-priority cabinet post, and ambitious politicians have either not wanted to do the job at all, or sought to move on from it to something bigger and more important, as soon as they possibly could.”⁴⁰

In the Irish context, the importance placed in official rhetoric on Education to the Government’s policy of nation-state building, through its Policy of Gaelicisation (discussed in Chapter 3) was belied by this inferior status of the Department of Education, which was at the perpetual mercy of the Department of Finance.⁴¹ What is more, the Department of Education throughout the period, was notable for its hands-off approach, with its head being described by one educationalist as a “Minister without a portfolio.”⁴² MacNeill for example, was absent for the majority of his tenure owing to his work with the Boundary Commission. J.M. O’Sullivan viewed his scope as Minister to be limited, owing to his firm belief that primary responsibility for educational matters lay with the churches.⁴³ Eamonn DeValera served as Minister for a few months only, re-introducing set-texts for all language and classics subjects, as well as overseeing the creation of the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies⁴⁴ before vacating the position.⁴⁵ The minor position of the Department, in conjunction with the subordinate status of the State to Church authorities regarding the running of the Irish Education system, was epitomised by Minister Richard Mulcahy. Unashamedly declaring himself ‘a kind of Dungarees Man’, Mulcahy compared the role of Minister to a plumber whose job was simply to ‘take the knocks out of the

⁴⁰ Cannadine et al., *The right kind of history*, p. 221.

⁴¹ Diarmaid Ferriter, *The transformation of Ireland, 1900-2000* (London, 2004), pp 14–15 talks about the integral position of the Department of Finance to the Free State’s political system, over all other departments, and the concept of a strong centralised government.

⁴² Patrick Duffy, *The lay teacher: a study of the position of the lay teacher in an Irish Catholic environment* (Dublin, 1967), p. 23.

⁴³ Patrick Maume, *DIB*, ‘John Marcus O’Sullivan’.

⁴⁴ I am grateful to Dr Neasa McGarrigle for bringing De Valera’s involvement in DIAS to my attention. See Neasa McGarrigle, *The Establishment of the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies 1936-1948* (Unpublished PhD, TCD, 2017).

⁴⁵ For an overview of all the Ministers for Education since the foundation of the State see McManus, *The ministerial legacy*.

pipes' and afterwards, to leave things as they were, with minimal interference with regards to education policy or practice.⁴⁶

This position was not universally maintained. From the late 1950s onwards, a period of great change began, whereby the status of education dramatically increased in government, politics and policy.⁴⁷ The "inability to recognise the value of secondary education, or to take stock of parental demand for it" by earlier Ministers for Education⁴⁸ was changing. Reports such as 1965's *Investment in Education*⁴⁹ testified to this increased attention, with Education, and particularly the development of Second-level Education, now being considered as central to future economic growth and modernisation. Indicative of this change in official attitudes was Donogh O'Malley, Minister between 1966 and 1968. O'Malley, who saw his position as "the political head of a Department, representing the people"⁵⁰ outlined the need for a careful plan of action, with regards to education as "the decisions which we arrive at over comparatively short periods on all these important facets of education will set the tenor and pattern of education for hundreds of thousands of children for many generations possibly, and certainly for many years" and despite changes in particular methods and practices "nevertheless there will be an unchanging foundation of basic principles."⁵¹

An issue in this regard was the general pace of change in Education. As commented on by Cannadine with regards to the English context:

One reason why the dynamic of educational reform is so slow is that it proceeds by a gradual (and often unacknowledged) pattern of inter-generational evolution and broad political consensus....In general, educational reform in the twentieth century has proceeded with some measure of agreement, co-operation and common ground [among the different political parties].⁵²

⁴⁶ *Dáil Éireann debates*, vol. 159, col 1494, 19 June 1954.

⁴⁷ For an extensive coverage of this period see Walsh, *The politics of expansion*.

⁴⁸ McManus, *The ministerial legacy*, p. 337.

⁴⁹ Department of Education, *Investment in Education: report of the survey team*, 1965

⁵⁰ *Seanad Éireann Debate*, Vol. 62 No. 11, Col. 1079.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Cannadine et al., *The right kind of history*, p. 225.

This situation was even more evident in Ireland where the ideological differences between the political parties in power were negligible.⁵³ One reason, for example, why O’Malley announced his plans for ‘free education’ as he did, was to take the wind out of the sails of Fine Gael, who were planning a reasonably similar though slightly more conservative measure.⁵⁴ The impact of O’Malley’s announcement that the government would pay school fees to enable students to avail of secondary education, along with the department’s longer term plans to increase the school leaving age, reinforced the newfound importance of the Department of Education within government. This testified to the extent to which the general educational context had changed since the Department was first founded in 1924.

Types of schools involved in post-primary education:

Having briefly discussed the status of Irish education and its structure from a legislative perspective, it is important to note how the Post-Primary system in no way operated as an homogenous unit in terms of the types of schools which students attended. For those students who continued their education beyond primary level, the majority went to the more traditional secondary school, whose focus, in terms of programmes for learning and general ethos, was on a general academic education in the grammar school tradition.⁵⁵ However many also attended vocational education schools, known colloquially as ‘Techs’. These schools were not under strict denominational control, but were run through the local Vocational Education Committee (VEC), a school district Board, comprised of locally elected members. As noted in the introduction, Vocational schools catered for a significantly smaller number of students than the more traditional secondary schools, and did not teach history.

There also existed a third form of post-primary education known as ‘Secondary Tops’. These comprised of primary schools where the secondary school programme was being taught to pupils who had completed the Primary course, but who were not able to enter secondary schools,

⁵³ Ferriter, *The transformation of Ireland, 1900-2000*, pp 16–8. For an interesting discussion by journalist Mary Holland on the lack of a left-right divide in Irish politics see Irish Times, 23 May 2002.

⁵⁴ Walsh, *The politics of expansion*, pp 197–8.

⁵⁵ Tom O’Donoghue and Judith Harford, ‘A Comparative History of Church-State Relations in Irish Education’ in *Comparative Education Review*, lv, no. 3 (2011), p. 324.

primarily due to financial constraints.⁵⁶ Secondary Tops primarily served female education. In 1924-25 for example, of the 18 primary schools who presented students for the Certificate examinations, 17 were Girls' Schools. Furthermore, of the 156 students who sat the exams, between Intermediate and Leaving Certificate level, only two were boys.⁵⁷ Secondary Tops continued to grow over the first decades of the new system. By 1944 of the nearly 20,800 pupils in the 14 to 16 years age range, approximately 4,000 of these attended Secondary Tops.⁵⁸

These schools were consistently complained about by registered secondary school teachers, who bemoaned that positions which they had specifically trained for, were being made unavailable by unqualified primary teachers teaching the secondary programme.⁵⁹ Secondary Tops were also criticised by secondary school teachers due to the condition of pay made to teachers there, as they were not teaching in officially recognised secondary schools. These issues were summarised in 1945 when an ASTI deputation met with the Minister for Education (2 October 1945) to discuss the growing number of Secondary Tops being established. The delegation asked the Minister "to discourage the addition of 'Secondary Tops' to primary Schools" as "in a number of such schools...the teachers were unqualified, while such qualified teachers as were employed, received poor salaries and were ineligible for increments." Additionally,

the Secondary Top was an inadequate substitute for, and detrimental to the secondary school proper. The position could be improved if the Department would insist on the employment of properly-qualified teachers who would receive adequate basic salaries and be eligible for increments. A case was cited of a teacher employed in a secondary school who could never qualify for increments owing to the existence in the same town of a Secondary Top which had affected the attendance in the sec. school proper.⁶⁰

This stance was a noticeable change of tactic from previous delegations, as the ASTI were no longer calling for the complete removal of Secondary Tops, but were more qualified in their

⁵⁶ Secondary Tops also provided an alternative to free secondary level education, which MacNeill was not willing to implement; *Dáil Éireann debates*, Vol.12, cols. 192-3, 11 June 1925.

⁵⁷ *Report of the Department of Education, 1924-25* (Dublin, 1926), p. 106.

⁵⁸ See McManus, *The ministerial legacy*, pp 40-1.; Coolahan, *Irish Education*, p. 44.

⁵⁹ See ASTI/Annual Convention 1925 for the initial complaints about Secondary Tops.

⁶⁰ ASTI/OP/1946, C.E.C. Report 'Secondary Tops'.

considerations. The Minister was being asked to discourage them, but also to improve the remuneration for teachers in these schools, and to ensure that only trained teachers are allowed to teach. In response, Minister Derrig remarked how “Secondary Tops had always been in existence and were definitely justifiable where secondary schools were not available”, though he did contend that the Department was very careful about giving permission for Secondary Tops.

A further reason why Secondary Tops were opposed by registered secondary teachers was that these schools were not subject to appropriate inspection. As noted,

they are subject to inspection by officials from the Primary Department of Education, whose qualifications are essentially those of the Primary, and not of the Secondary Inspector. It is invidious that the work of a teacher, of say, Leaving Certificate Hons. Mathematics, French, or History, should be inspected by one who, owing to the nature of his normal work of inspection, could not be expected to rank as an expert in even one subject of the Leaving Certificate Programme.⁶¹

This issue was considered at a further deputation between the ASTI and the Minister for Education, 15 December 1947. Amongst those also in attendance were Mícheál Breathnach (Secretary of the Department), Proinnsias Ó Dubhthaigh (Assistant Secretary), and Toirdhealbhach Ó Raifeartaigh (Chief Inspector). In view of the proposed raising of the school leaving age⁶², the problem of ‘Secondary Tops’ was seen to assume “major proportions.” They urged the Minister to dispense with these schools which they regarded as “mere cramming institutions, working under a system educationally unsound” [due to the limited subject choices, and the fact that teachers could not become registered while employed there.] The ASTI, as in previous occasions, called for the conversion of ‘Secondary Tops’ to secondary schools proper, and for their discontinuance “in areas where secondary schools charged reasonably low fees.”⁶³ The Minister again denied that the Department encouraged the growth of Secondary Tops “but he could see no reason why permission should be withheld from a primary school to form one, if the Department were satisfied that the necessary regulations had been complied with.” In

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Though this was being proposed in 1947, it ultimately did not occur for over another twenty years.

⁶³ ASTI/OP/1948, - C.E.C. Report, pp 33-38.

addition, both Breathnach and Ó Raifeartaigh stressed the financial advantages of these schools as well as stating how their examination results were often very satisfactory and that the teachers' qualifications were generally good." Breathnach also cited the overcrowding of secondary schools as another reason in favour of the establishment of Secondary Tops.

Most importantly however, in terms of the general economic context, was the argument made that "when some form of secondary education was available in a primary school, parents were not anxious to withdraw their children from it. There they would have facilities for entering for the Certificate examinations, which they could not afford to pay for elsewhere."⁶⁴ Whilst the ASTI were naturally disinclined to accept these reasons, they are interesting to note, being seen not as a necessary evil, but a public service almost; a way around fee-paying schools for those who could not afford it. It was a case that as parents would have attended primary school to some level, but in all likelihood, would not have received a secondary education, that the Secondary Top offered a more comfortable option, being more relatable, and thus less intimidating. This would then lead to these children being more likely in the circumstances to receive at least some form of secondary education, rather than none at all.

The proliferation of Secondary Tops continued until the early 1960s. By 1948-49, courses of instruction in the secondary schools Programme were taught to senior classes in 78 primary schools and were followed by 4,703 pupils.⁶⁵ Within two years, this had risen to 81 primary schools and 5,289 pupils.⁶⁶ By 1955-56 this figure had increased to 5,607 pupils, in 81 schools.⁶⁷ However, they soon fell fast out of favour, owing to the increasing accessibility to secondary education, the improved facilities available for secondary education, and from the 1960s on, with the state sponsorship for Community and Comprehensive schools, and especially after the introduction of 'free education' in 1967.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ *Report of the Department of Education, 1948-49* (Dublin, 1950), p. 18.

⁶⁶ *Report of the Department of Education, 1950-51* (Dublin, 1952).

⁶⁷ *Report of the Department of Education, 1955-56* (Dublin, 1957), p. 20; These were not necessarily the same schools however, as the number had risen slightly in the intervening years, before dropping again to 81 this year.

Providers of Education:

The power dynamic between the Government who prescribed the courses of study, and the Churches who owned and managed the schools, as well as providing much of the teaching staff, was hugely important during this period. While the Department of Education set the syllabi for study as mentioned, it was the Catholic Religious Orders, both male and female, who provided education, both in terms of facilities and teachers, for the overwhelming majority, as well as Protestant Church authorities. Secondary education during these years was, for the most part, single-sex and denominational. While it is important to acknowledge the education of Protestants at Second-level, this chapter focuses predominantly on Catholic Education, which comprised the great majority of secondary schools in Ireland. In 1965 there were 571 secondary schools in the country. 468 of these were Catholic, 43 Protestant, 59 Lay, and 1 Jewish school.⁶⁸ The number of students enroled was 92,989, of whom 87,518 were Catholics, or 94% of the total.⁶⁹

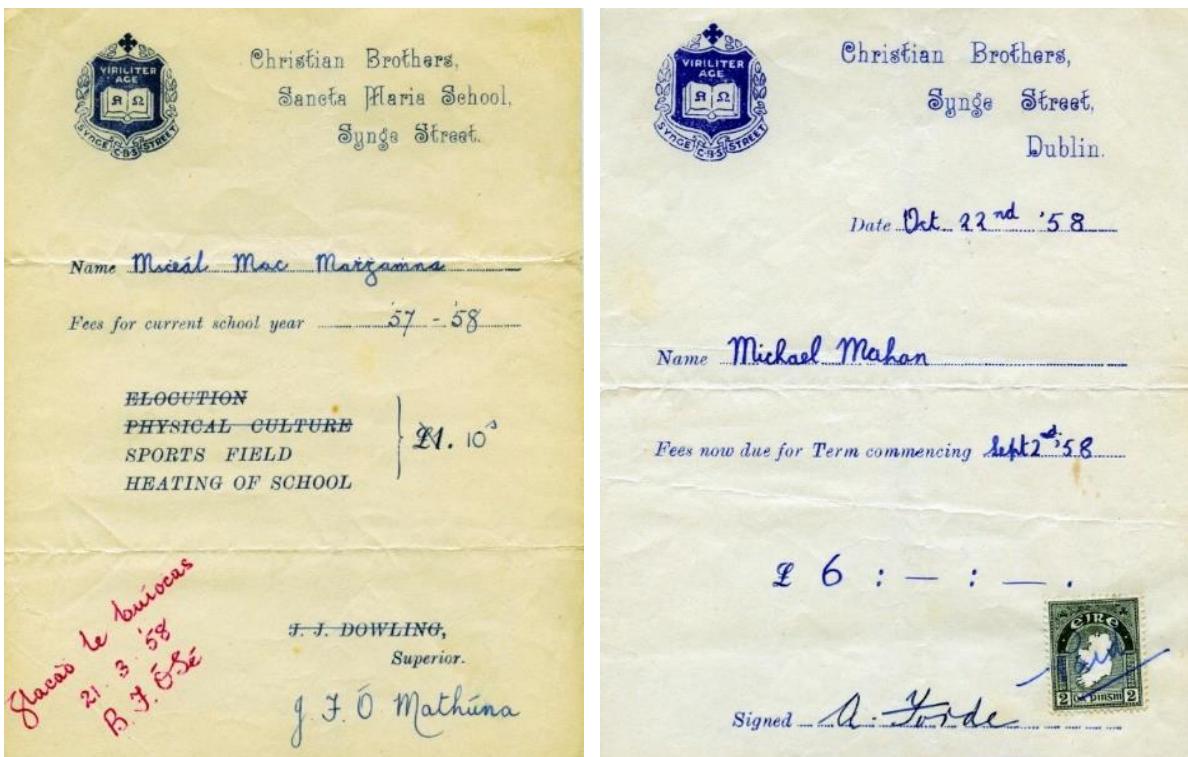
The Irish Christian Brothers were the most prominent order involved in the education of Catholic boys, at both primary and secondary level. Their greatest involvement was with non-residential education, while only a minority of Brothers were involved in industrial school work at any time.⁷⁰ That is not to say that they were the exclusive holders of this responsibility. Catholic male secondary education was also conducted by the De La Salle Brothers, Presentation Brothers, Patrician Brothers, Marist Brothers, Franciscan Brothers, and unaffiliated Diocesan Colleges. There were also more ‘elite’ higher fee schools: the Vincentians who operated a school in Castleknock, Dublin, the Holy Ghost Fathers, in Rockwell College, Tipperary and Blackrock College, Dublin, and the Jesuits, who ran schools in Clongowes Wood College, Co. Kildare, and Belvedere College in Dublin amongst others. In terms of providing education for Irish girls, the main providers were the Presentation Sisters, founded by Nano Nagle in 1775, as well as the Ursuline Order, the Sisters of Mercy, and the Sisters of Loreto among others.

⁶⁸ Duffy, *The lay teacher*, p. 42.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 12.

⁷⁰ Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse Investigation Committee Report (‘Ryan Report’) Vol. I, (2009) p. 70.

Fig.1.2.: Invoice for School fees Payment, 1957-59⁷¹



These religious orders had their own purpose of education, separate from any programme set by the Department of Education, and also separate from one another, based on their mission and class outlook. Garvin suggests that one reason why the Catholic Church maintained control over the majority of Irish education was “because it wished to recruit faithful servants, ‘soldiers of Christ’, missionaries to the English-speaking world and Catholic leaders of a Catholic people: priests and middle-class professionals and businessmen.”⁷² While the belief that secondary schools were a potent breeding ground for missionaries was a factor considering the foregoing of tuition in a number of schools to boys who declared their intention to enter the congregation, other studies have demonstrated that recruiting missionaries or clergy was not the sole nor primary function of these schools. While vocational talks occurred in many schools, many students specifically declared that they were not pressurised into ‘taking the cloth’, demonstrating how there was no single experience or uniform ‘purpose’ for education in these schools.⁷³

⁷¹ Mike Mahon, CBS Synge Street, Dublin. “School fees 1957-1958,”; “School fees 1958-1959,” Life Histories Archive, accessed November 12, 2017, <http://lifehistoriesarchive.com/items/show/1132>; <http://lifehistoriesarchive.com/items/show/1133>;

⁷² Tom Garvin, *Preventing the future: why was Ireland so poor for so long?* (Dublin, 2004), pp 254–5.

⁷³ See O'Donoghue & Harford, *Secondary School Education in Ireland: History, Memories And Life*

Nevertheless, the Church's role in education was both a defining feature of the Irish context, and was in keeping with wider Catholic teaching of the time. As noted by Pope Pius XI in his 1929 Papal Bull, *Divini Illius Magistri*, the education of the masses and teaching from a moral perspective became a central objective of the Church. This encyclical outlined the clergy's responsibility to ensure that this not be undermined by any secular education offered by the state.

As noted

since education consists essentially in preparing man for what he must be and for what he must do here below, in order to attain the sublime end for which he was created, it is clear that there can be no true education which is not wholly directed to man's last end, and that...there can be no ideally perfect education which is not Christian education.⁷⁴

The gradual increase in schools in Ireland, and secondary schools in particular (See Fig. 1.5) is therefore significant. That the majority of the new schools founded, as well as those in operation, were under the authority of religious orders would confirm the continued desire for religious involvement and control over education, and reflected papal policy during this period. Moreover, this control over secondary education was not only accepted by the public, but was generally welcomed. In 1922, the Irish educational sphere was dominated by

church-related secondary schools...with a long tradition of existence as fundamentally private, independent institutions, each with its own recognised manager. As this appeared to suit the circumstances of the country, they so remained while continuing to receive state support, but...on a more substantial scale than prior to 1922.⁷⁵

Stories, 1922-1967, pp 106–115.: Andrew Shortall who attended a Patrician Brothers Secondary School in Laois the late 1960s, contended that there was hardly any mention of joining an order. Brian Titley, Coláiste Chríost Rí, Cork, in the late 1950s, early 1960s specifically recalled how “There were detailed discussions of the nature of a religious vocation and how to recognize it. ... In the end it all came down to one simple premise: were you willing to do God’s work in return for the hundredfold reward in the hereafter? As these matters were being clarified for us, the recruiters for religious orders returned in earnest to make their pitches to captive audiences. We had no choice but to listen...”

⁷⁴ Pope Pius XI, *Divini Illius Magistri*, (7), http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_31121929_divini-illius-magistri.html, viewed 13/02/18.

⁷⁵ Duffy, *The lay teacher*, p. 34.

Similar to Minister J.M. O’Sullivan’s comments on the suitability of the Church-State relationship to education,⁷⁶ the issue received only limited discussion in Dáil Éireann when broached in the 1940s. Senator Michael Hayes, former Minister for Education (responsible for the secondary Branch, in 1922) and at the time, UCD Lecturer in modern Languages, stated how “We have un-denominational schools which are really denominational and we have the question of religion and religious teaching in our schools settled to the satisfaction of the Churches. We have nobody arguing that it should be changed.”, - from which there was no demur.⁷⁷ Thus, the situation was not seen as problematic by the representatives of those who sent their children to be educated in these schools.

As late as the mid-1950s, it was argued that the dominant purpose of secondary education in Ireland, as highlighted in the Council of Education report, published, 1962, was “the inculcation of religious ideals and values. This central influence, which gives unity and harmony to all the subjects of the curriculum, is outside the purview of the state which supervises the secular subjects only.”⁷⁸ The school, it was stated was “the instrument which society uses for the preservation and transmission of the culture of the past and for the organised development of the younger generations towards certain ends or ideals” being “synonymous with general and humanist education.” Giving primacy to the autonomy of the schools, the report did not declare any overarching aim of secondary education beyond stating that “In Ireland...[o]ur schools are the heirs of a great tradition and it is universally recognised that their purpose is, in short, to prepare their pupils to be God-fearing and responsible citizens.”⁷⁹

The religious (namely Catholic) ethos permeating through Irish Secondary education mirrored the wider society in the wake of Independence, whereby a concern with creating an integralist Catholic nation resulted in a number of legislative measures to that effect. Concerned

⁷⁶ Quoted in Chapter 2. [“We are very lucky in this country that we have a system that satisfies the legitimate demands of the Church and State...Anything that would tend even to shake a system of that kind I would consider disastrous in the extreme.”]

⁷⁷ Barney O'Reilly, 'Education Policy in Ireland since the 1940s' in *Italian Journal of Sociology Of Education*, iv, no. 1 (2012), p. 246. See also Coolahan, *Irish Education*, p. 73. On Church control of Education and ideology.

⁷⁸ *Report of the Council of Education: The curriculum of the secondary school* (Dublin, 1960), p. 88.: History was among these ‘secular’ subjects.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

“with a general decline in moral standards,” with their pastorals complaining of “the evils of dancing, the indiscipline of youth, lack of parental control, intemperance, disgraceful literature, cinema,...strikes, secret societies, and so on” the Catholic hierarchy desired the new state to enshrine the Catholic moral code in the civil law. This was accomplished with the various censorship acts on cinema and literature, and through the official banning of contraception and divorce.⁸⁰ The control of education by the Religious orders was simply one part of a wider system in which Catholic morality could be promoted in the new Irish Free State and beyond. In terms of the minority religion, no distinction, constitutionally, was made by the State in its treatment of the secondary schools of the several religious denominations.⁸¹ An argument has however been made that while Protestant schools were given some special dispensations, they were also disadvantaged by way of their religious stance in a predominantly Catholic-orientated system.⁸²

This issue is beyond the remit of this study.

Separate from this distinction, it has been argued that the conclusions of the Council of Education’s report- *inter alia*, that education was an inherently moral endeavour and that the idea of free secondary education was impossible and ‘utopian’- were a statement of the conservative position of 1950s Ireland and were outdated by the time of publication.⁸³ The principle of second-level education for all had already been accepted in Britain from 1944 and in Northern Ireland in 1947.⁸⁴ Up until then, it had been taken for granted in the Irish context that “anything beyond an elementary education was available only to those who could afford to purchase it, or the small number of children who achieved it through scholarships.”⁸⁵ This was seen to change right across Europe in the aftermath of the Second World War.⁸⁶

⁸⁰ Wall, ‘The Bishops and Education’, p. 9.

⁸¹ Duffy, *The lay teacher*, p. 21.

⁸² Joseph Ruane and David Butler, ‘Southern Irish Protestants: an example of de-ethnicisation?’ in *Nations & Nationalism*, xiii, no. 4 (2007), pp 619–635.

⁸³ See Walsh, *The politics of expansion*.

⁸⁴ The ‘Butler’ Education Act of 1944 granted free Secondary Education for all in England and Wales. This was followed soon after by the Northern Ireland Education Act of 1947. For a discussion of the Northern Ireland context see Sean Farren, ‘A lost opportunity: education and community in Northern Ireland 1947-1960’ in *History of Education*, xxi, no. 1 (1992), pp 71–82.

⁸⁵ Eileen Randles, *Post-primary education in Ireland 1957-1970* (Dublin, 1975), p. 15.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 16. “Belief in equal opportunity in education was intense in the middle and late 1950s, and there was an upward thrust in the demand for educational provision. Britain was the first country in

Change was slower in Ireland. It was not until 1963 that Minister Patrick Hillery announced the government's intention that "the equality of educational opportunity towards which it is the duty of the state to strive, must nowadays entail the opportunity of some post-primary education for all."⁸⁷ This has been seen as a watershed moment, marking a great shift in attitude, "an indication that the government was prepared to assume a greater responsibility for the provision of second level education, rather than leaving it solely to the various religious groups."⁸⁸

This shift was also seen in official documentation regarding the Certificate exams. By 1971, for example, the purpose of the Intermediate Certificate was defined in more secular terms, being seen "to testify to the completion of a well-balanced course on general education suitable for pupils who leave full-time education at about 16 years of age, and alternatively, to the fitness of the pupils to entry on more advanced courses of study."⁸⁹ The purpose of the Leaving Certificate was further described as being "to prepare pupils for immediate entry into open society or for proceeding to further education."⁹⁰ As educationalist Eileen Randles noted, "Secondary education then, has two aims. It is terminal for those students who enter the world of work immediately after school. It is preparatory for those who move into any form of third level education. The traditionally academic orientation of the Secondary school course prepared students for clerical positions and for entry into the professions."⁹¹ The religious element was still evident, though no longer framed as the *sine qua non* of secondary education.

Recognised schools and attendance figures:

Having outlined in part both the providers and purpose of secondary education, it is important to examine who actually attended these schools and in what quantity.

Western Europe to raise the school leaving age to 15 and to arrange that all children between the ages of 11 and 15 received some form of secondary education. Sweden, Luxembourg, France, and even half the lander of West Germany had followed and even surpassed the example of Britain."

⁸⁷ *Irish Times*, 21 May 1963.

⁸⁸ Agnes McMahon, 'A review of changes in the pattern of history teaching and an examination of current practice in twenty-four secondary schools in Dublin' (M.Ed thesis, TCD, 1975), p. 55.

⁸⁹ Rules and Programmes for Secondary Schools, 1971-72, (Dublin, 1973), p. 23.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 29.

⁹¹ Randles, *Post-primary education in Ireland 1957-1970*, p. 19.

Fig. 1.3: Number of Secondary Schools, 1922-42:

Year	# of Secondary Schools
1922-23	275
1932-33	311
1941-42	362

The number of pupils enrolled almost doubled within the first twenty years of the state, from 20,600 pupils in 1922-23 to 39,787 by 1942-43.⁹² Of the latter, 30,076 followed the Intermediate Certificate Course and 9,461 followed the Leaving Certificate Course of study. Fig.s 1.4.-1.5 based on figures compiled from the Annual Departmental reports, provide visual representations of the number of pupils attending recognised secondary schools throughout the period, and the number of schools. Fig. 1.6 provides a geographical breakdown of the provision of secondary education and attendance levels after the first decade of the new secondary system.⁹³ It demonstrates how there was a continuous increase since 1925, with the number of schools increasing by 14 percent in the opening decade of the State, and nearly 50 percent for the number of pupils (64% increase in girls, 42% increase of boys).⁹⁴ It also demonstrates how the greatest proportional increase in provision in the first ten years was in rural counties, like Cavan and Roscommon, as opposed to the more urban centres, such as Cork or Dublin.⁹⁵ The increase in students between the 1930s and 1960s demonstrates the overall growth in Irish secondary education during the period, and the differences between regions. In 1951-52 for example, the

⁹² All figures have been compiled from the Annual Report of the Department of Education. *Report of the Department of Education, 1942-43*, (Dublin, 1944): By 1941-42, this figure had increased to 362 secondary schools on the Department's registered list, an increase in 10 schools from the previous year (showing how schools were still being built, despite the war.) See *Report of the Department of Education, 1941-42*, (Dublin, 1943), pp 21-2.

⁹³ This figures differ in part from those cited by the ASTI, which, for example, noted how the Limerick area "fairly thickly populated, included 11,000 secondary school pupils – about one-sixth of the total secondary school population in the Twenty-Six Counties." ASTI/C.E.C. *Bulletins to Branches*, No. 56, July 1960: Res. 53. This discrepancy could be based on the ASTI including students from nearby regions such as West Tipperary or East Clare for example, as they offer no definition of what the 'Limerick area' entails.

⁹⁴ *Report of the Department of Education, 1935-36* (Dublin, 1937), p. 55.

⁹⁵ It is important to note however, that while these rural areas saw the greatest percentile increases, these counties (such as Donegal for instance) were among the lowest levels of secondary school attendance.

Department of Education noted how with the continued rise in students and schools that “there are few regions in the Republic of Ireland that are without a Secondary School at present”⁹⁶ By 1967, the largest development in secondary education occurred (except Co. Wicklow and Co. Meath) along the West coast of Ireland and in Munster, with Donegal, Limerick, Galway, and Kerry among the counties where provision and attendance figures were most increased. The largest single increase however was by far Co. Leitrim, from 1 school and 95 pupils, to 8 schools and 955 pupils, an increase of 884.5%.

The figures in Figs 1.4-1.5. are telling. There was a gradual increase in 1940 before a more substantial rise throughout the 1950s. The statistics published in 1958-59 showed how in less than five years, the amount of students increased by over 13,000, to 69,568 students.⁹⁷ There was a further upsurge in figures in the late sixties, even more so after 1967. The growth in the late 1950s was looked upon by the Department of Education as proof of the enhanced esteem in which secondary education was being viewed by the public and parents alike, demonstrating how they were increasingly willing to send their children to secondary schools, before the implementation of free education.⁹⁸ By 1958-59, more than 66% of children aged between 14 and 16 attended post-primary school.⁹⁹ Considering how the mandatory age for education was still 14 at this point, this showed how parents were more willing (and more able) to fund their children’s education to at least the Intermediate Certificate. This should not however be seen as proof that the growth in secondary education would have occurred to anywhere near the levels which they achieved following the initiative for free post-primary education.

⁹⁶ *Report of the Department of Education, 1951-52*, (Dublin, 1953), p. 13; personally translated from “is beag ceantar i bPoblacht na hÉireann atá gan meanscoil fé láthair.”

⁹⁷ *Report of the Department of Education, 1958-59*, (Dublin, 1960), p. 10

⁹⁸ Ibid, “Is léir... ón bhfás atá faoin meánscolaíocht le blianta anuas gur mór an meas atá ag an bpobal ar an gcóras mean-oideachais agus gur inmholtá an iarracht atá á dhéanamh ag na tuismitheoirí a thabhairt dá gclann.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

Fig. 1.4. School Attendance Figures, 1924-68

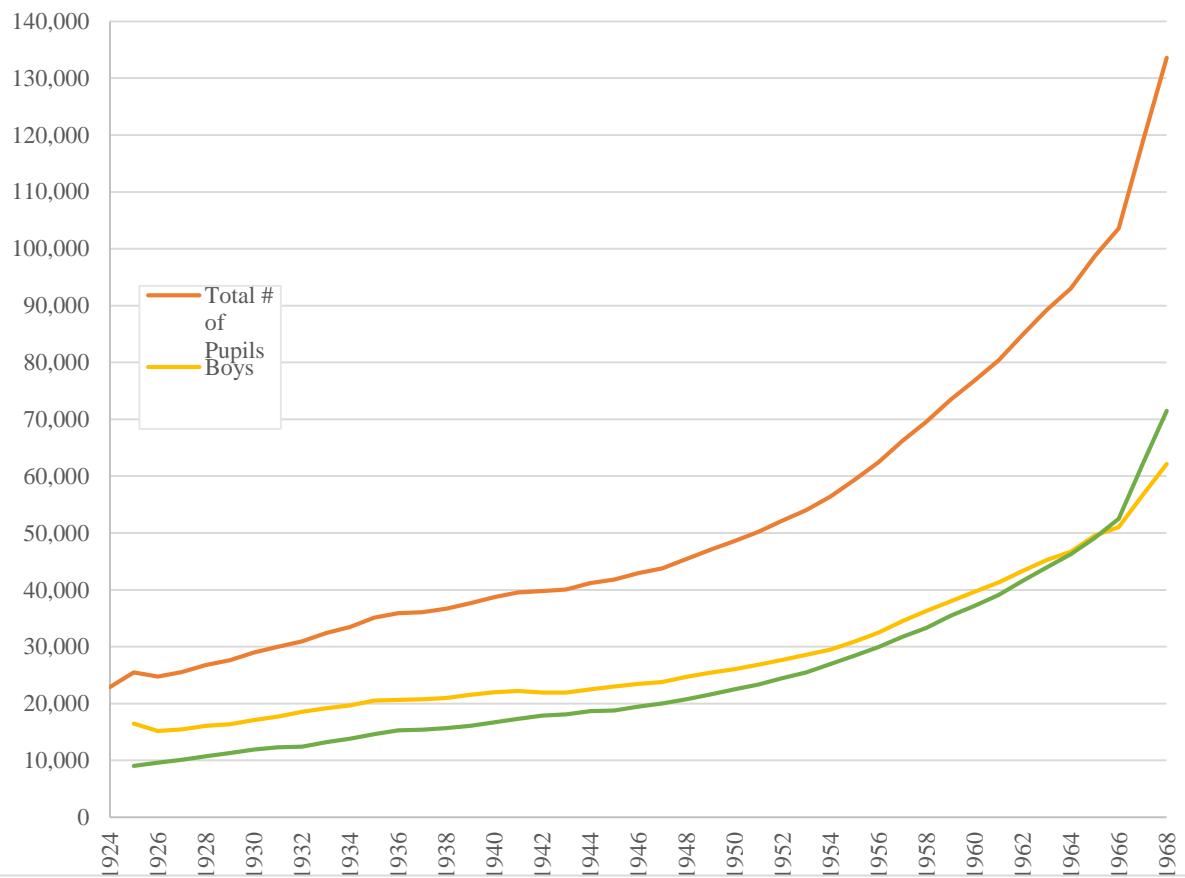


Fig. 1.5 Amount of Recognised Secondary Schools, 1924-68

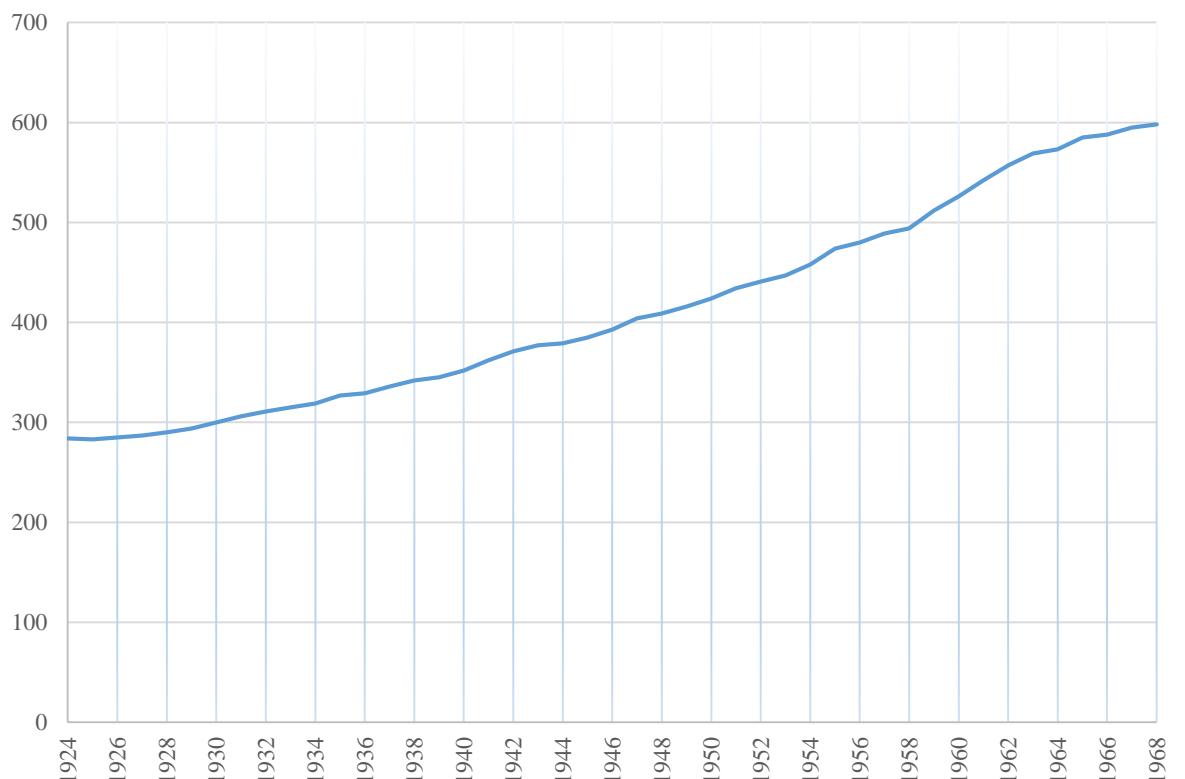


Fig.1.6.¹⁰⁰

County, &c	School Year 1925-26		School Year 1935-36		Increase per cent (%) in No. of pupils	School Year 1967-68		Increase per cent (%) in No. of pupils
	No. of Schools	No. of Pupils	No. of Schools	No. of Pupils		No. of Schools	No. of Pupils	
<i>County Boroughs</i>					('25-'35)			('35-'67)
Dublin	41	5,672	49	7,454	31.4	85	22,895	207.1%
Cork	10	1,303	11	1,859	42.7	27	6,425	245.6%
Limerick	9	994	10	1,189	19.6	13	3,965	233.4%
Waterford	5	573	8	836	45.9	8	2,891	245.8
(Dún Laoighre)						15	3,745	n/a
<i>Counties</i>								
Carlow	7	460	7	665	44.6	7	1,321	98.6
Cavan	2	111	3	385	246.0	8	1,139	195.8
Clare	6	628	8	1,067	70.0	15	2,846	166.7
Cork	25	1,340	27	2,189	63.3	53	8,028	266.7
Donegal	5	252	6	367	45.6	17 ¹⁰¹	2,471	573.3%
Dublin	22	1,773	24	2,352	32.6	41	7,199	206.1
Galway	14	913	15	1,691	85.2	38	8,063	376.8
Kerry	9	956	9	1,150	20.3	26	4,544	295.1
Kildare	8	798	8	912	14.3	15	2,460	169.7
Kilkenny	6	421	7	716	70.1	9	1,945	171.6%
Leitrim	1	82	1	97	18.3	7 (2,2,3)	955	884.5
Leix*	7	338	7	662	95.8	10	1,560	135.6
Limerick	7	298	10	561	88.2	19	2,882	413.7
Longford	3	173	3	346	100.0	9	1,404	305.7%
Louth	7	575	8	829	44.2	14	3,066	269.8
Mayo	13	795	15	1,430	79.9	27	4,989	248.8
Meath	5	263	8	522	98.5	11	2,078	298.1
Monaghan	8	554	8	858	54.9	9	1,795	109.2%
Offaly	7	395	7	534	35.2	11	1,329	148.8
Roscommon	2	100	5	533	433.0	11	2,028	280.4
Sligo	5	462	5	793	71.6	10(1.3.6)	2,189	176.0
Tipperary	17	1,235	21	2,116	71.3	29	6,524	208.3%
Waterford	6	400	7	541	35.2	11	1,496	176.5
Westmeath	9	550	11	991	80.2	17	2,891	191.7
Wexford	14	793	14	1,055	33.0	13	2,209	109.3
Wicklow	6	348	5	411	18.1	11	2,077	405.3%

¹⁰⁰ Figures compiled from *Report of the Department of Education, 1935-36* (Dublin, 1937), p. 56; *Report of the Department of Education, 1967-68* (Dublin, 1969), p. 34.

¹⁰¹ Donegal was interesting in that, of its 17 schools, five were exclusively for boys, 3 for girls and 9 were mixed. This went against the general trend. Of the 2,471 pupils, 788 went to the first type, 583 to the second, and 1,100 attended the mixed schools (376 boys and 724 girls). Co.Mayo was also interesting for the extent of girls in comparison to boys. 1427 male pupils attended 8 exclusively boys schools, while 2,460 pupils attended 11 Girls' schools, or over 1,000 more girls than boys in single sex schools.

Conclusion:

The legislation passed in 1924 set the foundation for the development of secondary Education in the Free State/Republic of Ireland. The new system altered how government approached Education, by uniting the disparate pre-University levels of Education under one department. Few if any reforms were made to the system on a legislative or structural basis after 1924. Many histories of independent Ireland have implied that “with the exception of emigration and rural depopulation, Irish society changed little between the 1920s and the late 1950s” when a new Taoiseach, Seán Lemass, and a dynamic civil servant, T.K. Whitaker, began the process of economic and social transformation.” However, as historian Mary E. Daly has noted, “this simplistic version does not withstand closer scrutiny. There were marked differences between Ireland in the 1920s and the 1950s.”¹⁰² This was also the case with regards to Irish Education despite this lack of any major legislative or structural change.

While the level of secondary school provision throughout nearly all of the period was low relative to the numbers leaving primary school, attendance figures did continue to rise during the initial four and a half decades of secondary education in post-Independent Ireland, as did the number of secondary schools. In the keynote address to the ASTI Annual Conference on secondary education in 1943 for example, Minister Derrig commented upon how “The past twenty years have seen many changes and much progress in our Secondary Education system.” He declared that “in this rapidly changing world, education, and particularly, Secondary Education, cannot remain static” and called for a continuation of consultation between the Department of Education and the teachers union. Derrig’s additional comments on the significant growth in the previous twenty years in children receiving secondary education are interesting “especially as during portion of this period, the school-going population of the country as a whole continued to show a decline.” While it was acknowledged that the situation was far from “peak point”, Derrig optimistically noted how “parents are more than ever realising the growing

¹⁰² Mary E. Daly, ‘The modernization of Rural Ireland, c.1920-c.1960’ in David Dickson and Cormac Ó Gráda (eds), *Refiguring Ireland: essays in honour of L.M. Cullen* (Dublin, 2003), pp 356–369.

importance of post-primary education in a world which is placing a premium on education in all spheres of activity.”¹⁰³ Thus, the growing status of secondary education was celebrated, with the caveat that more needed to be done. Derrig can be charged with engaging in rhetorical flourishes without much practical content here, especially considering how he had been Minister for Education for over a decade by then, while secondary education faced considerably harsh conditions. While Derrig’s comments show a level of complacency and certainly no evidence of any intent to reform the system -his outlook being conservative and his main priority being Gaelicisation- change was still gradually occurring.

The State was subordinate to the Churches in the actual provision of secondary education, in line with the general consensus of the period. In the wake of the Second World War, a new generation of politician began to emerge, as “the generation which was racked by Civil War grew old” and were gradually replaced. This, it has been argued, led to an opportunity for social, political and economic development and reconstruction which had too often been hindered “because of internal dissensions in the past.”¹⁰⁴

When it came to public and political discourse, the low status of Education greatly hindered the ability for significant improvements to emerge, beyond the gradual growth in figures highlighted above. As one commentator noted, “Prior to the ‘sixties, educational discourse in Dáil Éireann rarely reached a high standard... Further, at least three times in the ‘fifties, when debate on the Education estimates might have addressed the critical issues of the day, business of the House was stopped because... less than twenty Deputies were present.”¹⁰⁵ Education in general, and secondary education in particular was not a major political priority.

There were (and still are) different types of schools in Ireland, varying primarily around which religious order was in charge. Different curricula were offered in different schools, depending on their religious ethos, mission, and financial policies. Some, like the Diocesan schools, were more directed at prospective candidates for the priesthood (for example) and

¹⁰³ ASTI/97/48 – ‘Annual Convention Minute Books, 1942-74’, Speech delivered by Minister for Education Thomas Derrig at opening of the 21st ASTI Annual Convention, 27 April 1943.

¹⁰⁴ Beggan, ‘Education in Clare-Connacht in the Nineteen Fifties’, p. 66.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

offered a more restricted curriculum. Others, like the Vincentians or the Jesuits, who oversaw larger schools with higher tuition fees, offered a far wider curriculum. Having considered these general issues, it is important to remember that despite these differences, history was a mandatory subject in all schools that sought to be state-recognised, with Irish history constituting the majority of this. The following chapter will engage with how history was viewed in Ireland, in particular the rhetoric behind it as a subject, and the function which it was to serve in the post-Independence period.

Chapter 2: ‘Heritage Education’: The Purpose of History.

“The teaching of Irish history is still more important in the secondary schools, for the general principle holds good that the higher the form of education, the greater its influence on the national well-being.”¹

This chapter focusses on the official purpose of History teaching in Ireland from the 1920s to the late 1960s. It challenges the consensus in the historiography which has contended that religion and the development of the moral dimension was the dominant feature of history teaching in the Irish context. This view was most notably developed by Professor of the Theory and Practice of Education, UCD, Rev. Timothy J. Corcoran S.J.,² who has been widely described as crucial to formulating educational policy in the new state. This position has now been accepted by John O’Callaghan in his most recent work on the topic. Having previously asserted that the purpose of history teaching in Ireland was directly political,³ O’Callaghan altered his position, when he contended in a 2011 study that “the most important factor that determined the function of history at secondary level was the Catholic philosophy that permeated secondary education. The study of history was not a secular pursuit but a branch of religious education and an instruction in proper Catholic living.”⁴ This contention is only partially true. History in secondary schools was certainly seen from a moral perspective. In the rhetoric surrounding the subject however, this position of importance was shared with History’s role in shaping the national identity of students, predominantly connected with the Irish language and Gaelic heritage.

This chapter outlines the public discourse on Irish history in secondary schools, in terms of how the subject was viewed and what it was to represent. It also considers the wider scholarship as to the purpose of History education, in order to contextualise this study. A general debate

¹ IE UCD/LA1/Q/347, MacNeill papers, Article on the teaching of history in Irish schools, Oct. 1911.

² Rev. Timothy J. Corcoran, ‘Moral Training through History’ in *The Irish Monthly*, lvi, no. 666 (1928), pp 622–624.

³ O’Callaghan, *Teaching Irish independence*, p. 59.

⁴ John O’Callaghan, ‘Politics, Policy and History: History Teaching in Irish Secondary Schools 1922–1970’ in *Études Irlandaises*, xxxvi, no. 1 (2011), p. 35.

currently exists, between school history as a form of citizenship training, and as a skills-based discipline for teaching criticality. This contemporary debate would not have resonated with key figures in politics and education during the period under investigation, as History teaching in Ireland at that time was unquestionably about promoting a national and moral purpose. A select few advocated that school history in Ireland at that time should be geared more towards developing the “ability to weigh evidence and to come to an opinion.”⁵ This view also appeared occasionally in the Inspectorate reports.⁶ The wider consensus however, as gleaned from official rhetoric on the matter⁷, was more in keeping with school history as a means to promote citizenship and national identity, until the late 1960s at least.⁸ This was understood in the Irish context in two distinct ways; Gaelicisation and moral training. This chapter offers a succinct overview of history teaching in the pre-Independence period, as well as a brief overview of the major debates within Irish historiography during the twentieth century, namely the ‘Revisionist’ debate. It also acts as a comparison with the more in-depth chapters on curriculum, textbooks, and examinations, by contrasting them with the official rhetoric surrounding history. How Irish history was defined in a general sense can then be considered against how it was framed and actually promoted in the secondary school setting, as seen in these later chapters.

Debates within current scholarships:

It is important to locate this work within the wider scholarship surrounding the theory of history education. The purpose which school history should serve has been a source of contention throughout the twentieth century, remaining a highly contested issue internationally.⁹ In his 2005

⁵ James Johnston Auchmuty, *The teaching of history* (Dublin, 1940), p. 10.

⁶ For example, *Report of the Department of Education, 1962-63*, (Dublin, 1964), p. 15; translation p. 57.

⁷ ‘official rhetoric’ is defined here as the rhetoric of those either in positions of official power, such as Education Ministers, or TDs, or prominent figures involved in Education, such as University professors Rev. Timothy Corcoran, or H. Rex Cathcart for example.

⁸ Cathcart, *Teaching Irish history*, p. 9.; where history as ‘the objective study of the past’ was not promoted by the Department of Education until 1966 at Intermediate level.

⁹ In 2002, Canadian educationalist Peter Seixas rejected the claim that history should be for the creation of collective memory, and instead favoured the promotion of historical consciousness, which he outlined in detail in Peter Seixas, ‘The Purposes of Teaching Canadian History’ in *Canadian Social Studies*, xxxvi, no. 2. For a discussion of the rhetoric and reality of History education in the United States see Barton, ‘Wars and rumors of war: Making sense of history education in the United States’. For a specific example see a 2014 controversy over a Colorado school board’s decision to alter the history programme to promote patriotism and respect for authority, *The Guardian*, 24 Sept. 2014,

review essay on this issue, Stéphane Levesque posed a critical question regarding history's function in the school setting: "Is history a disciplinary inquiry into the past? Or is it an uncritical heritage exercise meant to enhance identity and advance political claims?"¹⁰ Likewise, James Wertsch, in his article on the 'History Wars' of England during the 1980s debated "whether the goal of history instruction is to promote critical thought and reflection on texts- that is, to engage in the practice of analytical history- or to inculcate collective memory grounded in 'state-approved civic truth'."¹¹ This divide was encapsulated in David Lowenthal's distinction between 'heritage' and 'history'.¹² 'Heritage' referred to the unexamined and uncritical use of the past to deny or support present interests, and establish the rights of one group or another. 'History' on the other hand was an attempt to recreate the past through the critical appraisal of surviving evidence. It was to be impartial and universal, with no one group having a monopoly over 'truth'. 'History' was to be "public, subject to debate and falsifiable. Its truth claims rest on historical method and the historical record through documentary and artificial sources".¹³

Leaving Lowenthal's distinctions to one side temporarily, the teaching of history has widely been accepted as being essential to the creation of national identities.¹⁴ In their important 2013 edited collection on this topic, Mario Carretero et al divided the teaching of history into three distinct approaches. The 'romantic approach' of the mid-nineteenth century "promotes national identity and social cohesion within a world that is organized into nation-states." In the 1970s, a further 'empirical approach' was developed which viewed the teaching of history as the transmission of historical knowledge. Finally, the recent 'civic approach' focuses on "the role of

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/24/denver-students-walkout-protest-history-school-board>, viewed 01/10/14.

¹⁰ Stéphane Lévesque, 'In search of a purpose for school history' in *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, xxxvii, no. 3 (2005), p. 350.

¹¹ Elizabeth A. Cole, 'Reconciliation and History Education' in Elizabeth A. Cole (ed.), *Teaching the violent past: history education and reconciliation* (Lanham ; Plymouth, 2007), p. 19.

¹² Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*.

¹³ Peter N. Stearns, Peter C. Seixas and Samuel S. Wineburg (eds), *Knowing, teaching, and learning history: national and international perspectives* (New York ; London, 2000), p. 24.

¹⁴ Mario Carretero, Mikel Asensio and María Rodríguez Moneo (eds), *History Education and the Construction of National Identities* (Charlotte, NC, 2013), p. 2.

history in developing students' civic competence." Carretero et al ultimately contended that "the traditional romantic view is still prevalent in history education."¹⁵

In a broader context, history, as noted by Benedict Anderson, was seen as central to the creation of a 'collective memory' necessary to connect the 'imagined community' of a nation.¹⁶ A feature of how school history has been consistently framed, especially (though not exclusively) in post-independence societies, is the tendency to transmit a positive story about the national past, with the desire that this "will inculcate in young people a sense of loyalty to the state; a reassuring and positive sense of identity and belonging; and a sense of social solidarity with fellow citizens."¹⁷ In their edited collection of essays on the nature of European school textbooks, Volker Berghahn and Hanna Schissler demonstrated how school history across Europe has been used on repeated occasions as a means of state socialization, geared to the teaching of the national past to generate an identification with the nation and the state.¹⁸ This was strikingly identified in the work of Gregory Wegner on the teaching of history in Pre- and Post-Nazi Germany.¹⁹

However, this contention that history is used to promote a state-driven nationalist ideology is not universally agreed upon. Keith Barton, in his comparative study between History education in Northern Ireland, New Zealand and the United States identified three contrasting approaches to history education: "the first assumes than one task of school history is to 'provide' students an identity, almost always conceived of in national terms." By learning about the history

¹⁵ Mario Carretero, Mikel Asensio and María Rodríguez Moneo, 'History Education and the Construction of National Identity' in *History Education and the Construction of National Identities* (Charlotte, NC, 2013), pp 3–4. For the first approach see also Keith C. Barton, 'A Sociocultural Perspective on Children's Understanding of Historical Change: Comparative Findings from Northern Ireland and the United States' in *American Educational Research Journal*, xxxviii, no. 4 (2001), pp 881–913.; The second approach is considered within Peter Lee, 'Putting principles into practice: Understanding history' in M. Susan Donovan and John D. Bransford (eds), *How students learn: History in the classroom* (Washington, D.C., 2005), pp 31–77.

¹⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (Rev. ed, London, 2006).

¹⁷ Terry Haydn, 'History in Schools and the Problem of "The Nation"', in *Educaitonal Sciences*, Vol. 2, (2012), pp 276-289

¹⁸ Volker R. Berghahn and Hanna Schissler (eds), *Perceptions of history: international textbook research on Britain, Germany and the United States* (Oxford, 1987); See also Robert Phillips, *History teaching, nationhood and the state: a study in educational politics* (London, 1998), pp 2–11.

¹⁹ Wegner, 'Germany's Past Contested: The Soviet-American Conflict in Berlin over History Curriculum Reform, 1945–48'; Wegner, 'The Legacy of Nazism and the History Curriculum in the East German Secondary Schools'; Wegner, *Anti-Semitism and Schooling Under the Third Reich*.

of the nation, students would learn what it meant to be “an American or Russian or Netherlander, and presumably they will then give their allegiance to the nation.” The second approach worked in direct contrast with this, arguing that “attempts to impose identity are likely doomed to failure, because students have pre-existing identities that are grounded in ethnicity, religion, or nationalities other than those represented in the curriculum.”²⁰ This approach resulted either in students actively resisting the historical identity proposed at school, or their alternative identity influencing how they make sense of the school history that they learn.²¹ The third approach regards History Education as being separate from national identity.²² David Pratt rejected the use of school history to promote specific political agendas, contending that “where the stated rationale for an objective is purely political it is usually recognized as spurious, even by its proponents.”²³

Lévesque argued that the function of history education internationally changed considerably in the post-World War II period, and drove the later resurgence in this area of academic inquiry.²⁴ In the Irish context, this situation did not materialise in the same manner, as shall be discussed. In the Northern Irish context, the concept of history as a ‘disciplinary enquiry’ was not forthcoming in a curriculum and evaluation system devised to promote the accumulation and memorisation of factual knowledge. School History was not seemingly meant to be about developing ‘little historians’ but rather was seen as a way of informing students about their collective past, as embodied in the teaching of national history.²⁵ This echoed the Irish context between the 1920s and late 1950s. As outlined in the 1960 Council of Education report, the chief aim of school history was not the training of scientific historians or the critical spirit, except in a broad way, but the development of the civic and moral sense.²⁶ In many ways, the approach to

²⁰ Keith C. Barton, ‘School History as a Resource in Constructing Identities: Implications of Research from the United States, Northern Ireland, and New Zealand’ in Mario Carretero, Mikel Asensio and María Rodríguez Moneo (eds), *History Education and the Construction of National Identities* (Charlotte, NC, 2013), p. 94.

²¹ For a more in-depth study of this, see Barton & McCully, ‘History, identity, and the school curriculum in Northern Ireland’.

²² Barton, ‘School History as a Resource in Constructing Identities’, p. 94.

²³ David Pratt, ‘The Functions of Teaching History’ in *The History Teacher*, vii, no. 3 (1974), p. 414.

²⁴ Lévesque, ‘In search of a purpose for school history’, p. 350.

²⁵ Smith, *Reckoning with the past*, pp 19, 24.

²⁶ Report of Council of Education, p. 130.

history education in the past in Ireland could be categorised as an exercise in ‘heritage’ education.²⁷ In line with Anderson, and Barton’s first approach, the teaching of Irish history could then be seen as integral to state formation, and the cementing of specific government-held ideologies; a means through which to inculcate the emerging generations of Irish men and women to a specific view of their own culture and history in the wake of independence.

History education, it has been noted, faces a near-universal tension between two demands: the need to provide young people with a usable past, versus the need to promote criticality and reflection on texts; that is to promote analytical history. What is more, “The need for a usable past, which implies some kind of master narrative that is both officially sanctioned and not exclusively negative, is genuine and cannot be ignored, especially in a community involved in nation building after widespread violence.”²⁸ It has been argued that of the numerous different purposes of history education²⁹ the model most common in a post-independence context is that of ‘citizenship transmission’.³⁰ The rhetoric surrounding Irish history in secondary schools during this period fits with this. The post-colonial desire to create a Gaelic nation, focussing on the language, literature, and history of the Irish people permeated the decisions as regards the newly outlined curriculum. The Irish example coheres with international scholarship, where reform of the ‘national subjects’; the arts, literature, and (notably), history and geography, were considered crucial as “these contribute to consolidating a common sense of national identity.”³¹

[Debates within Irish historiography- the Revisionists:](#)

Having considered the wider scholarship regarding the purpose of history education internationally, it is also important to situate this research in the context of Irish historiography in particular. Debates surrounding the overall purpose of history and history writing had garnered

²⁷ Garrison, ‘Struggles of immigration at the doorstep of Irish education’, pp 189–90.

²⁸ Cole (ed.), *Teaching the violent past*, p. 19.

²⁹ For an overview of the different purposes for school history see Carmen Gloria Zúñiga, Tom O’Donoghue and Simon Clarke, *A Study of the Secondary School History Curriculum in Chile from Colonial Times to the Present* (Rotterdam, 2015), pp 36–7.

³⁰ Gerald Marker and Howard Mehlinger, ‘Social Studies’ in Philip Jackson (ed.), *Handbook of research on curriculum* (New York, 1992), pp 830–51.

³¹ Alan Smith and Tony Vaux, *Education, conflict and international development* (London, 2003), p. 2.; See also Alan McCully, ‘History Teaching, Conflict and the Legacy of the Past’ in *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, vii, no. 2 (2012), p. 145.

significant attention in Ireland from the late 1930s onwards. Irish history and the teaching thereof in schools especially emerged as a key ideological battleground in academic circles in the 1960s, particularly as the northern crisis escalated from 1968.³² Claims abounded about the faults of the Irish educational system, in part, as a means to justify the new Revisionist approach favoured by the historical establishment in Irish universities. This section outlines what this approach entailed, and the major arguments within this historiographical debate. It then considers the relation between this and how Irish history was portrayed in secondary schools. This thesis can then be partially understood as a critical engagement with the narratives against which the ‘Revisionist’ historians (as they became known) were supposedly reacting to. It also considers contemporary counterarguments to the revisionists, namely concerning the national purpose that history was to serve, before situating school history within this wider debate.

Central to the tensions which emerged within Irish historiography was a growing belief that history, as a discipline, should be solely based on empiric research, subject to verification, and should be about the rigorous analysis of the surviving documents, presented in a style of writing devoid of emotional sensationalism. This approach emerged in the early twentieth century. The academic work and practices of Edmund Curtis at Trinity, and Eoin MacNeill at UCD among others were early examples of this.³³ It reached more widespread popularity within Irish academia from the late 1930s onwards, chiefly amongst a number of British-trained historians such as T.W. Moody, Professor of Irish history at TCD, Edward Martin, and R. Dudley Edwards at UCD, in line with the development of the journal *Irish Historical Studies* under their

³² That is not to suggest that alterations in how history was being written was a direct result of the outbreak of the Troubles. Accusations that some historians were abandoning the nationalist canon in the interests of appeasement in the troubled northern situation, as noted by Kenneth Milne, “ignored [the] fact that much of the re-thinking of near contemporary Irish history pre-dated by several years the present phase of northern unrest, which is generally taken to have begun in 1968.” Milne, *New approaches to the teaching of Irish history*, p. 38.

³³ For a consideration of the growth of Irish historiography in the pre-*IHS* period, see Ciaran Brady, ‘Arrested Development: Competing Histories and the Formation of the Irish Historical Profession, 1801–1938’ in Tibor Frank and Frank Hadler (eds), *Disputed territories and shared pasts: overlapping national histories in modern Europe* (Writing the nation, Basingstoke, 2011), pp 275–302.

stewardship.³⁴ This attempt to be ‘value free’ led to a style noted for its austere, clinical, and ‘sanitised’ nature. Developing from this, a further phase of Irish historical writing emerged in the late 1960s and 1970s under a new generation of university students, also trained in British universities, who “added to the earlier ‘value-free’ approach a deliberate iconoclasm, a practiced irony that juxtaposes incidents and phrases in ways calculated to convey an ultra-scepticism, even cynicism, about the national problem.”³⁵ FSL Lyons and Roy Foster were prominent amongst these.

The overall goal of the ‘Revisionists’, as the above group became labelled, was epitomised in a 1978 address by Moody, in the distinction he drew between ‘myth’ and ‘history’. As argued, ‘good history’ was a matter of ‘facing the facts’, with ‘myth’ being a way of refusing to do this.³⁶ For Moody, it was imperative that historians move away from the myths of Irish history and instead begin studying them.³⁷ Myth criticism, as one historian explained, “brought with it a belief that historians could establish a more objective truth that was capable of countering the impact which myth had made in formulating the nationalist understanding of the Irish past.”³⁸ This position was summarised by Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh as follows:

the particular task which the advocates of the ‘revisionist enterprise’ see as desirable and necessary...is that of confronting the myths and legends which constituted an obsessively determinist nationalist historiography; an historiography which...saw the underlying logic of Irish political history as the urge towards an Independent Irish state, and which rested on the assumption that this urge towards national sovereignty (‘freedom’) was itself predicated on an enduring and ineradicable ‘Irish national consciousness’ which, though drawing on different or constantly

³⁴ D. George Boyce and Alan O’Day (eds), *Modern Irish History, Revisionism and the Revisionist Controversy*, (London, 1996), (London, 1996), p. 6.; This is outlined in further detail in Chapter 9.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ciaran Brady, ““Constructive and Instructive”: The Dilemma of Ireland’s First “New Historians”” in Brady (ed.), *Interpreting Irish history: the debate on historical revisionism 1938-1994* (Dublin, 1994), p. 7.

³⁷ T.W. Moody, ‘Irish History and Irish Mythology’ in Brady (ed.), *Interpreting Irish history*, p. 84.

³⁸ Farrell Moran, ‘History, memory and education’, p. 213.

shifting elements of cultural particularity down through the centuries, retained for all that a core of ‘national identity’ sufficiently strong to sustain the urge to ‘nationhood’.

There was also a ‘robust scepticism’ towards and revision of the ‘valorisation of those who, through the centuries, could be presented as having been most committed, or most uncompromisingly committed, to achieving this freedom, this Irish national sovereignty.’³⁹

For Lyons, these ‘myths’ were not simply inaccurate understandings of the past, but rather, represented a more sinister enterprise, being cultural artefacts of dangerous significance. As noted by Ciaran Brady in his overview of the Revisionist debates, by the late 1970s, a view existed amongst certain historians that “false images of Ireland’s past were undermining its present and mortgaging its future.” Lyons, and others such as Ronan Fanning in the 1970s and 1980s, both directly and indirectly attributed the ‘mythistory’ to which they opposed with instigating much of the Troubles in the North.⁴⁰ Nor was such a view held by historians only. In a 1973 conference on ‘The teaching of history in Great Britain and Ireland at secondary level with special reference to prejudice and bias’, Minister for Education Richard Burke, warned about “the danger of romanticising the physical force element in our history and thus of glorifying violence as a means to the attainment of political ends.”⁴¹ This romanticisation was especially seen to occur within the education system.

Revisionist historians condemned Irish history as they understood it to have been portrayed in secondary schools until the late 1960s. Lyons, speaking in Queen’s University Belfast in 1979, had ‘serious reservations’ owing to the fact that “the historiographical revolution has been slow in reaching the schools.”⁴² The education system was seen by the Revisionists as a particularly potent avenue through which such ‘false images’ were being propounded, with the

³⁹ Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh, ‘Irish Historical “Revisionism”: State of the Art of Ideological Project?’ in Brady (ed.), *Interpreting Irish history*, p. 312.

⁴⁰ Farrell Moran, ‘History, memory and education’, See also F. S. L. Lyons, ‘The Burden of Our History’ in Brady (ed.), *Interpreting Irish history*, pp 87–104 specifically pp 91-2.

⁴¹ *Education Times*, 30 August 1973; See also John Darby, ‘History at World and Local Level and the problem of bias’, *Education Times*, 24 April 1975, p.16, quoted in McMahon, ‘A review of changes in the pattern of history teaching’, p. 78.

⁴² Lyons, ‘The Burden of Our History’, p. 92.

lessons on Irish history being understood as exercises in myth propagation.⁴³ In Lyons' view, students had for decades been learning little more than "travesties of Irish history", to the extent "that it has sometimes taken a full undergraduate course to undo the mischief."⁴⁴ Thus, his critique of wider scholarship in Irish history was also demonstrative of his attitude with regards to school history. This is not an entirely misplaced reservation, especially, as discussed in Chapter 4, considering how the same textbooks remained in operation in Irish schools for the better part of forty years. However, by directly connecting school history and the Northern Troubles, these figures were implying that Irish history in Irish schools actively promoted a militant anti-English and anti-Protestant bias, through its simplified understanding of the past. There are a number of issues with such an assessment, not least of which, the ready acceptance that what was propounded was an uncritical exposition of a naïve and mythic narrative of Irish history. Moreover, the causal link between history teaching and the development of the Troubles in the North was not unanimously accepted.

Counter-arguments to the Revisionist viewpoint were evident within academia at the time. Brendan Bradshaw for example was fiercely against Steven Ellis' application of the myth-criticism to Medieval Ireland and governance.⁴⁵ Bradshaw criticised the implication that Irish resistance was neither unified nor positive. Ultimately, in his eyes, Ellis' underlying message was "that in our relations with Britain on the Irish question the Irish have been very much at fault. This is the popular image of historical revisionism."⁴⁶ As contended by one summary of Bradshaw's position, the attempts by Moody et al, and as later championed by Ellis and Lyons, to instil 'value-free' history, led to "a selectivity that omits inconvenient aspects of the country's

⁴³ Farrell Moran, 'History, memory and education', p. 213; "Applying themselves in an attempt to overthrow the 'errors' and 'myths' of nationalist history, many Irish historians now seek to liberate the Irish once again, their target being the national 'story' which had been developed and propagated by Irish educators some eighty to one hundred years ago

⁴⁴ Quoted in Magee, *The teaching of Irish history in Irish schools*, p. 3.

⁴⁵ See Stephen Ellis, 'Nationalist Historiography in the English and Gaelic Worlds in the Late Middle Ages', in Brady (ed.), *Interpreting Irish History*, pp 161-80.

⁴⁶ Brendan Bradshaw, 'Nationalism and Historical Scholarship in Modern Ireland' in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxvi, no. 104 (1989), pp 329-351.; See also, Desmond Fennell, 'Against Revisionism' in Brady (ed.), *Interpreting Irish history*, pp 184-5.

past thereby laying the foundations of an interpretation unsympathetic to the suffering, struggle, heroism and sacrifice of those who liberated the nation.”⁴⁷ Bradshaw believed that such an approach implicitly chose to avoid concepts of heritage and culture, while also avoiding controversial or traumatic issues. This was seen not merely as a flawed preoccupation with the new methods, but a deliberate attempt to undermine the held beliefs of the community. As Ciaran Brady defined it

In claiming their methods were justified as an attempt to create a ‘value-free’ historical science, Moody and Edwards were, Bradshaw claimed, at best intellectually and politically naïve. And over time, the vanity of their efforts had become obvious in the practices of those they trained. Under the pretence of objectivity their followers had distorted or buried the heritage which the community had received from the past.

The result of all this, according to Bradshaw, was that these historians did not simply “perpetuate the injustices suffered by generations past”, but “denigrate[d] the achievements and future aspirations of their successors who had successfully asserted their independence from Ireland’s colonial past.”⁴⁸

Others, such as Desmond Fennell were obstinately opposed to the ‘revisionist’ approach, seeing their ostensibly ‘value-free’ history as simply an alternative ideology. It was not, he contended, “primarily the presentation of new facts, nor again...the refutation of factually false historical ‘myths’.” Rather it was a “new *moral interpretation* of the known major facts, and the general course of events, especially in the last century and a half...it is a new allocation, with regard to the known major facts and the general course of events, or *rightness* and *wrongness*, as between the ideas and actions of the Irish and the intentions and actions of the British (or Ulster British).”⁴⁹ Through its iconoclasm, and attempt to undermine the nationalist understanding of Irish history prevalent during the twentieth century, the revisionists sought “to show that British

⁴⁷ D. George Boyce, and Alan O’Day, (eds.) *Modern Irish History, Revisionism and the Revisionist Controversy*, (London, 1996), p. 6; See also, Brady, ““Constructive and Instructive”: The Dilemma of Ireland’s First “New Historians””, p. 6.

⁴⁸ Cited in Ibid., p. 11.

⁴⁹ Fennell, ‘Against Revisionism’, pp 185–6.

rule of Ireland was not, as we have believed, a *bad* thing, but a mixture of necessity, good intentions and bungling; and that Irish resistance to it was not, as we have believed, a *good* thing, but a mixture of wrong-headed idealism and unnecessary, often cruel, violence.” Ultimately, revisionism, in his eyes, represented “the historiography of the Irish counter-revolution”⁵¹

Fennell reserved his chief criticism for Lyons’ ‘theory of historical causation’; that the Troubles in the North was due “not by Britain’s conniving with the Ulster unionist rebellion of 1912 and ignoring the will of most of the people of Ireland, and particularly of the nationalist Irish in the Six Counties; nor by the scandalous fifty years of British rule in Northern Ireland; nor again by the continuing refusal of Britain, even in 1971, to recognise the Irish nation and its rights there.” As he contended, for Lyons “Ireland had been brought to its present pass in the North by theories of revolution, of nationality, and of history, which we Irish had entertained and must now re-examine; the present dire situation had been caused, in other words, by *ourselves*, by the ideas and convictions inspiring our freedom struggle, our nationalism.”⁵³⁵⁴

His criticisms were grounded in a differing belief as to the actual purpose that history was to serve in society. This echoes the debates seen earlier in this chapter, as to the purpose of school history in particular. Fennell, an ardent nationalist, was a strong advocate of using history to promote national well-being. “Every nation in its here and now, the people...have needs with respect to their national history. They need for their collective well-being an image of their national past which sustains and energises them personally, and which bonds them together by making their inherited nation seem a value worth adhering to and working for.”⁵⁵

It should not be said that the revisionists fundamentally succeeded in altering how Irish history was taught in secondary schools, or at least not in the manner in which Fennell’s describes them. Many of the features of school history to which the ‘Revisionists’ were opposed, were actively championed by others. These features, such as the manner in which history was moulded

⁵¹ Ibid, pp 184–6.

⁵³ Ibid, p. 185.

⁵⁴ Ibid,

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 187

into specific narratives, with the desired effect of developing citizens of a nation, and the moral and civic implications that were assumed within this, were not necessarily negatives in need of correction, but were seen by some, even in late 1970s and early 1980s, as justified positives. Bradshaw was another proponent of such a viewpoint. The stressing of an Irish resistance narrative was to him a positive aspect of how Irish history should be portrayed, through its emotive capabilities, and refusal to downplay atrocities.

However, while such criticisms were evident, and are important to acknowledge, they were not nearly as influential as the views of those they opposed. The predominant theory of history writing in Ireland (if it can be called such), was in line with the Revisionists, with historians such as Foster, Lyons, and Fanning remaining the predominant figures within Irish academic history in the latter half of the twentieth century.

Irish history in schools, pre-Independence:

The setting of a full outline course of Irish history in its own right in 1924, with the exclusion of British and Imperial history, has been seen as being ‘in full accord with the state policy of employing education, and history within it, to create an ‘Irish Ireland’.⁵⁶ This was seen to be in direct counteraction to the National Board of Education, and its predecessor, the Intermediate Board, whereby Irish history had been neglected as part of what was interpreted as a deliberate policy of Anglicisation. As part of this chapter’s contextualisation of Irish history in secondary schools post-Independence, it is important to understand what history was taught in the wider education system previously in operation.

History was banned entirely from the national schools until 1900. This situation was ultimately not allowed to continue, according to the belief that ‘history was too important a subject to be neglected on the curriculum’.⁵⁷ However, despite being introduced in some form that year, History was not a distinct subject, but was a component part of the English Curriculum, with

⁵⁶ Francis T. Holohan, ‘History Teaching in the Irish Free State 1922-35’ in *History Ireland*, ii, no. 4 (1994), p. 54.

⁵⁷ Patrick Callan, ‘Aspects of the Transmission of History in Ireland during the latter half of the nineteenth century’ in *Irish Educational Studies*, vi, no. 2 (1986), p. 60.

English History (as the only subject topic) being studied in a similar vein to English grammar, or English literature.⁵⁸ Until 1908, Irish history was not allowed to be taught in either national or secondary schools. This omission was criticised widely in the Irish press of the time. The *Freeman's Journal* in 1906 for instance, fiercely condemned 'the systematic manner in which Irish history is ignored by the various examination Boards of this country'.⁵⁹

While some form of Irish history was allowed to be taught after 1908, the Board of Education restricted the texts from which this was done, through its Commissioners of National Inspectors, under the guise of providing 'non-denominational education'. Irish history was frequently seen as politically dangerous, and many textbooks which the Commissioners disapproved of were banned from being used. The effective system of inspections subsequently ensured compliance to this.⁶⁰ The Commissioners did not commission their own works however, meaning that they were "to a certain extent, at the mercy of the commercial printers, who were under pressure from the public to produce works reflecting its concerns."⁶¹

The above discussion is focussed on primary-level education. The Intermediate Board, as noted in the above *Freeman's journal* article, were further criticised because Irish history was ostensibly a possible subject for study, but was increasingly omitted from consideration on the exam papers set; the students' results of which, it is important to bear in mind, dictated a teacher's salary. As questions were not being asked, teachers increasingly chose not to teach the subject at all, being seen as an exercise in futility, which in turn meant that Irish history in secondary schools was more or less a dead letter until 1924. The restructuring of the course in this year under the new Department of Education, and especially the central position granted to Irish history was therefore revolutionary, in comparison to the system formerly in operation under the Board of Education.

⁵⁸ See Callan, 'Aspects of the Transmission of History in Ireland during the latter half of the nineteenth century'; See also, Doherty, 'National Identity and the Study of Irish History', p. 328.;

⁵⁹ *Freeman's Journal*, 21 June 1906

⁶⁰ Doherty, 'National Identity and the Study of Irish History', pp 328–33.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 330; See also Idem, 'The Irish history textbook, 1900-1960, problems and development'.

Purpose of Irish history teaching in Secondary Schools, 1924-69:

John O'Callaghan, in his short work *Teaching Irish Independence*, one of the few published works to address the issue of school history and its implications in Ireland, argued that the purpose of school history was directly political: to create loyal subjects to the new state and to justify and preserve the new state's existence.⁶² If education as a whole, as argued in part by Pierre Bourdieu and Jean Claude Passeron, is geared towards maintaining the dominant social cultures of a nation,⁶³ then history was seen as a way through which loyalty to this nation could be maintained. History as a subject cohered with this particular aspect of Bourdieusian educational theory, as it could legitimise the power structures in place, by promoting the history of the dominant groups. This is important considering the new state's need for consolidation.

This would fit into the belief of Marc Ferro, whose seminal text *The use and abuse of history, or, how the past is taught*, theorised the intrinsically political use of history in nation-state building. According to Ferro, societies use school history to condition the minds of its citizens. Control of the past means mastery of the present, and justification of legal claims.⁶⁴ Ferro considered particular examples of how history was taught to children in a number of different contexts, “ranging chronologically from remote antiquity to the present, and geographically from Europe to Africa and Asia.”⁶⁵ According to Ferro, the dominant societal powers, be they state, church, political party or private interest, “are concerned to censor the vision of the past in order to inculcate their values with the goal of consolidating their position”⁶⁶ The Orwellian contention that “Who controls the past, controls the future, who controls the present controls the past” was seemingly being furthered, through Ferro’s understanding of school history in the different

⁶² O'Callaghan, *Teaching Irish independence*, p. 59.

⁶³ See Pierre Bourdieu and Jean Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in education, society and culture*, trans. Richard Nice (2nd ed. (1990), London, 1990). Michael Burawoy and Karl van Holdt, *Conversations with Bourdieu: The Johannesburg Movement*, (Johannesburg, 2012), ‘Part V - Pedagogy Of The Oppressed: Freire Meets Bourdieu’ <http://burawoy.berkeley.edu/Bourdieu/6.Freire.pdf> viewed, 09-01-2016.

Bourdieu and Passeron were also deeply concerned with the issue of social reproduction and how there are more favourable processes of social reproduction for people in privileged positions. This was articulated in their concept of ‘Cultural Capital’.

⁶⁴ Ferro, *The use and abuse of history, or, How the past is taught to children*, p. vii.

⁶⁵ Dr Beverley Southgate, review of The Use and Abuse of History, or, How the Past is Taught, (review no. 441) <http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/441>, Date accessed: 14 May, 2018.

⁶⁶ O'Callaghan, *Teaching Irish independence*, p. 9., citing Ferro.

contexts which he assessed. In the Irish context, by actively promoting Irish history for the first time, the new state could be seen to be justifying its existence. The degree to which the Irish example cohered with Ferro's appraisals of censorship is a different matter, especially considering how the major parties post-independence all originated from the same political movement.

Irish History was (according to official rhetoric) the most important subject, after the Irish language, to this 'policy of Gaelicisation' (discussed in the next chapter) being not only complementary to Irish, but integral to the possible success of reviving the language. As Eoin MacNeill is oft-quoted as declaring in 1911, "From our point of view [The Gaelic League], the history of Ireland, at least generally felt is almost a necessary adjunct to the learning of Irish, and I think that ignorance of Irish history is the chief cause of want of interest in the Irish language. To anyone who had not a feeling of Irish history, the learning of Irish is mere philology."⁶⁸

This was representative of the official view within the Irish Free State. Similar declarations were repeated in official records upon the initiation of the new government, and specifically with regards to Irish education. In 1932, Toirdhealbhach Ó Raifeartaigh, Secondary school inspector (later, Secretary for the Department of Education) stated that "History is almost as important as the Irish language itself. History is one of the cornerstones of Nationality, as it is in England, in Germany, in France, even in the United States."⁶⁹ Speaking of primary level, Pádraig Ó Broin, Gaelic League member and Chief executive officer for National Education declared in the official Statement of the Commission of National Education, 1922 that "It is the intention of the new government to work with all its might for the strengthening of the national fibre by giving the language, history, music and traditions of Ireland their national place in the life of Irish schools."⁷⁰ This interplay between history and the Irish language, for distinctly

⁶⁸ IE UCDA/ LA1/Q/347, 11 Oct. 1911, Eoin MacNeill, on the teaching of Irish history. (Published also in 'An Claidheamh Solais')

⁶⁹ *Dundalk Examiner*, 17 September 1932,

⁷⁰ D.P.S., E 58/33/24; *The School Weekly*, 11 Feb. 1922; Pádraig Ó Broin,

nationalist purposes was furthered in the rhetoric surrounding the textbooks to be used in secondary schools as well.

Cultural nationalist aspirations were not the only driving ideologies behind secondary school history (or at least what school history represented in people's minds). History was significantly seen from a religious standpoint as well, with the inculcation of Christian morality being stressed. The most influential proponent of such a claim was Rev. Timothy J. Corcoran, a leading figure in education in the Irish Free State. Alongside his call for a wider perspective with regards to the content of history in secondary schools,⁷¹ Corcoran notably argued that "the teaching of history in the new secondary school curriculum should embody a Catholic spirit and a Catholic outlook.⁷² He called for all Catholic schools to provide a course in history "wherein the Church will have its fullest place as the directing force in all civilizations and progress."⁷³ History was to be considered from a moral perspective in order to create upstanding members of a Catholic society. As he declared in 1928; "The constant directing and training of the exercise of moral judgment on the facts of history, under the control of a teacher who is self-disciplined enough to avoid dictatorial decisions when liberty of opinion has good reasons on its side, will obviously tend to produce the citizen who will not fear to be explicitly Catholic in the field of social action." The intended goal was to develop students who would "later on not be inclined to shirk the use of moral decisions on the facts of public life. Training in judgment on the facts of history can thus be made an excellent preparation for full Catholic action in adult years."⁷⁴

Corcoran's view of using history to teach moral values and hone one's moral judgment tied into a wider belief of the Catholic hierarchy as to the purpose of education. The Association of Catholic Managers, which involved the clerical and religious managers of schools, and worked closely with the bishops, proclaimed in 1924 "that the only satisfactory system of education for

⁷¹ This is discussed in Chapter 3.

⁷² Rev. Timothy J. Corcoran, S.J., 'The New Secondary Programmes in Ireland: the teaching of history' in *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, xii, no. 46 (1923), p. 258.; See Seosamh Ó Néill, 'Father T.J. Corcoran: An appreciation' in *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, xxxii (1943), pp 153–62.

⁷³ Rev. Timothy J. Corcoran, S.J., 'Advanced schoolwork in history', in *Irish Monthly*, lvii, December 1929, p.626.

⁷⁴ Corcoran, 'Moral Training through History', p. 624.

Catholics is one wherein Catholic children are taught in Catholic schools by Catholic teachers, under Catholic control.” They were confident that “an Irish government established by the people, while safeguarding the material interests of the new state, will always recognise and respect the principles which must regulate and govern Catholic education.”⁷⁵

These views also fitted into the wider societal context which as one influential historian argued, retained a “remarkable consensus” in the years 1923-37; a time when there was “overwhelming agreement that traditional Catholic values should be maintained, if necessary by legislation”.⁷⁶ As Minister for Education, J.M. O’Sullivan noted in 1931, “We are very lucky in this country that we have a system that satisfies the legitimate demands of the Church and State... Anything that would tend even to shake a system of that kind I would consider disastrous in the extreme.”⁷⁷ Corcoran called for national history to be the main focus of school history.⁷⁸ He further maintained that “the teaching of history must, in Irish Catholic schools, be frankly and fully Catholic.”⁷⁹ This was seen by John O’Callaghan as conclusive proof of the political-religious use of history and the inherent religious bias to be propounded in Free State schools, at the behest of both the state and the dominant Catholic Church.⁸⁰ This cannot be said to be an accurate reading of Corcoran. It was not intended that the Catholic Church were to have complete control over school history without qualification. It was more that the history of the Irish nation was to be associated with Catholicism. It made perfect sense, in the context of Corcoran stressing the importance of social rather than purely military history. If one is to examine the lives of the

⁷⁵ See John Mescal, *Religion in the Irish system of education* (Dublin : London, 1957), p. 135. See also Wall, ‘The Bishops and Education’, p. 8.

⁷⁶ Whyte, *Church and state in modern Ireland, 1923-1979*, p. 60.; See also Mark Finnane, ‘The Carrigan Committee of 1930-31 and the “Moral Condition of the Saorstát”’ in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxxii, no. 128 (2001), p. 519.

⁷⁷ *Dáil Éireann debates*, vol.38, col.1902, 27 May 1931.

⁷⁸ Rev. Timothy J. Corcoran, ‘The Teaching of Modern Irish History’ in *The Irish Monthly*, li, no. 604 (1923), pp 494–5. “[The] main object of attention in the school treatment of history must be national rather than international. The proper corrective, which will keep this basis of treatment sound and healthy, is the linkage of Irish history with Catholic history, rather than with European. The Catholic standpoint will not fail to give our race and its work its due and ample credit from the time of O’Connell, through the period of the Vatican council, and in the missionary enterprises of constructive Catholicity in both hemispheres.”

⁷⁹ Corcoran, S.J., ‘New Programme: History’, p. 260.

⁸⁰ O’Callaghan, *Teaching Irish independence*, pp 23–25.

Irish, their customs, their literature, then one needs to realise the centrality of Catholicism in the lives of the majority of these individuals. Irish History then becomes Catholic, as an understanding of the faith is required to understand the actions and mind-sets of the faithful. These Catholic overtones were specifically cited as being prevalent in many of the central history textbooks used at the time, with members of the Protestant religion having “undoubtedly some grounds for grievances” in this regard.⁸¹ The course undeniably maintained a character more favourable to Catholic sensibilities, as Catholics made up the overwhelming majority of the school going population at all levels, while Protestants constituted merely two percent by the late 1940s.⁸²

This belief that school history should be used for expressly religious and moral purposes was not unanimously accepted however. One 1939 critique of the school curriculum contended that the purpose of history in Ireland, above all else, should be achieving clarity of expression.⁸³ A further critic of the moralistic approach was historian James Johnston Auchmuty. In his 1940 work *The Teaching of History*, Auchmuty specifically argued that history should *not* be taught for its moral value, as this would result in the distortion of the facts and personalities involved, for an ideological purpose. He continued however to state that “Should it be felt essential that some moral lesson should be drawn for small children, better far that it should be based on legendary fiction than on a misrepresentation of historical fact.”⁸⁴ It was only at primary level that Auchmuty believed the moral point could be stressed, without distorting the real image of actual people.⁸⁵ When it came to secondary school, history was supposed to be about “[the] ability to weigh evidence and to come to an opinion” though he acknowledged how this became less

⁸¹ UCD Archives, P7/C/152, Mulcahy Papers,

⁸² Martina Relihan, ‘The Church of Ireland, The State and Education in Irish Language and Irish History, 1920s-1950s’ in Deirdre Raftery and Karin Fischer (eds), *Educating Ireland: schooling and social change, 1700-2000* (Kildare, 2014), p. 162. These figures pertain to primary and secondary education combined.

⁸³ *Irish Times*, ‘Reform of School Curriculum’, 4 March 1939.

⁸⁴ Auchmuty, *The teaching of history*, p. 8.

⁸⁵ Ibid., pp 14–15. Auchmuty specifically called for the teaching of ‘mythology’ for this purpose, rather than legend, as the latter, according to him, was grounded in fact long ago, whereas mythology had no historical foundation.

likely when faced with the reality of the exams, and of overly assertive teachers.⁸⁶ Despite the merit of his arguments, Auchmuty was not influential, except among teachers who pursued the H.Dip at Trinity.⁸⁷ He emigrated to Australia shortly after the publication of this short work. His general critique ultimately proved ineffective in altering any official policies on the matter.

Ultimately, History was seen as central to the religious ethos maintained in the majority of Irish secondary schools – with the study of the subject being seen as morally beneficial.⁸⁸ Its mandatory position in the curriculum was deemed necessary, to ensure the moral development of students in second-level education, as part of the wider societal project to preserve Irish culture, its mores and traditional principles from the threat of ‘secular modernisation’.⁸⁹ This final point suggests that the inherently moral position of the history course in secondary schools was as much a product of who controlled the schools as of the formal curriculum. Both Protestant and Catholic schools were to be taught the same basic material for the central examination. As an analysis of the syllabus demonstrates, religion was not the sole focus of the course. Moreover, while the promotion of certain cultural aspirations from a nationalist perspective may have been expected, especially if the Free State is considered a ‘post-colonial’ society, the curriculum was not simply a vehicle of religious interests. The analysis of the Certificate examination questions further demonstrates this.⁹⁰

Historian Francis Holohan contended that the role of history in the policy of Gaelicisation was far more pronounced at primary than at secondary level, owing to “the realisation that it was more efficacious to commence at the younger age level, and from the fact that secondary schools

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 10.; Auchmuty’s book was written during the Second World War. He was firmly against neutrality, seeing himself as a ‘keen internationalist’. According to this biography, he left Ireland shortly after the war to avoid internment, immigrating to Australia. See Biography of J.J. Auchmuty <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/auchmuty-james-johnston-12155>

⁸⁷ This is considered in Chapter 9.

⁸⁸ Thomas A O’Donoghue, *Catholic teaching brothers: their life in the English-speaking world, 1891-1965* (New York, 2012), p. 67.

⁸⁹ *Dáil Éireann debates*, Vol. 152, No.3, 07 July 1955, Cols.440-1; On how the provision of libraries to rural schools, with specific reference to the reading of historical material, would benefit education, while it would also “have the effect of keeping down the cinema queues...because boys and girls would become engrossed in reading instead of going to the pictures.”

⁹⁰ This is especially discussed in Chapter 6 on the Leaving Certificate Examinations.

were exclusively in private denominational hands catering for a relatively small proportion of pupils.”⁹¹ While this is true in terms of direct governmental impetus, the importance of this policy to what was being taught at secondary level should not be underestimated, or dismissed so easily. The shared value system of those in positions of power within society at this time, between the Church and the State, was reflected in both the ethos and programmes of the schools. In short, what was being taught can be seen to comply with Antoni Gramsci’s concept of ‘cultural hegemony’⁹², through the creation of a worldview, (or in this case, an historical narrative) which reflected the values of those in power and which appealed to the majority of those within society, by stressing Irish history as integral to the curriculum, and by defining it as Gaelic and predominantly Catholic. That the Irish history class reflected many of the values of the wider society is in keeping with findings internationally.⁹³ That Corcoran viewed history, and primarily Irish history, as a tool for teaching moral and civic responsibilities is telling. Though there may have been less direct governmental impetus in driving the Gaelicisation agenda at second-level, there is no reason to suggest that a major difference existed between Church and State in this regard.

But while others may have argued that Irish history in schools was to be shaped for political purpose, those in charge of education were adamant that this was not so. The Department of Education, through its work with its publication branch An Gúm⁹⁴ and through the way they approached and promoted the history textbooks published under their scheme, were very careful not to provide a state-approved ideology for history, owing to the recognisably contentious nature of the subject.⁹⁵ This offers an Irish example of David Cannadine’s contention that, despite the widespread recognition that history teaching “can help reinforce the established order by

⁹¹ Holohan, ‘History Teaching in the Irish Free State 1922–35’, pp 54–5.

⁹² For a comprehensive review of Gramsci and this concept see T. J. Jackson Lears, ‘The Concept of Cultural Hegemony: Problems and Possibilities’ in *The American Historical Review*, xc, no. 3 (1985), pp 567–593.

⁹³ Zúñiga et al., *History Curriculum in Chile*, pp 8, 42.

⁹⁴ The work of An Gúm is analysed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

⁹⁵ N.A.I./GAEL/AN GÚM/G8(III), Preliminary Correspondence, 1927: Letter by Proinnsias Ó Dubhthaigh (Deputy secretary to the Department of Education) to J. Houlihan (Secretary of the Department of Finance) 13 January 1927.

inculcating deferential attitudes, or subvert that order by encouraging dissent and discord” especially with the tendency to predominantly teach English history in England, and Irish history in Ireland, that

even during the first half of the twentieth century, when history was so often conceived in political and biographical terms, and when two world wars were fought to save the British Empire, Whitehall did not urge that the subject should be taught to inculcate national pride, most teachers did not teach history with that aim, and most pupils did not learn about it for that purpose.⁹⁶

While the political potential of school history was recognised, the Department of Education were reticent to openly declare any official purpose. They were determined to make a distinction between ‘national’ and ‘political’ history. Irish history in secondary schools could have a political purpose and be used to foster citizenship. It was not however to be used as a promotional vehicle for any particular political party. The Government of the day were careful not to endorse any specific version of Irish history, as this could be seen as contentious among members of the opposition. This was further evidenced in a 1929 response from Minister O’Sullivan to an opposition TD who specifically called for a state-sanctioned history textbook. The latter contended that the current Irish history textbooks showed that

the tendency of the Department was not strongly enough Irish and was not strongly enough patriotic. From the point of view of the party at present in power, one would imagine, and expect ...that they would be as deeply interested in making the children thoroughly Irish as any other section of the Irish people...Enthusiasm should be created in them for their country and for their local history...They should really be taught not merely in an abstract sort of way the dry bones of history, but...made to feel attachment to the tremendous traditions of their country.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Cannadine et al., *The right kind of history*, p. 13.

⁹⁷ *Dáil Éireann debates*, Vol. 29, No. 4, 17 April 1929, cols 464-7.; Deputy Patrick J. Little. Little was a founding member of Fianna Fáil, and was speaking from the opposition at the time. Little also argued that imbuing school children with a sense of national pride would lessen the desire to emigrate. Teaching patriotism “would help to stem the spirit which looks to America and to other countries and make the Irish people look to Ireland only.” [col. 465] though he does qualify his statement by noting how it was primarily an economic issue.

Minister O’Sullivan’s response was telling. He rejected the idea of a standard text-book in Irish history, before specifying that “If it be a question of teaching patriotism, we are prepared to do our part, but everything cannot be done from the Central Government.”⁹⁸

This issue of using history for immediate political use had precedence in the recent history of England. In 1917, the Board of Education were debating whether to direct history in the secondary school for this purpose, considering the need for more manpower, and the desire to bolster national pride during the latter years of the First World War. Objections to this arose immediately among members of the Board, first on the grounds of time allocation, and more importantly owing to the belief that “if we once admit the principle, we shall get into the intolerable position that we shall be asked to change the advice which we give to schools as one party or another succeeds to power.”⁹⁹ Ireland should not be seen as an exception. This issue of schools being used for political propaganda was a worry throughout the period. In a 1955 Dáil debate, Deputy Pádraig Mac Loinsigh specifically argued how the teaching of Irish, and subjects taught through the medium of Irish (which history was a notable example of)

should not be made the plaything of any political Party and should not be claimed as the plaything of a political Party so that that Party could derive advantage from it. The Irish language is our language, the language of our people, and as such it is right and proper that it should be given national rather than political treatment.¹⁰⁰

Thus, the political *use and abuse* of history was seen by the Department to differ from the national purpose, as reflected in promoting citizenship, which in the Irish case embodied aspects of cultural and moral identities, and commanded a very wide consensus.

Conclusion:

Internationally, numerous debates continue to emerge as to the function of school history in the twenty-first century. There is a general consensus however that during the first half of the twentieth century, it was predominantly used as a means to legitimise the authority of those in

⁹⁸ *Dáil Éireann debates*, Vol. 29, No. 4, 17 April 1929, cols 464-7.

⁹⁹ Cannadine et al., *The right kind of history*, pp 57–8.

¹⁰⁰ *Dáil Éireann Debate*, Vol.152, No.3, 07 July 1955, col. 405.

power and cement concepts of political and cultural identity. The rhetoric surrounding history teaching in the Irish context was consistent with this, especially in the immediate post-Independence period. This contrasted in part with the emerging trends within Irish historiography, which opposed this more traditional approach. The manner in which history was presented, and its overall purpose within Irish academia was an area of considerable consideration during the twentieth-century, most notably among a specific group of historians who wished to ‘revise’ Irish history as previously portrayed, through adopting a more scientific, ostensibly ‘value-free’ style of writing. Part of their *raison d'être* was to challenge the received understanding of what Irish history was, and especially as it had been promoted in schools. This chapter highlighted the official rhetoric as regards school history. It examined a representative selection of major speeches and public assertions regarding the function of history in schools. From this, it established that while religion and the moral dimension were considered integral to history teaching by a number of key individuals, especially Rev. Corcoran at the time, and in later scholarship by O’Callaghan, that this was not its sole purpose, or even the principal one. The importance of asserting a particular national and cultural identity was of equal importance in the official rhetoric on history teaching. The degree to which this official rhetoric mirrored the reality of Irish history in secondary schools from the 1920s to the 1960s is considered in the following chapters.

Chapter 3, Curriculum in Context:

“Curriculum as practice cannot be understood adequately or changed substantially without attention to its setting or context. Curriculum is contextually shaped.”¹⁰¹

In terms of outlined programmes for learning, it is a truism that the curriculum set by the Department of Education served (and continues to serve) as an integral “functioning instrument of education.”¹⁰² Specific subjects and their syllabi operate within this general framework. This chapter is concerned with the History curriculum, and more precisely, the syllabi on Irish history, and the political concerns, contexts and developments which shaped them. It examines issues of curriculum creation, the key figures involved, as well as the socio-political and philosophical concerns regarding secondary Irish history curricula. It analyses the Irish history curriculum by studying its development between 1924 and 1969. It pays particular attention to the numerous alterations made to the official programme at Leaving Certificate level between 1940 and 1943 as a case study in the interplay between educational policy and politics. This chapter argues that the political and religious ideology of those in power was being reflected through the syllabus, especially as it related to Irish history, implicitly in the 1920s and 1930s, and then more explicitly from the 1940s onwards. The syllabus’ focus on a Gaelic identity, in line with the private religious-run schools, resulted in the promotion of an historical narrative that was overwhelmingly Gaelic, nationalist, and Catholic. However, due to the belief that the Department of Education should have minimal interference in what was being taught, there were very few expressed objectives when it came to teaching Irish history, as well as only a general direction given in the curriculum. This chapter also challenges previous assessments which viewed the teaching of Irish history as largely homogenous between the 1920s and the 1960s.¹⁰³ The numerous attempts (both successful and more usually unsuccessful) at reforming how history was

¹⁰¹ Catherine Cornbleth, *Curriculum in Context* (London, 1990), p. 6.; For a discussion of this in an Irish context see Jim Gleeson, *Curriculum in context: partnership, power and praxis in Ireland* (Oxford, 2009).

¹⁰² Ralph Winfred Tyler, *Basic principles of curriculum and instruction* (Chicago ; London, 1971), p. 1.

¹⁰³ Most notably O’Callaghan, *Teaching Irish independence*.

structured and outlined directly before and during the Emergency period¹⁰⁴ demonstrate a feeling of dissatisfaction among teachers in secondary history education. While there was an interest in curriculum revision within the department of education and in the inspectorate, this did not always manifest itself in actual curriculum change or reform. The attempt to compile a composite subject ‘History and geography’ in the late 1930s-early 1940s and its failure as a curriculum project to get off the ground was a telling example of this.

The formal syllabi governing the teaching of Irish history in secondary schools have been understood as being “indicative of authoritative opinion regarding the significant elements of the nation’s past.”¹⁰⁵ What is selected for study (and also what is omitted) is central to debates surrounding the teaching of history.¹⁰⁶ It has been widely acknowledged that History as a school subject can be empowering or oppressive, depending on whether it is representative of a society, or else used to prescribe a given ideological or political position.¹⁰⁷ While the lack of any radical alteration to the syllabi until 1969 can potentially be attributed to the dominant power structures in place and the general exclusion of history teachers from the syllabus drafting process, the debates over its overarching framework mean that this period deserves further attention. This chapter provides an outline of the syllabi set for Irish history during this period, before considering its role as part of the wider curriculum. The work of Cannadine et al on History teaching in England during the twentieth century is used as methodological support, by framing the History curriculum within a larger educational context.¹⁰⁸ The chief source material for this chapter are the official syllabi, published by the Department of Education, and the internal files of the ASTI. The former contained the essential blueprint for what was to be taught in schools, while the latter offer an insight into how this material was engaged with by teachers, and also highlight wider contextual concerns.

¹⁰⁴ This is defined as the period between the Passing of the Emergency Powers Act 1939 on 2 September 1939 and 2 September 1946, when it lapsed.

¹⁰⁵ Doherty, ‘National Identity and the Study of Irish History’, p. 327.

¹⁰⁶ Bruce VanSledright, ‘Teaching of History’ in James W. Guthrie (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Education* (2003), pp 1055–58.; Zúñiga et al., *History Curriculum in Chile*, p. 7.

¹⁰⁷ Zúñiga et al., *History Curriculum in Chile*, p. 37.

¹⁰⁸ Cannadine et al., *The right kind of history*.

There was little consideration within Departmental circles for international scholarship on curricular planning and assessment during this period. Such an explicit model as the ‘Objectives, Content, Method, Evaluation’¹⁰⁹ model outlined by Ralph Tyler¹¹⁰ in his influential 1949 work *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction* did not take root in the Irish context until the 1970s at least, in terms of how curricula were devised. This left it that school History (and specifically Irish history) was being guided, not by any stated objective, but by content. This led to divergence between the desires held for secondary Irish history, as reflected in the previous chapter, and the form which the syllabus actually took.

[Irish secondary curriculum in general.](#)

In terms of overall purpose, the curriculum (established in 1924) put a predominant focus on the alteration of society through the development in education of a distinctly Irish (and later Catholic) identity in the wake of independence. This was embodied, first and foremost, in the new mandatory status of Gaeilge, in contrast to the more Anglo-centric curriculum in operation in the pre-Independence period.¹¹¹ Séamus Ó Buachalla and John Coolahan respectively have argued that the central educational prerogative of the Cumann na nGaedhal, and from 1932 onwards, the Fianna Fáil governments, was to promote a ‘Policy of Gaelicisation’. As Coolahan noted, these governments were “committed ideologically to curricular policy changes in

¹⁰⁹ Tyler’s model was predicated on the following pattern of questions: 1. What educational purposes should the school seek to attain? (State Objectives) 2. What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes? (Select Learning Experiences) 3. How can these educational experiences be effectively organized? (Organize Learning Experiences) 4. How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained? (Evaluation); See Tyler, *Basic principles of curriculum and instruction*. See also Thomas A. O’Donoghue, *Understanding contemporary education: key themes and issues* (London, 2017), pp 89–91. Tyler was also concerned with asking how objectives could be stated in a form helpful in selecting learning experiences and in guiding teaching.

¹¹⁰ Prior to this, Tyler has been in charge of “a highly sophisticated group of evaluators” as part of an ambitious (though ultimately unsuccessful) educational initiative in the U.S, entitled the ‘8-Year Plan’, (1933–41) aimed at reforming Secondary Education by removing many of the constraints on teaching such as a set curriculum and the institutional patterns dictated by the colleges. Tyler et al were tasked with assisting the participating schools in how best to plan and appraise their respective programmes. See Tyack & Tobin, ‘The “Grammar” of Schooling’, pp 467–70.

¹¹¹ For example, Gaeilge was not a major component of the curriculum until after independence. See also Doherty, ‘National Identity and the Study of Irish History’.

education, re-establishing through the schools what was understood to be the true Irish, that is the Gaelic, cultural heritage, primarily reflected in the Irish language.”¹¹²

This policy was not limited to Catholic secondary schools. In 1929, when discussing the initial resentment demonstrated by certain members of the Church of Ireland Educational community to the drive to promote the Irish language in all schools, Archbishop of Dublin, John Gregg¹¹³ stated how he could “understand that resentment, but at the same time resentment of that kind was quite gratuitous. It served no purpose, and the best thing they could do with a thing which they did not like was to face it.” As declared:

We are all aware that the Government has laid it down that Irish is to be one of the compulsory subjects of study in our Irish schools’ curriculum. Into the wisdom or otherwise of that situation I have no intention to enter; but I would impress on you that...the wise people are the people who recognise facts, and that is one of the facts of our Irish life at the moment.”¹¹⁴

The interconnection between the promotion of the Irish language and Irish history was also widely acknowledged. As recognised in Dáil Éireann in 1930:

A knowledge of history is very necessary, because if Irish is to make headway in the schools, it is not sufficient to teach it as a subject. You must have a national foundation for it, and not teach it merely as you would teach other subjects. Irish will never be revived except [if] you have a national basis for the teaching of it.¹¹⁵

This sentiment was concisely articulated in the Department of Education reports of this year, which acknowledged that “Until the history of Ireland is properly taught in the schools the work of Gaelicization will be greatly hindered, since there will be no real incentive to urge the pupils to the use of Irish as a living speech.”¹¹⁶ Irish history was thus seen as having an integral role in

¹¹² Coolahan, *Irish Education*, pp 72–3; Ó Buachalla, *Education Policy*, pp 340–50.

¹¹³ Gregg was noted as being very influential within the Protestant community. See R. B. McDowell, *The Church of Ireland, 1869-1969* (Studies in Irish history : 2nd series, vol. 10, London [etc.], 1975), p. 131. In the post-1922 period he was noted for encouraging Irish Protestants to come to terms with the political realities of the day. See Angela Bourke, *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing* (New York, 2002) p. 124.

¹¹⁴ *Irish Times*, 7 December 1929

¹¹⁵ *Dáil Éireann Debate*, Vol. 34 No. 18, 21 May 1930, col. 2150; Frank Fahy.

¹¹⁶ *Report of the Department of Education, 1930-31*, (Dublin, 1932), p. 21; this report was specifically

state formation in the early government programmes for the Irish Education system. Its importance extended beyond the history classroom.¹¹⁷

The newfound focus on Irish history, which was to comprise *at least* fifty percent of the History course, was a contingent component of the ‘citizenship transmission’ discussed in the previous chapter, as part of this general ‘Policy of Gaelicisation’. This was widely accepted, despite the trenchant perspective of Auchmuty in the early 1940s, who condemned how “history has become the servant of a political attitude and has been forced to desert the fair-minded search after truth which should be its hallmark.”¹¹⁸ The content of the syllabus to be taught was to be a central element in the historical construction of a new national narrative for a new nation.

A corollary to this period of cultural regeneration was the drive to officially mandate an educational programme which reflected the ideology of the new post-Independence state. Pádraig Hogan has argued that all major schools of thought on education (Marx, Plato, Rousseau...), despite the variances in opinion and general outlook, share the “Platonic conception of education as an ongoing battle to gain control of the formal education of the young...a struggle to get one's own coterie firmly entrenched in the driving seat and to lay down from that position of strength what will be taught to the young and who will do the teaching.”¹¹⁹

In the Irish context, the ‘who’ was less important than the ‘what’ in terms of changing educational structures. Secondary education, as noted, was the private domain of the Churches, between Catholic and Protestant. No attempt was made to alter this in the first few decades of the state.¹²⁰ What the new state offered was the opportunity to re-design the programmes for study, in contrast to those in place under the pre-independence Board of Education. This was coupled with the awareness of the centrality of the Catholic identity to the majority of secondary schools.

referring to Primary level.

¹¹⁷ This interconnection of Irish history and other subjects is considered in greater detail towards the end of this chapter,

¹¹⁸ Auchmuty, *The teaching of history*, p. 24.

¹¹⁹ Padraig Hogan, ‘An Overview of the Educational Ethos’ in *The Crane Bag*, vii, no. 2 (1983), p. 44.

¹²⁰ One example was the Vocational Education Act in 1930 which dealt with vocational and technical education. This study focusses on secondary education however, in which no such attempt at change was made.

Any schemes for reform and their subsequent implementation were not to “conflict with Catholic educational principles.”¹²¹ It was to this end that Rev. Corcoran demanded a shift not only of content, and an increased focus on Irish history,¹²² but also in pedagogy and purpose. As noted,

What is needed is a radical reconsideration of the whole substance and matter of history for effective use in general ...education: the use of wide liberty of choice in such matter, by schools and teachers [and] the development of methods of teaching which will be both intellectually and morally more effective than those at present applied in Ireland.¹²³

The Departmental programme was to “testify to the completion of a well-balanced course of general education”¹²⁴ while, as declared later, the overall purpose of secondary education was to prepare students both for University and ensure the “organised development and equipment of all the powers of the individual person – religious, moral, intellectual, physical – so that, by making the fullest use of his talents, he may responsibly discharge his duties to God and to his fellowmen in society.”¹²⁵

In terms of the general context, the work of Ó Buachalla attests to the ideological and political forces involved in education¹²⁶, and helps explain the influences which framed the teaching of Irish history during this period. Ó Buachalla outlined the various political bodies in charge of education in Ireland during the twentieth century as well as discussing policy formulation and implementation and the processes behind these, using two case studies (the Irish language being one) to achieve this. His work is also important in constructing educational ‘eras’ through which to examine the Irish context, while relating it to a wider European context. As noted, “The quarter century from 1932 to 1957, encompassing the economically lean years of World War Two and the potentially expansionist years of the post-war period, witnessed no dramatic policy changes in the system” with a “common cautious response from all the parties

¹²¹ Séamus Ó Buachalla, *Education Policy in Twentieth Century Ireland* (Dublin, 1988), p. 274.

¹²² This call was tempered however, with a call for increased awareness of Continental history as part of the Irish framework. See p. 16 of this chapter.

¹²³ Corcoran, S.J., ‘New Programme: History’, pp 249–50.

¹²⁴ *Report of the Department of Education, 1929-30*, (Dublin, 1931), p. 58.

¹²⁵ *Report of Council of Education*, p. 88.

¹²⁶ Ó Buachalla, *Education Policy*.

and the four ministers...to the Church-dominated status quo” as regards education.¹²⁷ The framing of these educational ‘eras’ of ‘creation’, ‘consolidation and stagnation’, into the period of ‘modernisation’ after 1957 is not universally accepted within academia.¹²⁸ It is however a useful construct through which to consider curricular developments in the Irish context.

Politics of history education.

In many countries, the history curriculum has been seen to represent a ‘battlefield’ where rival political parties fought and altered the version of the past taught to children in order to legitimate their respective ideologies.¹²⁹ Recent studies have furthered this position, noting that the teaching of history is of particular significance in contested societies, standing out as an area of the curriculum particularly open to charges of bias and prejudice.¹³⁰ Examples of this kind have occurred for example in Hungary,¹³¹ Spain,¹³² Germany,¹³³ and more recently in the ‘History Wars’ of 1980s England.¹³⁴

The extent to which changes in political party and political context affected how national history was being taught in Ireland however is negligible for a number of reasons: First, due to the fact that the leading political parties between the 1920s and late 1960s differed little ideologically from one another, with Fianna Fáil and Cumann na nGaedheal (later becoming Fine Gael) owing their animosities more to civil-war politics than a left-right divide, as was the case

¹²⁷ Ibid., pp 277–78.

¹²⁸ For example, Walsh, *The politics of expansion* which gives less importance to free post-primary education and more attention to earlier efforts at reform. While he agrees that the reforming period began in late 1950s, he contends that rigid periodisation is not particularly helpful.

¹²⁹ John Tosh, *The pursuit of history: aims, methods and new directions in the study of modern history* (Rev. 3rd ed, London, 2002), p. 8. Tosh argues how School history can be seen as “a political battleground” as the “sanction of the past” is useful for both “upholders and subverters of authority.”

¹³⁰ Smith & Vaux, *Education, conflict and international development*, p. 31.; See also Mariam Chughtai, ‘What Produces a History Textbook?’ (Unpublished PhD thesis, Harvard University, 2015), p. 11.

“Pakistan provides an extreme case of these politics playing out with competing political agendas in a relatively short period of its existence.” See also Yeandle, *Citizenship, nation, empire*.

¹³¹ Nikolett Márhoffer, ‘The Changes in the textbook-approval process in Hungary from the change of regime to today’, Paper delivered at the European Conference for Educational Research (ECER) 2016, (Dublin, 2016)

¹³² Zúñiga et al., *History Curriculum in Chile*, p. 5.

¹³³ Wegner, ‘Germany’s Past Contested: The Soviet-American Conflict in Berlin over History Curriculum Reform, 1945-48’; Wegner, *Anti-Semitism and Schooling Under the Third Reich*.

¹³⁴ Phillips, *History teaching, nationhood and the state*.

elsewhere. Their understanding of Irish history was, (the revolutionary period aside) relatively similar.

A second important issue within any given educational context, was who decided what history to teach. This issue has been considered internationally.¹³⁵ Robert Phillips, in his important 1998 study *History teaching, nationhood and the state: a study in educational politics*, highlighted, *inter alia*, the complexities of seeing any national curriculum as “state control over school knowledge” due to the ability for teachers to manipulate such material in their own classroom, and considered “the gap between policy intent (at macro levels) and actual implementation (at micro/meso levels.)” He also noted how different syllabuses existed in different parts of Great Britain, decided upon by various local examination councils.¹³⁶ Ultimately, this decision can be made at two levels: central-government level, and local-school level, or what has been termed the ‘state-didactic’ or ‘liberal’ form of decision making.¹³⁷ The Free State (later the Republic of Ireland) system fits neither the ‘state-didactic’ type nor the ‘liberal-type’, being a mixture of both. The secondary schools were independent, run primarily by the religious orders, both male and female. These schools operated in an almost autocratic way, according to their own ethos and structures, with little direct interference from either state or parents. This notwithstanding, the centralised Department of Education set a syllabus which was to be followed. This syllabus corresponded with the Certificate examinations, whose increased importance during this period, ensured compliance, as discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

As for course content, the official syllabus set for study, (as demonstrated later in this chapter) can be seen to maintain the great men tradition, according to a new Gaelic-centric narrative. Zúñiga defines this ‘traditional’ approach, in line with the work of David Sylvester, as “a chronological enumeration of historical events, where political facts and the names of the great

¹³⁵ Karl Pellens, ‘History: Educational programs’ in Arieh Lewy (ed.), *The international encyclopedia of curriculum* (Oxford, 1991), pp 743–6; Stuart Foster, ‘History’ in Gary McCulloch and David Crook (eds), *The Routledge international encyclopedia of education* (London, 2008), pp 294–5; Zúñiga et al., *History Curriculum in Chile*, p. 7.

¹³⁶ Phillips, *History teaching, nationhood and the state*, pp 6–7.

¹³⁷ Zúñiga et al., *History Curriculum in Chile*, p. 7.

characters comprise the main thought content.” This approach was dominated by memorisation and factual recall, rather than the acquisition of skills. Furthermore, an important concern within the ‘great tradition’ approach is “the selection of events that can justify the political organisation set by the dominant political culture.”¹³⁸ In the Irish context, this was connected with the centrality of faith and religion, with the history lesson being seen to be singularly suited to the imparting of moral lessons. This belief had international echoes in the recent past. The pre-independence Board of Education for example stressed in 1905 how school history could be utilised to this effect, being “to a certain extent, a record of the influence for good or for evil exercised by great personalities. ...our scholars should have examples put before them, whether for imitation or the reverse, of the great men and women that have lived in the past.”¹³⁹ The ideas underpinning this tradition were represented in the official Departmental annual *Rules and Programme*, as well as in the scholarship of Rev. Timothy J. Corcoran.

[The Irish history syllabus, 1924-69:](#)

Having established the dominant value systems driving education in general and history in particular, as well as noting the general understandings guiding curriculum design, it is appropriate to examine the content of the syllabi in operation between 1924 and 1969 as well as the contexts surrounding their creation.

Following the establishment of the new Department of Education, the first official syllabus in Irish history was published in 1924. This new programme comprised two examination levels (Intermediate and Leaving), as opposed to the three in place before (Junior, Middle, Senior). At Intermediate Certificate level, the course (Section A) was defined as being a study of the “General outline of Irish History and of the historic relations of Ireland with Great Britain, the continent of Europe, America and Australia.” A further note was included which stated that this outline should be dealt with in a very general way, with special reference to the social and economic conditions. The teaching should aim at giving the pupils the main factors and general trend of

¹³⁸ Ibid., pp 9–10.

¹³⁹ Board of Education, *Suggestions for the Consideration of Teachers and Others Concerned in the Work of Public Elementary Schools*, (London, 1905), p. 61;

development rather than a mass of dates and details about kings, battles, laws, etc. Historical geography should form an integral part of the course. A school will be at liberty, in a three or four year course, to distribute the subject matter set down above on its own plan, which should be specific and based on some definite principles.”

It was acknowledged also that the Certificate examinations which emerged from this syllabus would be “of the most general type” and test a knowledge of “the general causes and effects of the greater movements in Irish history.”¹⁴⁰

The countries chosen within the Irish framework reflect an awareness of the importance of emigration and the Irish diaspora to Ireland’s history. It also embodied the belief of Rev. Corcoran, developed during his own training at the University of Louvain,¹⁴¹ that having placed Irish history on a firm footing within the curriculum, that there should be no fear in introducing into the study of history in Ireland “manifold aspects of Continental History, corresponding to, or enriching, our own.” As he noted “A narrow nationalism in the teaching of history is its own worst enemy: it leads more often to a mean opinion of our own people and its story than to an excessive esteem for them.”¹⁴² At Leaving Certificate level, the course was defined as “A more detailed knowledge of the course for the Intermediate Certificate” alongside the study of one specialised area of interest. The first two (of eight) “intensive courses” outlined were on ‘The social, economic and cultural history of Ireland...’

- (i) ...until the end of the 16th century
- (ii) ...from the 16th century *to the present day*, with special reference to the period from the end of the Jacobite wars to the Famine.

¹⁴⁰ Rules and Programmes, 1924

¹⁴¹ James G. Deegan, ‘An assessment of Rev. Professor Timothy J. Corcoran’s major works in the field of Irish educational historiography’ in *Irish Educational Studies*, iv, no. 1 (1984), p. 88. “While studying...Corcoran became aware of the contribution that had been made by Irish scholars working abroad in the past. As a result of this experience, Corcoran began to view Irish history with respect to its European and Catholic links.”

¹⁴² Corcoran, S.J., ‘New Programme: History’, p. 255.

Other options included the History of the Classical World until the fourth century; Early Medieval Europe; Late Medieval Europe; and Europe, 1789-1830, or 1870 to 1920. No specific delineation existed between 'pass' and 'honours' courses in the official programme.¹⁴³

Corcoran's considerations were in keeping with wider discussions of how school history was being taught elsewhere across Europe; notably in Denmark, a standard comparison for Irish officials at this time, between finance, agriculture, and in this instance, education. When considering the Danish system for teaching history, and how the Irish system could emulate it, it was noted how

their curriculum is purely cultural, and their aim is "to enlighten and enliven the people." National and world history occupy a prominent place on the curriculum, they are taught vividly and dramatically through the "living word" in informal lectures, the object being to make the students feel that as a body they are a living whole, and to make them recognise the heritage of the past in the present. The power that works in the lives of great men is brought before the minds of the students so that they may realise something of the same capacity in themselves.¹⁴⁴

These were the only official guideline as to what was to be taught at either Intermediate or Leaving Certificate Level, and remained in place, relatively unchanged, for twelve years.

The first discernible alteration to the curriculum occurred in 1936-37, when the Intermediate Certificate course was amended. The syllabus for study was extended up to 1921, though the course for examination was reduced. The earlier portions of Irish history (pre-12th century) and European history (pre-987 A.D.) were still regarded as a compulsory course for First and Second year pupils, however they were now "to be tested by inspection and not by written examination."¹⁴⁵ Increased detail was also provided in terms of pedagogy, noting how the teacher should stimulate the pupils' interest "by judicious use of poems, pictures, anecdotes, and legends."¹⁴⁶ "Undue emphasis" it was further noted "should not be placed on dry-as-dust study

¹⁴³ *Rules and Programmes for Secondary Schools*, (Dublin, 1925), pp 13-15.

¹⁴⁴ *Irish Independent*, 27 Sept. 1924.

¹⁴⁵ Department of Education, *Rules and Programmes for Secondary Schools 1936-7*', (Dublin, 1936), pp 13-15.

¹⁴⁶ Legends, as in lists and maps, not mythologies.

of cause and effect to the exclusion of the human and pictorial interest of History.”¹⁴⁷ However, beyond these cursory differences, the changes outlined in the 1936-37 syllabus were minimal. The Intermediate Course was still defined simply as the “General outline of Irish history down to the end of the year 1921” with the Certificate examination testing “a knowledge of...the main facts and principal movements in Irish history” without elucidating any further.¹⁴⁸

There had also been discussions of bringing the new history programme up to the present date, however these were rejected by the Catholic Headmasters’ Association (C.H.A.) in particular, under the stewardship of its president, John Charles McQuaid.¹⁴⁹ Separate from any issues of political contention, this reticence could also be explained by a prevalent disdain for ‘contemporary’ history. As the Council for Cultural Co-operation noted in 1973:

There was an older tradition, derived originally from the teaching of the classics, that the business of history lay with earlier civilisations, or at least with generations sufficiently remote to be considered in quiet detachment from the passions of the present. History, it was said, was about past politics, not present politics; if it became involved with the latter, it would become contaminated and lose that clear, detached perspective and impartial objectivity that were its greatest pride.¹⁵⁰

Overall, secondary teachers were reported to have been satisfied with the alterations made in this year.¹⁵¹

While the change which occurred in 1936-37 was welcomed, it was but one of a number of issues broached by the various representative teaching and management organisations with the Department of Education. As their annual report noted the year previous, in December 1935, the

¹⁴⁷ *Rules and Programmes, 1936-37*; It is worth noting that while this was the first time that this was officially stated within the rules and programmes, that this complaint had been made on a number of occasions in the departmental inspectorate reports during the previous decade.

¹⁴⁸ Rules and Programmes for Secondary Schools, 1936-7, (Dublin, 1936), pp 13-15.

¹⁴⁹ Clara Cullen and Margaret Ó hOgartaigh (eds), *His Grace is displeased: the selected correspondence of John Charles McQuaid* (Dublin, 2013), p. 33.

¹⁵⁰ Council for Cultural Co-operation (CCC), *European Curriculum Studies, No.8 History* (Strasbourg, 1973),

¹⁵¹ *Report of the Department of Education, 1936-37* (Dublin, 1938), p. 49: “Tá múinteoirí I gcoitchinne fior-shásta den atharrac a rinneadh I gcúrsa Staire na Meadhon-Teistiméireachta, agus tá gach aon chosamlacht gur fearr an obair a déanfar de thairbe an atharraig sin.”

[translation] “The teachers, in general, are very happy with the redrawing that was done in the Intermediate Certificate Course for History, and it appears that the work to be done will be all the better as a result of this re-drawing.”

Department submitted proposals to the various Associations of Managers and Teachers for the amendment of the Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools, and invited them to give their views on these. These proposals were formulated "with a view to giving schools greater freedom in their choice of subjects and for the purpose of simplifying the Rules generally." Among the more important of these suggested amendments were-

- (1) That in the Intermediate Certificate Course and for examination purposes, History and Geography should constitute two separate subjects;
- (4) That for Intermediate Scholarship purposes-
 - (a) History should carry 300 marks. (b) Geography should carry 300 marks.
- (5) That the Intermediate Certificate Course in History should be shortened by substituting "General outline of Irish History down to the present day" for "General outline of Irish History and of the historic relations of Ireland with Great Britain, the continent of Europe, America and Australia," and that the examination in Irish History should deal only with the period from the 11th century to the present day, and in European History from 987 A.D. to the present day. The earlier portions of Irish and European History were to be tested by inspection. Having considered the views expressed by the Associations, the Department decided to introduce only one of the proposed amendments for the school year 1936-37, namely, that concerning the Intermediate Certificate Course in History. It was decided that "the prescribed period of Irish history should not extend beyond the end of the year 1921 and that the course in European history should stop at the end of the year 1918."¹⁵²

It was not until 1940-41 that any major alterations occurred at Leaving Certificate level.¹⁵³ The changes which were implemented, at both levels, were wide ranging in terms of structure, and controversial. At Intermediate Certificate level, the newly outlined course in Irish history was

¹⁵² *Report of the Department of Education, 1935-36* (Dublin, 1937), pp 62-3.

¹⁵³ This focus on Intermediate level only was specifically acknowledged in 1936-37; "The principal amendments referred mainly to the Intermediate Certificate Course and Examination as the existing Programme gives very considerable freedom in regard to the selection of subjects in the Leaving Certificate Course." See *Report of the Department of Education, 1935-36* (Dublin, 1937), pp 62-3.

for the first time, clearly defined according to the central topics to be dealt with. The detailed breakdown ranged from ‘Pre-Christian Ireland’ to the ‘Sinn Féin Movement and the Resurgence of 1916.’ When analysed, these topics promoted a linear chronology of Irish history which focused primarily on the military and political events deemed integral to the ‘Story of Ireland’.¹⁵⁴

Fig 1.7: 1941 Intermediate Certificate Syllabus- Irish History¹⁵⁵

(a) The History of Ireland, to be studied under the following headings: -

Pre-Christian Ireland, The Mission of St. Patrick and the spread of Christianity. The Norse Invasions. The Norman Invasions. The Gaelic Revival, the Assimilation of the Normans and the Tudor Attack. The Rise and Fall of the House of Kildare. The Elizabethan Wars in Ireland. The Plantation of Ulster. The Rising of 1641. The Cromwellian Plantation. The Williamite Wars. The Penal Laws. Grattan’s Parliament. The United Irishmen. O’Connell. The Young Ireland Movement. The Famine. The Fenian Movement. Parnell. The Sinn Féin Movement and the Resurgence of 1916.

Beyond the need to cover the topics, there was no instructions or recommendations in terms of how the course topics should be engaged with, from what perspective, or in what order. It was understood however that the course would be taught chronologically, as noted in complaints that due to time constraints, that teachers often were unable to teach the more recent aspects of Irish history, from the late nineteenth century onwards. This was noted at both primary and secondary level, with the inspectorate reporting with regards to the former that “The period 1850-1930 is not often taught well, and that leaves it that a good many students leave school without knowing about the events which most left their mark on the world of today.”¹⁵⁶ This phenomenon of failing to complete these later contentious aspects of the Irish past has also been noted in more recent scholarship internationally.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ This was the title of a popular pre-independence history textbook. See A. M. Sullivan, *The story of Ireland: a narrative of Irish history, from the earliest ages to the present time; written for the youth of Ireland* (Dublin, 1867).

¹⁵⁵ *Rules and Programmes for secondary schools, 1943-44*, p. 23

¹⁵⁶ *Report of the Department of Education, 1936-37* (Dublin, 1938), pp 18-19; personally translated.

¹⁵⁷ Smith, *Reckoning with the past*, p. 13. See also Keith C. Barton, ‘Dealing with the legacy of the past:

A change occurred in 1940-41 at Leaving Certificate level also. The pass course now comprised of two-thirds Irish history, with one general course to be taught up to 1921, alongside one specified period in Irish History (400-1200 A.D. from the Celts and Early Christian Ireland to the Norman Invasion; 1200-1600, from the Normans to the Battle of Kinsale; 1601-1800 from Kinsale until the Act of Union; and finally 1800-1921, from the Union until modern times).¹⁵⁸ These alterations were initially approved of by the ASTI, who complimented the change from general to specific study periods, as being beneficial to study for students.

The changes which occurred in terms of syllabus content between 1940 and 1943 were a major change in direction and can be seen as the first official steps away from the freedom of programme cited above. When analysed in more detail these changes also highlight the issue of how wider socio-political contexts can impinge on curricular content. First off, the language of the new 1940-41 history syllabus changed dramatically, becoming far more directive and vigorous. No longer was the Department of Education prescribing a “general outline of Irish History...and the historic relations with Britain...Europe and Australia” for the Intermediate Certificate and for Leaving Cert to require simply “a more detailed knowledge of the Intermediate Course.”¹⁵⁹ 1940-41 saw a plan laid out, in terms of specific topics to be focussed on.¹⁶⁰ Furthermore, a clear delineation between the Leaving Certificate Pass and Honours courses was being called for. It was now expressed that “the examination in the Honours Course will be *definitely* harder than that on the Pass Course and a higher standard of answering will be expected.”¹⁶¹ The content for study and examination was to go as far as “the end of 1921” for Irish history at both Intermediate and Leaving Certificate level, and 1918 for European history.

the role of history and citizenship education’ (Queen’s University Belfast, 8 June 2015). In his Keynote address, Barton discussed, inter alia, the phenomenon of US History teachers often ‘conveniently running out of time’ before dealing with the Vietnam War, and thus avoiding engaging with such contentious aspects of the American past in their classes

¹⁵⁸ *Rules and Programmes, 1940-41*; This syllabus mirrored the organisation of James Carty’s *A Class-book of Irish History* textbooks.

¹⁵⁹ Rules and Programmes of the Department of Education, 1925-32 for example.

¹⁶⁰ The perspective through which these were to be analysed was not overtly outlined though.

¹⁶¹ *Rules and Programmes of the Department of Education, 1940-41* (Dublin, 1942); Brian Mulcahy, ‘A Study of the Relationship between Ireland and England as Portrayed in Irish Post-Primary School History Textbooks, Published since 1922, and Dealing with the Period 1800 to the Present’ (University of Hull, 1988) had stated that this change had occurred the following year, however this would seem to have been a clerical error on his part.

The Leaving Certificate Honours course was to include the study of two further specialised courses in Irish history (to be consecutive) or else at least one along with the corresponding period in European history. Thus three-quarters of the course could be completed on Irish history exclusively.

This structure was short-lived, as the new syllabus was abruptly altered in the middle of the same school year, before being officially outlined in the following year's *Rules and Programmes*.¹⁶² The pass course for Leaving Certificate for example now saw Irish history ranging from 400-1603 between two alternative courses (400-1200; 1477-1603) and European history ranging from 918 to the 17th century. At honours level, a three-year rotation system for study was adopted, between four alternative 'eras' (400-1200; 1477-1603; 1603-1760; 1760-1916.) In any given year, two course options could be taught for the two year Leaving Certificate programme, with the teacher deciding which course to follow. These options rotated with the next period once the programme was completed. Each course began on a separate year, so that no two course options were ever taught during the same two year period. This cyclical programme remained in operation unchanged until 1969.

This complete alteration of the Leaving Certificate structure within the same school year cannot be ignored. The dates were backtracked, with no modern Irish or European history being taught, with the latest dates of study being 1916 for Irish history, and 1815 for European history. The origins and activities of World War One were removed entirely, while the Irish history course culminated in the unifying narrative of 1916 rather than the war of independence. As noted by historian David Fitzpatrick, for Irish political representatives "...the rebellion of 1916 offered a credible focus for reconciliation between supporters and opponents of the Treaty. The Easter Proclamation and Pearse's writings remained seminal texts for both major parties, and the 'martyrs' were celebrated with competitive enthusiasm by all factions descended from revolutionary Sinn Féin."¹⁶³

¹⁶² Rules and Programmes, 1941-42

¹⁶³ David Fitzpatrick, 'Commemoration in the Irish Free State: A chronicle of embarrassment' in Ian McBride (ed.), *History and memory in modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2001), pp 195-8.

The sudden course alteration however caused considerable consternation among certain teachers, with some calling for an alternative course to be set for that year's examination as a result. To this end, the ASTI agreed that "the Department be asked to set an alternative course as suggested and that the Department, the C[hristian] B[rothers], the C[atholic] H[eadmasters'] A[ssociation], and all such educational Associational Associations be made aware of the ASTI's proposals."¹⁶⁴ This request was also driven by practical issues. The Department's decision was criticised owing to the belief that it particularly disadvantaged those students who had begun the new course set the previous term. As the association's education sub-committee for History acknowledged in their annual report:

The fact the Department has failed to give at least one year's clear notice of the proposed change in the Leaving Certificate History Course inevitably penalises those candidates who in their (1940-1) Fifth year, have read the later period in Irish History, i.e. 1603-1921, and at the same time gives a comparatively unfair advantage to those candidates who have been lucky in having read the earlier period in Irish history in their 1940-41 Fifth year.

Issue was also taken with the fact that by changing the course so soon after having set the previous syllabus, the Department was going against its own permanent regulations which required Leaving Certificate candidates to follow the prescribed course for at least two years. It was decided that "In view of the action of the Department concerning the introduction of the History Programme for the 1941 (June) Leaving Certificate Examination in History, the Committee recommends that a very strong protest on the above lines be lodged immediately..."¹⁶⁵ The Association requested the Department, *inter alia*, to provide either sample papers for teachers to prepare for the examination in the new course, and to set as an alternative to the Present Syllabus, the Leaving Certificate set for the year 1940-41. The Department rejected both of these requests, without proffering any concrete reason why.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ ASTI/SC/13 September 1941.

¹⁶⁵ ASTI/97/47, Private Session of the Annual Convention, 16 April 1941; That the sub-committee report was included in full in the convention minutes demonstrated the importance of the issue in that year. On a separate point, an example of the continued rise in stature of the organisation as a representative union was seen this year, with Archbishop John Charles McQuaid being in attendance at the opening of the convention.

¹⁶⁶ ASTI/OP/1942, p. 23

This controversial curricular decision should be looked at in the context of the time. Europe was in the middle of the Second World War. Ireland had declared neutrality. It would appear that policy makers wished to eschew any charges of ‘taking sides’ through what was to be taught in schools, removing any reference to modern periods which could be contentious in Europe, and in the light also of Civil War politics in Ireland, which could elicit extreme responses from teachers and parents alike.¹⁶⁷ While history might not have been framed according to expressed political objectives, contextual political issues could still be seen to effect the teaching of history in schools.

The decision as to how the curriculum is structured is always deliberate, as there is more to teach than time allows.¹⁶⁸ The periodization of study is a sensitive issue, with the question as to what aspects of the past should be dealt with and, particularly, how far should historical study encroach on recent, violent events, being crucial to an understanding of the role that history was to play in education.¹⁶⁹ This sensitivity also fitted into the wider cultural context, efficiently represented in the embargo placed by veterans of the War of Independence on statements submitted to the Bureau of Military History (BMH) during this and the following decade. The “fear of too much knowledge about the revolutionary period” and that the release of material from the BMH could lead to ‘local civil warfare in every second town and village in the country’¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷See for example UCDA/LA1/H/131 (11), Eoin MacNeill papers for an example of this Civil War mentality. Letter with heading ‘Intermediate Education Board for Ireland’ from Eithne Nic Suibhne 07 Sept 1922; Nic Suibhne in her letter (which refused to acknowledge MacNeill as Minister) stated that “the government of the Irish Free State” did not exist. Instead, “there is a group of men with the help of English guns and English direction [who] are striving to destroy the Irish Republic.” She continued to state that she would refuse acceptance of any interim grant which derived from the ‘Free State’ “that I would never sign any form of the ‘Provisional’ or ‘Free State’ government” and that the Minister for Education “may rejoice in depriving citizens of the Republic of their Rights.” Nic Suibhne, (Annie Mac Swiney) was an intermediate teacher as well as being the sister of Republican martyr and former mayor of Cork, Terence MacSwiney. What is important to note in the context of this study is that to certain teachers 1921, the War of Independence and the Treaty of Dec. 1921 were seen as divisive, and thus were contentious for teaching in schools.

¹⁶⁸ Stephen J. Thornton, ‘What is History in US History Textbooks’ in Jason Nicholls (ed.), *School history textbooks across cultures: international debates and perspectives* (Oxford, 2006), p. 19. As cited, “purposes other than scholarship are always at work when educators decide what to teach, as there is more scholarly material than can possibly be taught in the available instructional time. Choosing among the material, whether recognised as such or not, is an educational decision, since nothing in the discipline of history tells you which parts of it young people ought to study.”

¹⁶⁹ McCully, ‘History Teaching, Conflict and the Legacy of the Past’, p. 146.

¹⁷⁰ Shane Nagle, ‘Review of Diarmaid Ferriter, *A Nation not a Rabble*’, in ‘History Ireland’, Vol. 23,

may seem exaggerated. Nevertheless, the tension within the post-Civil War Free State, and beyond was readily recognised and the inclusion of contemporary history was seen as a cause for concern.

In later years, there was much discussion at a European level to this effect. As the European Council for Cultural Co-operation noted in 1973 “It follows from the historian's claim to give his pupils an introduction to the world to which they belong that he has had to bring his syllabus up to date, for it is hardly possible to pretend that syllabuses which stop at 1815 or 1870 or 1914, or even 1939 introduce the young to the Europe of today.”¹⁷¹ This discussion over what should be included in the syllabus has been seen as a marker through which to view the beliefs of a given time. The omission of certain topics, or their relegation towards a more minor position in these school curriculum, often point towards the contemporary needs and values of a society.

This issue of avoidance was not exclusive to secondary Irish history, being prevalent in the wider cultural sphere. In terms of Irish literature, it was noted how on the whole “it seems that most Gaelic writers, like the authors of the textbooks...preferred to remain silent on the Civil War... Nor is it any wonder that Mícheál Breathnach (Gaelic writer, school inspector and An Gúm translator) could write in his 1966 autobiography: “I do not intend to discuss the harm the Civil War did nor the evil consequences it left behind. I would rather draw a big black curtain down on that period and put it out of my memory altogether if I could.”¹⁷² This exact omission was emphasised within the recommendations to include more modern history in the new Irish history introduced in 1969. As the 1966 report of a governmental Study Group tasked with devising this new course noted

By drawing a curtain over the events of 1916-1921, and over the subsequent tragic civil war and its aftermath, we certainly avoid the risk of raising delicate subject matter and interpretations of history which to so many adults may seem tendentious. On the other hand it is suppressing a knowledge of

¹⁷¹ Issue 5 (Sept./Oct., 2015), <http://www.historyireland.com/featured-book-review/a-nation-and-not-a-rabble-the-irish-revolution-1913-1923/>, accessed 20/12/2017

¹⁷² Council for Cultural Co-operation (CCC), *European Curriculum Studies, No.8 History* (Strasbourg, 1973), p. 10.

¹⁷² Philip O’Leary, *Gaelic prose in the Irish Free State, 1922-1939* (Dublin, 2004), pp 331–32.

the most important period in the formation of modern Ireland, if we neglect the history of the past four decades.¹⁷³

For students of Irish history, such a ‘black curtain’ was not so much a desire but a reality of their school courses. That the 1941 syllabus was altered within three months of the course being set confirmed that a black curtain of avoidance was indeed in operation in terms of the history curriculum.¹⁷⁴

A link exists between “the revision of history instruction and the broader societal healing process required after a civil war.”¹⁷⁵ Schools, it has been noted “can do no more than reflect the level of a society’s willingness to remember.”¹⁷⁶ Notwithstanding, the officially cited reasoning for the change was deemed to be more about practicality than politics. It was claimed that it was the disparity between the Leaving Certificate requirements and those for University Matriculation, and the attempt to bring the two into line which drove the sudden change in 1941. They gave no reason for why the dates were backtracked.

Teachers Unions had been openly complaining about the divide between the two standards for over a decade. In September 1930, for example, the ASTI wrote to the Department of Education to re-iterate their opinion that a ‘Committee of Inquiry into the Working of Programme’ was badly needed, not least because “...a better correlation between the Leaving Certificate and the Matriculation examinations is necessary....We assume there is general agreement on the necessity for correlation.”¹⁷⁷ By 1932, this was defined by the ASTI Central

¹⁷³ Magee, *The teaching of Irish history in Irish schools*, p. 3. See also ‘Report on the teaching of History in Ireland’ in *Administration*, xv, no. 1 (1967), pp 268–285.

¹⁷⁴ This avoidance was also seen in academia, with little to no work done on 1916 for instance, until the late 1960s. See D. George Boyce, ‘1916, Interpreting the Rising’ in D. George Boyce and Alan O’Day (eds), *Modern Irish History, Revisionism and the Revisionist Controversy*, (London, 1996), (London, 1996), pp 163–87. Consider for instance, p. 163: “professional historians very largely ignored it, and it was left to those whose purpose was to eulogise the heroes of the rising to write interesting, if sketchy, lives of the leading participants.”

¹⁷⁵ Smith, *Reckoning with the past*, p. 9.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ ASTI/OP/1931: Response letter from ASTI to Department of Education, requesting a ‘Committee of Inquiry into the Working of the Programme’, 23 September 1930.

executive council as “the most urgent problem confronting Secondary Education” for which an enquiry was “vitally needed.”¹⁷⁸

This claim was rejected by the Minister for Education at the time.¹⁷⁹ By 1941 however, this position was no longer maintained. In the Departmental response to the ASTI Convention resolutions, of 1941. Seosamh Ó Néill "referred to a protest made by the A.S.T.I. against one particular section of the History Syllabus for 1941-42. ‘Difficulties of this kind’, the Department stated ‘were incidental to any transition arrangement, and presumably, to the Department’s desire to co-ordinate the Leaving Certificate Pass and the Matriculation Course.’"¹⁸⁰ Through this, the government were portraying sudden change as a transitional measure, linked to ongoing educational concerns and downplaying any contextual or political issues.

This is unconvincing, especially considering how the main issue for teachers as regards matriculation was not the content being taught, but the valuation of examination marks and the threshold for pass. As noted in 1942, “though the courses for the Leaving Certificate Pass and the Matriculation Examination were similar in the current year, their standards of marking were not so. To matriculate, a student would need to secure 33 [percent] only, whereas no candidate for the Leaving Certificate could secure a pass on a pass paper under 40% - an obvious disadvantage to the latter student.” Requests were made for the Department to revise the provisional results of the Leaving Certificate, and “to bring both standards of marking into accord in future years.”¹⁸¹ The very abrupt change in programme within the same school year and the backtracking of dates to be studied would instead point towards other more sensitive issues at work, with politics playing a prominent role as well.

Further discussions were held to reconsider the History syllabus again in 1943-44, though ultimately, this never came to fruition.¹⁸² The instability of the course during these few short years

¹⁷⁸ ASTI/C.E.C. Report, 1932, published in the ASTI/Official Programme, 1931.

¹⁷⁹ ASTI/SC/ 30 Oct. 1931.

¹⁸⁰ ASTI/SC/; Response dated 8 July 1941.

¹⁸¹ ASTI/ Standing Committee Files/11 Sept. 1942.

¹⁸² N.A.I./GAEL/AN GÚM/G072; Hand written Letter from Mícheál Ó Siocfhradha to Seán MacLellan, and the Chief Inspector, M[eán].O[ideachais], Seoirse Mac Niocaill, 21 Oct 1953. This failed reform in 1943 has not been acknowledged in scholarship until now.

however caused a number of problems, not least of which being the availability of suitable textbooks to cover the courses,¹⁸³ the difficulties which the rotating course caused teachers in terms of class preparation,¹⁸⁴ as well as the negative effect it had on teaching as Gaeilge.¹⁸⁵

No further alteration occurred to the history curriculum between 1943 and 1969. Some scholars have taken this lack of syllabus change, along with the limited changes during the first two decades of the course, as a sign of both stasis and acceptance within the educational sphere.¹⁸⁶ This appears too simplistic. While little changed, that does not mean that little was attempted, or that change was not desired, particularly by lay secondary teachers. Numerous attempts were made at reconsidering the course and its methods and modes (though these ultimately proved unsuccessful.) Tellingly in this regard were the repeated demands, by both teachers and politicians, that history and geography should be separated as examination subjects at Intermediate level, that they should have more marks for scholarship purposes, and that the Leaving Certificate History course should be altered, which the ASTI had actively been pursuing since 1951.¹⁸⁷ A notable case in which change was attempted but ultimately proved unsuccessful was the trialled composite subject of ‘History and Geography’.

¹⁸³ ASTI/C.E.C./29 April 1943- Convention Resolutions, 1943 No. 24: “That the Dept be asked to recast its Leaving Certificate History programme in view of the difficulty in Procuring suitable text-books and their prohibitive price for the average pupil, and that the setting of different intensive periods in European History should be replaced by fixed ones so as to mitigate this hardship.” (Tralee Branch); ASTI/Official Programme of Annual Convention 1955: ‘Report of history sub-committee’, Meeting held 7 March 1955: “[the Sub-Committee] felt that the unsuitability of this syllabus and its system of rotation of set periods of history is the fundamental cause of the difficulty re text-books.” These were not the only examples of this kind.

¹⁸⁴ While this system was in operation for nearly two decades, it was vehemently criticised in the Council of Education Report, as well as repeated calls from the ASTI to have it changed.

¹⁸⁵ These issues are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

¹⁸⁶ O’Callaghan, *Teaching Irish independence*.

¹⁸⁷ ASTI C.E.C. *Bulletins to Branches*, 1959-1982, No. 55, July 1959.: “Mr Kirkpatrick pointed out that the Association had been endeavouring since 1951 to have the History Courses changed and he felt that we should first concentrate on this...The report of the History Sub-Committee meeting held on 6 March 1959...recommended the re-opening of negotiations with the various school bodies with a view of having the set courses in the Leaving Certificate altered.”; This report ended with the declaration that “The Committee expressed the opinion that the A.S.T.I. should pursue its policy of seeking to have the marks for history and geography increased.”

Composite subject:

The Department tried to solve the issue of repeatedly being called upon to separate History and geography at Intermediate Certificate into two standalone subjects, by creating a new composite subject ‘History and Geography’ in 1938. This was to offer an alternative to the two existing courses.¹⁸⁸ The standalone subjects of History, and Geography already in operation, would continue to consist of two separate examination papers, though considered for scholarship purposes as one subject. Pupils were required to sit exams in History and Geography due to their mandatory status on the Intermediate curriculum. From 1938 onwards however, this could consist of taking either the composite subject or else taking History and Geography separately.¹⁸⁹

This proved to be a short-lived experiment by the Department. Almost immediately, complaints arose from the ASTI about the weighting of the new course for scholarship purposes. The maximum mark for the Composite subject was reduced to 300 marks rather than 400 marks as was the case for History and Geography when taken separately.¹⁹⁰ Delegates asked why, seeing as the new course was longer than the old one, “urging the advisability of raising the mark to 400. More time could thus be given to the subject, and the pupils encouraged to take the composite subject with another modern language, instead of History and Geography as separate subjects.” The official reply was that the content of the programme was simpler in the case of the composite subject than in History and Geography taken separately, though this view was not shared by the ASTI representatives. There was no reference to the proposed course in the following years, in either the Official Programmes of the Department of Education results figures, in the Inspectorate reports, or the files of the ASTI. Furthermore, no record was found in the annual examination papers of any composite paper for the Intermediate Certificate, after the initial discussion in the report of 1937-38. This shows, as stated above, that the experiment was not continued beyond an

¹⁸⁸ ASTI/97/47, *Official Programme of Eighteenth Annual Convention*, 26-27 March 1940: C.E.C Report-Deputation with Minister for Education, 29 March 1939.

¹⁸⁹ *Report of the Department of Education, 1937-38* (Dublin, 1939), p. 47: Translated from “Beidh sé d’iacall ar gach dalta Meadhon-Teistiméireachta Stair agus Tíreolaidheacht a thógáil mar chuid den chúrsa faomhtha, agus ina leith sin de bheidh cead ag daltaí an chomh-ádhbhar Stair agus Tíreolaidheacht do thógáil nó Stair agus Tíreolaidheacht a thógáil ina n-ádhbhar aonair.”

¹⁹⁰ Gaeilge, for example, consisted of 600 marks, while History and Geography, as two separate papers but one examination subject consisted of 400 marks.

initial trial phase, if it even reached that. The records would instead suggest that it was agreed upon, but not implemented at classroom, or examination level.

An exemplar of how the lack of actual policy change should not be taken as proof of stasis or general satisfaction with the status quo was the ASTI convention of 1955.¹⁹¹ Among the resolutions passed this year were:

Res. No. 2: “that the A.S.T.I. seek a conference with the C.H.A. and kindred bodies with a view to devising a more satisfactory Leaving Certificate Course in History.”

Res. No 5: “that in Leaving Certificate History, the maximum mark be raised from 300 to 400

Res No. 6: “that the Intermediate Certificate History Course in both Irish and European History be halved for examination purposes (e.g. examinable periods should begin or end 1600 A.D.) early and late periods alternating.”

Res. No. 7: “That marks be assigned to History and Geography in the Intermediate Certificate Examination as follows: History, 200: Geography, 200.”

Res. No. 11: “That there should be a wider choice of questions given in Intermediate and Leaving Certificate History papers, especially in European History sections.”¹⁹²

Regarding the first resolution, a conference was sought, though ultimately, no lasting decisions were reached. Resolutions 6 and 7 were rejected outright by the ASTI. In terms of the calls to raise the marks for Leaving Certificate history, this was the second year in a row in which a deputation met with the Department of Education, however this appeal was ultimately rejected. As for the issue of question choice in both exams, a joint History Sub-Committee, comprising representatives from A.S.T.I. and kindred associations was convened,¹⁹³ though the direct results of this were not immediately apparent.

This example of anti-climactic campaigning can be seen to stem from the wider educational context during this earlier period. In terms of general curriculum, many realities were brought to bear on the Department, as to certain constraints on the new course and how it was

¹⁹¹ 1955 was not chosen for any particular reason, beyond serving as a suitable example. It holds no inherent importance over any other years, where similar calls were presented.

¹⁹² ASTI/Official Programme, 1955

¹⁹³ ASTI/C.E.C. REPORT, 1956, p.17

functioning within the educational context. In 1930, the Department of Education was entreated for the first time, as noted earlier, to establish a Committee of Enquiry into the Working of the Programme; a request they rejected.¹⁹⁴ Memos were sent to every TD in preparation for the Dáil Debate on the Education Estimates, May 1930, featuring a detailed outline why such a Committee should be established. The ASTI were “not to be taken as hostile to the present system” but felt that since the Programme was devised “at a time of political crisis, stock-taking now at the end of six years’ experience is advisable.”¹⁹⁵

By 1937, it was reported within the same union, how there was “considerable criticism of the present system of secondary education in this country, and much of it, indeed, was justified...[as] the present system, designed over thirteen years ago, is in many respects obsolete.” It was further argued that “The fact that the teachers –who are the people best qualified to know-regard the present system as needing investigation should be sufficient for the Department of Education, if not to take immediate action, at least to consider the present system and see what are the deficiencies under existing circumstances.”¹⁹⁶

The ASTI continued to make similar calls to establish a commission of inquiry to examine the secondary system throughout the 1940s. This was in spite of repeated ministerial statements that the education system in Ireland was the most fitting for Irish circumstances, satisfying both church and state. It has been widely argued that the school curriculum can be used to maintain the status quo and reflect the interests of the dominant power holders in society. The lack of change was not entirely surprising then considering the monopoly maintained by the Catholic Church over secondary education, and how there was little chance of any government implementing reforms that might affect this, be it in general, or in a subject-specific way (and especially in an area as important to official rhetoric as the teaching of national history).

¹⁹⁴ ASTI/OP/1931: The Department rejected the request in a letter dated 6 September 1930.

¹⁹⁵ ASTI/Official Programme, 1931; The ASTI’s case was made by Mr Frank Fahy, along with a call for a readjustment of the Leaving Certificate and Matriculation exams. Professor Tierney discussed the latter as well. Minister for Education, J.M. O’Sullivan did not reference the committee of inquiry in his response. See Dáil Éireann Debate, Vol. 34 No. 18, 21 May 1930,

¹⁹⁶ *Cork Examiner*, 3 April 1937.

A notable example of this inability to effect lasting change was the Council of Education, convened in 1951 to investigate primary and secondary education in Ireland. It took until 1960 for this council to complete its report on secondary education, which was published in 1962. This delay became a further factor which prevented, or at least was used as a pretext to inhibit, reform during the 1950s. It was acknowledged how until the report was submitted to the Minister how “usual procedure precluded him from making any statement or introducing any change which could appear to anticipate the findings of the Council. Secondary teachers, who knew of this procedure, would refrain from embarrassing the Minister by making public demands which he could not meet.”¹⁹⁷

In terms of Irish history, the report noted that while covering “the whole field of Irish history down to 1921 might seem to be very formidable in a junior secondary curriculum” that the course was suitable for Intermediate level, as it was to be taught previously in the primary school “in a general way”. The syllabus for the Intermediate Certificate therefore “involves only repeating the primary school course with appropriate linking up of the various periods and events, and the introduction of somewhat more detail for the period from the Battle of Clontarf onwards.”¹⁹⁸

Despite its general conservatism, the Council did propose some curricular reform in Irish history. It called for the Intermediate Honours course to include more recent Irish history, since the founding of the State. At Leaving Certificate level, the report agreed with corresponding periods in European and Irish history being taught, though as previously noted, it strongly disagreed with the system of rotating periods of specialisation “which ensures that no period can be taught for more than two consecutive years in any school.” This system, it argued, was established, not to aid teaching, but to “simplify the task of those whose responsibility it is to set and mark the examination papers”. It was criticised for causing “widespread dissatisfaction, and must certainly impose a severe strain on teachers without producing any corresponding advantage to pupils.” The recommendations

¹⁹⁷ Randles, *Post-primary education in Ireland 1957-1970*, p. 25.

¹⁹⁸ *Report of Council of Education*, p. 130.

called for the rotation system to be abandoned, with the syllabus in any given year to comprise any one of the following:

- a) History of Ireland, 400-1166 and History of Europe 400-987.
- b) History of Ireland, 1166-1485 and History of Europe 987-1453
- c) History of Ireland, 1485-1760 and History of Europe, 1453-1763
- d) History of Ireland, 1760-1939 and History of Europe, 1763-1939.¹⁹⁹

In terms of periodisation, the proposed courses were framed with a very definite narrative structure in place. Course A encapsulated the period from the Celts and the Coming of Christianity to Ireland until the High Kingship of Ruaidrí Ua Conchobair, last High King of Ireland. Course B ranged from the Coming of the Normans until the ascension of the Tudors; Course C ranged from the Tudor reign until the reign of George III, and also the arrival of the ‘Patriot Party’ in the Irish House of Commons; finally, Course D ranged from this point until the Emergency, encapsulating the first two decades after the Anglo-Irish Treaty.

But despite the criticisms levelled above, no alteration to either Intermediate or Leaving Certificate course occurred for almost a decade. This demonstrated the lack of real power that the Council had, even where it made modest recommendations for curriculum change. Furthermore, these proposed alterations, alongside the inclusion of additional material to bring the course more up-to-date would seem to follow what Jim Gleeson defined as the repeated ‘quick-fix solutions’ to curricular reform. As stated, when the complete curriculum was being reformed, what was occurring was “piece-meal adjustments or alignment to a host of social and cultural issues...leading to an enlargement of curricular contents with resultant pressures on schools to respond.”²⁰⁰

[Irish history teaching in the 1960s:](#)

Despite the criticism levelled by this report against the structure of the Leaving Certificate as well as its call for more recent history at Intermediate Certificate, the lack of

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., pp 130–8.

²⁰⁰ Jim Gleeson, ‘Cultural and Political Contexts of Irish Post-Primary Curriculum’ in Ciaran Sugrue (ed.), *Curriculum and ideology: Irish experiences, international perspectives* (Dublin, 2004), p. 124.

subsequent activity proved a source of irritation for many teachers and officials alike. A concurrent development was occurring amongst history teachers themselves, originating from the ASTI Education sub-committee on history, who were restive at the lack of any perceptible change in the Leaving Certificate syllabus.²⁰¹ This led to the creation of a teacher association specifically dedicated to furthering issues pertaining to history. Following the conclusion of a refresher course for history teachers held by the Department of Education the previous year, the History Teachers' Association of Ireland (hereafter HTAI) was founded, with its inaugural meeting held on 8 December 1962 in Dublin.²⁰² Their *raison d'être* was to strive to keep up with academia, and to ensure that the most modern and best techniques for teaching history at Post-primary level were promoted. As one educationalist has noted, in terms of their calls for the Department of Education to reconsider the History curriculum, the HTAI "found itself pushing against a door that, if not exactly open, was certainly not bolted and barred. From then onwards, the voluntary and the statutory streams converged."²⁰³

This period also saw the increased involvement of the ASTI in programme planning, as evidenced from the minutes of their History Sub-Committee meetings. In May 1965 during their discussions regarding the proposed revised Intermediate Certificate Course, the committee welcomed the proposal to divide the History Course into two sections – a Preliminary Corse and a Main Course – at 1477 (Irish history) and 1453 (European Course), though they unanimously opposed the testing of the Preliminary Course in the written examination and held that this should be done by inspection only. As stated

The fact that the proposed Preliminary course is to be tested by one **compulsory** question completely wipes out the advantages of dividing the course, since the whole period would have to be studied in the same detail as the Main Course to be sure of covering all possible questions. Thus,

²⁰¹ Milne, *New approaches to the teaching of Irish history*, p. 22.

²⁰² Niamh Crowley, 'Fifty years of the History Teachers' association of Ireland (HTAI)' in *History Ireland*, xxi, no. 6 (2013). There had been a number of (unsuccessful) attempts to organise refresher courses of this sort since the mid-1950s. See ASTI/SC/20 April 1956 ...14 March 1958 as examples of this.

²⁰³ Milne, *New approaches to the teaching of Irish history*, p. 22.

with the new additions, the whole history course would be intolerably long, and this when History tends to be allotted less time on the timetable in a number of schools than when the existing programme was drawn up by the Department.²⁰⁴

The History Sub-Committee noted the time constraints on teachers already, as well as acknowledging the increased importance of the course as taught at primary level as preparation for the post-primary course. Through this, they were developing the debate surrounding curricular reform to more than a policy or ideological level, by highlighting the classroom realities of it as a second-level subject. This sub-committee also unanimously advocated for a “completely new approach to the study and examination of history”, calling for the subject to move more towards being taught in ‘topics’ (“e.g. land, religion, culture, constitution, and social conditions and developments with the careers of outstanding personalities connected with each aspect”) rather than chronologically. This development towards a more thematic rather than chronological approach was in keeping with contemporary international trends, whereby the traditional approach to history teaching was being challenged.²⁰⁵ Calls were made to ensure that in any study of military history that “movements...not details” be studied. “The Thirty Years’ War” (for example) could be studied in European history “for its broad political and religious significance, but no intricate Wars of Religion.” There were also calls for new and improved history textbooks to correspond with any changes which emerged, as well as for examination questions to be set on a broader basis and “on a more level standard than heretofore”, alongside an alteration to the current system for framing examination questions.” The Sub-Committee stressed the importance of maintaining the standards already aimed at, while finally calling for the separation of History and Geography as examination subjects, with adequate time to be allotted for each in the Schools.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ ASTI Programme, 1966, C.E.C. REPORT, pp 52-4

²⁰⁵ See David Sylvester, ‘Change and Continuity in History Teaching, 1900-1993’ in Hilary Bourdillon (ed.), *Teaching History* (London, 1993), pp 9–26.

²⁰⁶ ASTI Programme, 1966, C.E.C. REPORT, pp 52-4: ‘Report of the History Sub-Committee’, 1965.

It was in keeping with this general atmosphere that a new syllabus programme for history (including Irish history) was constructed. The voluntary activity (annual refresher courses, lectures, Leaving Certificate symposia) “had achieved a sufficient head of steam to get movement under way at just the time when, within the Department of Education, and for many reasons...movement was the order of the day.”²⁰⁷ Following an investigation into the teaching of history in 1966, featuring prominent members of the academic and educational history community²⁰⁸ a new history programme was agreed upon, which was implemented in 1969. Irish history, it was noted, was to highlight not only the political and military aspects of its past, but the economic and social, in defining citizenship.²⁰⁹

Movement was seen, not just in the programmes being set but also in the purpose of school history. While reviewing a work relating to teaching History in England in 1966, Queen’s University Belfast historian H. Rex Cathcart noted how “if the school curriculum is to be adjusted...then the teaching of history has a special role to play in imparting to the young an understanding of social change.”²¹⁰ However, this change was slow in emerging. The traditional focus on history as ‘heritage’ education persisted a decade later despite the changes in curriculum, textbook production and syllabus which had occurred. As a 1975 study declared, though school history “has changed in recent years, the changes have been in the area of methodology rather than content; Irish history still retains its central place in the syllabus.”²¹¹ The aim of history, as the syllabus noted, was that “Pupils should be encouraged to value their heritage from the past.”²¹²

History was also beginning to lose its dominant status as a subject at Leaving Certificate level. In 1960-61, the annual departmental reports declared that while it remained an immensely popular subject, there was an increasing tendency among boys to study science and for girls to study foreign languages in its place.²¹³

²⁰⁷ Milne, *New approaches to the teaching of Irish history*, p. 22.

²⁰⁸ ‘Report on the teaching of History in Ireland’.

²⁰⁹ O’Callaghan, *Teaching Irish independence*, pp 42–3.

²¹⁰ H. R. Cathcart, ‘Review of History Teaching: The Era Approach’ in *Irish Historical Studies*, xv, no. 57 (1966), p. 112.

²¹¹ McMahon, *Review of Changes*, p. 66.

²¹² *Rules and Programmes...1974-5*, p. 97.

²¹³ *Report of the Department of Education, 1960-61*, (Dublin, 1962), p. 18.

It is important not to overstate this trend. Out of the 4,705 boys who sat the Leaving Certificate exam in 1962, 2,949 chose history as an option, meaning that nearly two in every three male students were studying history. No science subject approached even half of these figures. The situation was even more pronounced when it came to the education of girls, with history (as noted in previous reports), being seen as a favourite of girls, in comparison to boys. Of the 4,328 girls who sat the Leaving Certificate course, 3,008 chose history as an exam subject, being just under 70% of all who took the exam. French, the most popular continental language for study, was in comparison taken by 2,286 girls. This comparison allows a proper contextualisation of the increase in uptake in languages and the sciences in relation to history.²¹⁴ The trend was however moving against history. This difference in outlook between the previous educational era and the emerging modernisation phase was epitomised in 1963-64, when it was noted how “History is one of the really great cultural subjects; it is all the more regrettable, therefore, that some of the abler pupils choose to abandon its study when they reach the Leaving Certificate class.”²¹⁵

Movement could also be seen in the power dynamics of the major providers of education. Epitomising the later declaration by Assistant Secretary of the Department, Jack O’Brien that “when it comes to the crunch, it is not curriculum that’s the big issue...it’s structure and management and power and control”²¹⁶, calls were beginning to be made for a change in how the system was run. Senior governmental officials in the early 1960s began to stress the need to lessen the traditional clerical dominance of education, to be replaced with a system of cooperation between the state, lay teachers, and the Catholic Church.²¹⁷ The religious orders were not being overthrown, far from it. As Seán O’Connor stated, he did not want to expel the religious orders from education, a move characterised as ‘disastrous’. Instead “I want them in it as partners, not always as masters.”²¹⁸ O’Connor’s article was not necessarily representative of the wider context,

²¹⁴ *Report of the Department of Education, 1961-62*, (Dublin, 1963), pp 121-3.

²¹⁵ *Report of the Department of Education, 1963-64*, (Dublin, 1965), p. 58.

²¹⁶ Gleeson, ‘Cultural and Political Contexts of Irish Post-Primary Curriculum’, p. 124.

²¹⁷ Seán O’Connor, ‘Post-Primary education now and in the future’, *Studies*, Vol.57, no.3, (Autumn 1968), pp.233-49.; For more discussion on this article see John Walsh, *The Politics of Expansion*, p.262

²¹⁸ O’Connor, ‘Post-Primary Education’, p. 249.

in that the Church still maintained its central position. Attempts were made to suppress the article by Toirdhealbhach Ó Raifeartaigh, and Archbishop John Charles McQuaid, on the grounds that it would cause “great damage...by its presentation of what is supposed to be the position and influence of Religious in Irish Education.”²¹⁹ However, it highlighted a change that was slowly occurring within the Irish educational system, and which would increasingly take root as the decade drew to a close, with the Department of Education beginning to emerge as a more influential entity.

Curricular objectives:

The Council of Education report highlighted how the purpose of education, and particularly of History education was never directly connected with the classroom content. It also highlighted how the Irish context was little concerned with equipping students with the skills of the professional historian; to think critically, and analyse sources and so on. It declared (echoing the earlier claims of Corcoran) that “the aim of school history is not the training of scientific historians, or even of the critical spirit, except in a general way...”²²⁰ The latter was among the four overall ‘orientations’ which curriculum planning have taken internationally, as defined by Thomas A. O’Donoghue; namely ‘The development of one’s cognitive processes – the emphasis being on generic mental skills such as the ability to assemble information, work co-operatively, think critically, problem solve.’²²¹ This is important when attempting to locate the Irish history curriculum within international standards of the time, as it shows how the Irish context differed from O’Donoghue’s framing of curricular studies. School history, as conceptualised by the Council of Education in 1960, was still aimed towards the development of the moral and civic sense.²²²

This mirrored contemporary claims in England, where it was stated in the Ministry Handbook that the two key reasons for teaching history in schools were conveying a heritage and

²¹⁹ Irish Jesuit Archives. Admin/3/86(1), McQuaid to Fr. C. McGarry, 13 August 1968. See also Walsh, *The politics of expansion*, p. 262.

²²⁰ *Report of Council of Education*, p. 130.

²²¹ O’Donoghue, *Understanding contemporary education*, p. 87.

²²² Department of Education, *The Curriculum of the Secondary School*, (Dublin, 1960), p. 231. See also *Report of Council of Education*, p. 130.

handing on moral values. As Ann Low-Beer argues “The moral aim may be less explicit, but any conception of history in schools teaching citizenship, a knowledge of the society in which we live, an understanding of politics, national or international values, suggests an underlying practical moral aim.”²²³ Despite this, no guiding principles were established to this end in the Irish context, beyond the outline of course content.

It was not until a further review of the syllabus was conducted in 1966 than any move towards such a stance began to develop. A change in official policy occurred, with history being promoted as the objective study of the past, and developing skills of empathy and criticality. The new objectives were defined as helping students to feel a responsibility:

1. “To find rational explanations for historical events and developments;
2. “To understand what it is like to be in someone else’s position;
3. “To respect the right of others to be different and to hold different points of view.”²²⁴

However, while these values were at the core of the changes of the late 1960s, these objectives were not officially outlined until some ten years later, in 1977. D.G Mulcahy, contrasting Post-Primary History in the early 1980s with the situation as it had been up until then, noted

in the case of Intermediate Certificate history a relatively substantial statement of aims has been introduced where none previously existed but without any equally substantial change in content. And if this statement of aims represents an attempt to be more explicit on the question of educational objectives, it stands in sharp contrast to the situation in respect of the Leaving Certificate history which sets forth each of the courses to be covered in a few skimpy phrases and without any reference whatsoever to the question of aims.²²⁵

This resulted in a curriculum up to the 1970s that was primarily content-driven and placed great importance on the Certificate examination, and on textbooks for directing what was to be taught, as well as for shaping pedagogy.²²⁶ The lack of any stated objectives was of central importance

²²³ Ann Low-Beer, ‘Moral Judgments in History and History Teaching’ in W.H. Burston and D. Thompson (eds), *Studies in the Nature and Teaching of History* (London, 1967), p. 154.

²²⁴ *Rules and Programmes, 1977-8*, p. 75; Cathecart, ‘Teaching Irish History’, p.9

²²⁵ D.G. Mulcahy, *Curriculum and Policy in Irish Post-Primary Education* (Dublin, 1981), p. 57.

²²⁶ These areas will be examined in greater detail in Chapters four, five, and six respectively.

to understanding the difference between history's perceived role and the reality of it as a school subject.

In a seminal study published in the early 1970s, Seán O'Connor SJ, through the "tentative" conclusions reached from his report, argued that "where objectives are written into the curriculum materials, rather than left to the chance attention of the teacher or relegated to the worksheet, they are more likely to be well taught and learned."²²⁷ This would seem to confirm Mulcahy's later assertion that the concept of 'objectives' had not been a widely adopted one, despite claims as early as 1924 that teachers should have a "definite purpose" when outlining their own programmes.²²⁸ By 1947 further calls were being made to this end, with the ASTI Standing Committee resolving to create a sub-committee "to draw up a Plan of Education" in line with "the desirability of the Association (as a body of teachers) of giving expression to views on the ideal intention and object of Secondary Education."²²⁹ This never came to fruition during this period. As O'Connor noted, "many [teachers] told me that they never realised before the meaning of educational objectives." This highlights how such objectives were absent from previous periods.

O'Connor's assertions regarding the importance of learning objectives have been upheld internationally. In his opening address to the Association for Canadian Studies, Peter Seixas acknowledged that "Defining the purposes or goals or objectives of any enterprise is a crucial task. Without knowing our ends, choosing our means, becomes impossible."²³⁰ Or in other words, with no outlined purpose, how could it be possible to structure history teaching, in particular, the teaching of national history, in a way that reflects the reasons outlined by educators, educationalists and politicians as to its function?

The teaching of Irish history was deemed among the best subjects to imbue students with a moral and civic purpose, as emphasised by Corcoran, the Council of Education, and many

²²⁷ John Heywood and Seán O'Connor, S.J., *The multiple objective examining of school subjects with special reference to history* (Dublin, 1974), p. 189.

²²⁸ Rules and Programmes, 1924...

²²⁹ ASTI/SC/10 Oct. 1947: It is worth noting that the suggestion to include the word 'secondary' before Education was discussed but not generally favoured.

²³⁰ Seixas, 'The Purposes of Teaching Canadian History'. Accessed 09/11/17

politicians. However, without a stated objective, such endeavours were reliant obliquely on the course content itself, but even moreso on the perspective taken by teachers and textbooks with regards to it. This would then lead to difference between any stated aims of the course by teachers and officials, and what was actually before them.²³¹ This became increasingly problematic towards the end of the 1960s and into the early 1970s. As one international critic, David Pratt noted in 1974:

Despite the urgent need to find valid and persuasive reasons for engaging students in the study of history, a common feature that strikes the observer of history teaching in the schools is the absence of an explicit rationale for teaching the subject.

For Pratt, this lack of explicit rationale resulted in a peculiar situation where “history as actually taught in the classroom tends to resemble a ritual above justification.”²³²

The lack of guidance during this period would appear to have been a deliberate decision and not an inherent oversight or lack of planning as Mulcahy maintained. There existed a post-colonial desire for freedom of choice and programme for teachers in order to contrast the new system from its imperial predecessor. The first annual Report of the Department of Education specifically noted how

Under the old system the programmes had been, with few exceptions, rigid and narrow, and had to be carried out through the study of texts on which the examinations were based. Under the new system, the programmes are of the widest and most elastic types, prescribed texts have been abolished in all subjects. And the schools now enjoy the maximum of freedom both as regards the range of their programmes and the choice of books to suit their particular needs.²³³

This view echoed calls made by Corcoran in 1923 to this effect. As he declared “The work of the Dáil Commission on Secondary Curricula was wisely limited to pointing the way for schools and

²³¹ This divergence between the content teachers include in their lessons and the rationale for inclusion was developed in a paper presented at ECER 2016 entitled Richard Harris and Rosemary Reynolds, ‘Who chooses what and why? History teachers’ rationale when designing school history curricula’ (Dublin, 2016).

²³² Pratt, ‘The Functions of Teaching History’, p. 411.

²³³ Seán Ó Catháin, S.J., ‘Education in the New Ireland’ in Francis MacManus (ed.), *The years of the great test, 1926-39* (The Thomas Davis lecture series, 1962, Cork, 1967), pp 106–7.

teachers to follow: the details of the task are rather for the educators themselves. Nothing is more needed than the exercise of their own preferences by Irish schools.”²³⁴ This was important for Corcoran as teachers had

for over forty years been content to have their detailed programmes fixed for them, without consultation, by Boards and by Boards’ officials, and to have these programmes, in turn, delimited by examiners. When this order of procedure is exactly reversed, when Boards and Examiners have to work on the reasonable decisions of the schools, the right road will have been reached. Mere alterations of courses, mere readjustments of values, is by no means sufficient.²³⁵

Corcoran’s ideal of radically altering the system with the intention of allowing autonomy for schools within a predominantly Catholic and nationalist cultural context was never fully realised. Furthermore, the freedom of choice so emphatically stated as being crucial, became increasingly lessened over time. The Irish history syllabus, as defined, was concise, and very simply stated; merely a chronological course which highlighted what were deemed the most important aspects of Irish history. While officially teachers were to have the freedom “to distribute the subject matter set down above on its own plan”, the course became more prescribed with the increased demarcation of what was to be taught from the 1940s onwards. The teacher was free to teach the topics outlined without prescription in terms of textbooks or teaching methodology. But teaching outside this course was not encouraged, as evidenced in the criticism made by teachers of examination questions which did not deal directly with the specified topics.²³⁶

But while the course became more prescribed in terms of content, no corresponding development in course objectives emerged. The curriculum became increasingly content-driven, while the growing importance and pressures of the State examination further constrained the practice of teachers. The ‘*what*’ was being defined, though the reasoning ‘*why*’ was less forthcoming.

²³⁴ Corcoran, S.J., ‘New Programme: History’, pp 249–50.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*

²³⁶ ASTI/OP/1947, pp 20-21; “The Examiner should see that questions are set on the course as prescribed in the official Programme.”

Irish History in Other Subjects:

The importance of Irish history in secondary education extended beyond the formal history classroom, as previously mentioned. In his review of Auchmuty's *Teaching Irish History*, J.C. Beckett acknowledged history's interconnection with the majority of other subjects. While it may have only had between two and three hours specifically allocated to it per week, history impinged on other classes.²³⁷ Irish history in particular featured to a considerable degree in English, Irish and Geography classes. Any consideration of the place of Irish history within the secondary school curriculum must, therefore, also consider how it was portrayed in these other subjects too. A distinctly nationalistic historical perspective and attitude as to Ireland was promulgated through the prescribed readings in these subjects. While in keeping with the overall ethos and atmosphere seen in the history class, these subjects promoted this understanding of Irish history in a more overt manner. This was especially the case with English at Intermediate level, where nationalist poetry predominated, and was required to be committed to memory, with little additional consideration. Counter-narratives were not evident. This section will demonstrate that what was significant about the way that Irish history was promoted in other subjects was that it was taught in a less nuanced and more crudely nationalistic manner, than in the History classroom, which would effect the understanding that students would come to have of the subject in general.

A critical function of history in schools, as argued by Seán de Peitid, was "its function as a synthesizing subject, giving at least background unity to the arts, the sciences and modern languages...Today, [1972] with the curriculum so fragmented, history must be seen as giving a unifying background to the diverse disciplines."²³⁸ It is important to remember that it was not solely in the history class that Irish history was promoted. As noted by Létourneau and Chapman, "young people's historical consciousness develops in a wider social environment in which the history classroom is only one source from which they develop their wider sense/s of history,

²³⁷ Beckett, 'Review of The Teaching of History', pp 462–3.

²³⁸ Seán de Peitid, 'Why Teach History?' in *Oideas*, no. 9 (1972), p. 7.

alongside other cultural sources that shape the stock of ‘narrative templates’, representations and ‘myhistories’...”²³⁹ They defined this as a ‘learning eco-system’ that “help shape students’ thinking about the past”. They also deemed it necessary to understand such eco-systems “in order to understand the ways in which students will make sense of what they are taught...a precondition for teaching that aims to develop and extend what young people know.”²⁴⁰

Factors outside the school context are important towards shaping a student’s historical knowledge and identity.²⁴¹ This section limits its analysis of the ‘learning eco-system’ to all subjects within the secondary school. It examines how Irish history was being promoted in subjects other than history. Students do not simply forget what they learnt in the previous forty minutes before going into History class. Portrayals of Irish history given in other classes are therefore important to understand. This section focusses predominantly on the literature and poetry discussed in English and Irish classes, as well as briefly considering the Geography lesson to which History was twinned for examination purposes. It employs a sampling methodology, using select examples from the 1920s, 1940s and 1960s to gauge this issue in a general way.

The interconnection between the Irish language and Irish history has been discussed widely.²⁴² This was highlighted at primary level in 1930-31. When discussing teachers, those singled out for praise by the Department viewed Irish “not [as] a subject in a water-tight compartment. History, geography, singing, even the matter of occasional lessons in the English reading books are used to create an Irish atmosphere for the pupil and to arouse in him a Gaelic spirit and outlook.”²⁴³ In secondary schools, while the overall course focussed more on Irish composition and grammar, aspects of Irish history from a Gaelic nationalist tradition were promoted through the set reading. In 1943 for example, the Leaving Certificate examination paper

²³⁹ Jocelyn Létourneau and Arthur Chapman, ‘Negotiating the nation: Young people, national narratives and history education’ in *London Review of Education*, xv, no. 2 (2017), p. 150.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ For more on this see Barton & McCully, ‘History, identity, and the school curriculum in Northern Ireland’.

²⁴² See for example Steven Ellis, ‘A view of the Irish language: language and history in Ireland from the middle ages to the present’ in *Language and identities in historical perspective* (Pisa, 2005), pp 69–80.; Doherty, ‘National Identity and the Study of Irish History’.

²⁴³ *Report of the Department of Education, 1930-31* (Dublin, 1932), p. 18.

asked for an essay to be written on Ireland and the war, while one collection of short stories to be learned was *Seacht mBuaidh an Éirighe amach* by Pádraig Ó Conaire.²⁴⁴ In the most recent edition of this work, Brendan McGowan commented how, although not directly about the 1916 Rising, the short stories in this work “represent the after effects of the Rising on different types of Irishmen”²⁴⁵ and “reflect the seismic shift in public opinion in favour of Irish Independence rather than Home Rule, which culminated in the electoral success of Sinn Féin in 1918.”²⁴⁶ It was seen as “the first important fictional response to the Rising” securing Ó Conaire’s “position as the foremost writer in modern Irish and the only one of international standing.”²⁴⁷ Its inclusion in the secondary school curriculum shows how the literature chosen for study was steeped in aspects of Irish history.

This importance of Irish history towards promoting the Irish language was commonly noted. In a 1956 Dáil debate, it was acknowledged by Fianna Fáil TD Seán Mac Cárthaigh how

The teaching of Irish is very important because it is our native language...Every one of the leaders, not Pearse alone, who struck for freedom in 1916 showed for years before that their sincerity in making the restoration of our language part of their programme, their policy and fight... it is our own language and consequently should be preserved. The only thing is that we must set about preserving it in the right way, in the most satisfactory way for students and teachers and for the nation as a whole, so that an interest would be taken in it.²⁴⁸

The teaching of Irish was seen as integral to the transmitting of the historical ideals upon which the nation was based. The central role given to the restoration of the Irish language in the first thirty years of the Irish state was therefore embedded in its historical importance. The satisfactory promotion of Irish history was closely related to the drive to promote the Irish language.

²⁴⁴ Pádraig Ó Conaire, *Seacht mBuia an Éirighe Amach*, (Dublin, 1918); A 2016 re-publication translated this to Pádraig Ó Conaire, *Seacht mBuia an Éiri Amach/ Seven Virtues of the Rising*, trans. Diarmuid de Faoite (Dublin, 2016).

²⁴⁵ Robert Lynd, *If the Germans Conquered England, and other Essays*, (Dublin, 1917), p. 184.

²⁴⁶ Brendan McGowan, ‘Introduction’ in *Seacht mBuia an Éiri Amach/ Seven Virtues of the Rising* (Dublin, 2016), pp 11–12.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

²⁴⁸ *Dáil Éireann debates*, Vol. 159, 19 July 1956, col.s 1386-7.

A further example of this interconnection was the increased emphasis on teaching history *through* Irish. From the 1920s through to the late 1950s, History was consistently taught through the medium of Irish in a large number of secondary schools,²⁴⁹ with the inter-relation between the Irish language and Irish history repeatedly stressed in official circles.²⁵⁰ In 1936, 57.5% of all schools provided instruction through Irish, with 76 Class A schools (in which all instruction was through Irish), and 111 Class B (in which some if not most subjects were taught through Irish).²⁵¹ As for History, between the Intermediate and the Leaving Certificate examinations:

Total papers examined in history: 8,625

Total answered through Irish: 3,527

Percentage through Irish: 40.9%²⁵²

These figures rose until peaking in the mid-Emergency years.²⁵³ This began to decline soon after however, notably so by the mid-1950s, in line with the wider disillusionment with the policy of Gaelicisation.²⁵⁴

Beyond Irish, the study of English in secondary schools was the most noticeable subject influenced by Irish history. Between poetry and prose, Irish historical writers, and writers on historical topics featured prominently, especially at Intermediate level. This was a

²⁴⁹ See for example *Report of the Department of Education for the School Years 1925-26-27 and the Financial and Administrative Year 1926-27* (Dublin, 1928), p. 57 – In this year, History is specifically declared as the subject most taught through Irish.

²⁵⁰ See also *Dáil Éireann debates*, vol. 159, 19 July 1956, cols. 1386-7, in which the importance of the Irish language is justified in expressly historical terms.

²⁵¹ Of the 76 schools admitted to Class A., 26 were boys' schools, 50 were girls' schools, and one was mixed.

²⁵² *Report of the Department of Education, 1935-36* (Dublin, 1937), p. 64.

²⁵³ *Report of the Department of Education, 1937-38* (Dublin, 1939), pp 49-51; 1938 for example saw a further increase in the number of Irish and Bilingual Schools to 207 or 61.6 per cent of the total number of schools, with Class A schools accounting for 97 of these, or 28.9 per cent. The number of pupils in attendance were 24,124 or 66.8 per cent of the total number of secondary school pupils, Of the total number of scripts received from candidates, 54,565 or 45.4 per cent were in Irish.

²⁵⁴ N.A.I./GAEL/AN GÚM/G072; Hand written Letter from Mícheál Ó Siocfhradha to Seán MacLellan, and the Chief Inspector, M[éán].O[ideachais], Seoirse Mac Niocail, 21 Oct 1953: “Tá lón na scol ins na hAicmí A, B1 agus B2 ag laghdú beagán ó 1940/41 i leith... Ionann san go léir agus a rá nach bhfuil ag méadú (ach ag cúngú beagán beag) ar theagasc a dhéanamh trí Ghaeilge ins na scoileanna...cé go bhfuil ag méadú ar lón dá bhfuil de scoileanna sa tir.”

continuation of what was being encouraged through the primary schools. In 1927, one primary district inspector was adamant that “more is wanted than Irish and history treated as ‘subjects’...in developing a proper national sentiment.” History, he criticised was “not often taught with the vividness and feeling necessary to develop that national feeling at once intense and well-informed which is required to make us a self-respecting people.” The English reading books to be set were seen as a way of rectifying this supposed deficiency. As he continued:

Many of the reading texts in English are insipid and colourless. Some teachers have introduced such books as Mitchel’s *Jail Journal* and Standish O’Grady’s *Flight of the Eagle*, to their senior classes, and I am of opinion that such books, if treated intelligently, will give more insight into Irish history than much of the formal teaching of the subject.²⁵⁵

By 1940-41, both the Intermediate and the Leaving Certificate English course heavily featured the writings of Young Irelander Thomas Davis in the Prose Section, with twenty separate essays of his prescribed for reading.²⁵⁶ Likewise, Irish history was pervasive in the prescribed pieces in the Poetry section (at least half of which was to be committed to memory by students). The options were as follows:

‘Dark Rosaleen’ (Mangan); ‘A Retort’ (Lawless); ‘After Aughrim – Ireland Speaks’ (Lawless); ‘The March to Kinsale’ (De Vere); ‘Ireland’ (Shorter); ‘The Fool’ (Pearse); ‘The Memory of the Dead’ (Ingram); ‘The Ballad of Father Gilligan’ (Yeats); ‘Lament for the Death of Eoghan Ruadh O’Neill’ (Davis).²⁵⁷

This list, among others, features poems relating to the Nine Years War, the Confederate wars, and the Williamite wars, as well as writings by Thomas Davis and P.H. Pearse. This is significant when one considers how Irish history was being transmitted in secondary schools.

²⁵⁵ *Report of the Department of Education, 1925-26-27*, p. 37.

²⁵⁶ These were: ‘The Irish Brigade’; ‘Memorials of Wexford’; ‘The History of To-day’; ‘The Resources of Ireland’; ‘National Art’; ‘Our National Language’; ‘The State of the Peasantry’; ‘Irish Scenery’; ‘Irish Music and Poetry’; ‘Ballad Poetry of Ireland’; ‘A Ballad History of Ireland’; ‘Influences of Education’; ‘Foreign Travel’; ‘Self-Education’; ‘Absenteeism of Irish Genius’; ‘Popular Education’; ‘Study’; ‘Irish History’; ‘Orange and Green’.

²⁵⁷ ASTI/OP/1941 – C.E.C. Report, pp 34-6.

While this focus lessened somewhat in subsequent years, anglo-Irish poetry²⁵⁸ remained an important part of the English course following the change in programme in the mid-1940s.²⁵⁹ This was reflected in the readers set for study, especially Patrick Kennedy's *Intermediate Poetry*. Published in 1941, and re-printed on an almost annual basis until 1953, this anthology was "specially compiled for the Intermediate Certificate Course in accordance with the Programme of the Department of Education." Ciara Boylan described this work as "reflect[ing] the nationalist tone of school curriculum in the decades after independence"²⁶⁰ A significant number of Irish authors featured, including "a notable amount of patriotic verse and poems based on significant historical events central to the nationalist construction of Ireland's past."²⁶¹ There was a tendency at Leaving Certificate level to focus more on the established 'canon' of English literature, namely Shakespeare, Milton and the Romantic poets of the mid-nineteenth century.²⁶²

That the Intermediate Certificate course featured more anglo-Irish writers can be explained according to two possible reasons: First, that the course was structured so that students were not overly exposed to predominantly British poetry before they were adept to critically engaging with it. As their ability to consider and empathise with English scenes and themes was less likely at a younger age, the decision to focus on Irish themes and Irish poets at Intermediate Certificate level would make sense, being more familiar in general to them. There was also a very real concern during this period that students would be 'anglicised' through the material set for reading. In November 1953, Senator Frederick Summerfield acknowledged how he was

Appalled...when one of my grandchildren who attends a secondary school came home and showed me her fourth reader, identical in every respect with the standardised English secondary school reader...My little grandchildren are being taught that their national heroes are Nelson, Drake and Frobisher. Surely to God, after

²⁵⁸ This is understood in this context as poetry by Irish writers written in English.

²⁵⁹ ASTI/OP/1943, pp 28-31.

²⁶⁰ Ciara Boylan, NCCB, <https://nccb.tcd.ie/exhibit/ft848r126>, viewed 12 Dec. 2016

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² ASTI/OP/1945 – C.E.C. Report, p. 16: "The Leaving Certificate Course in English for the Schoolyear 1945/46. Poetry: English and Anglo-Irish poetry as in the College Book of Poetry: 1) The whole book for general reading 2) Special attention to the poems contained therein of the following: - Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Coleridge, Tennyson, Moore, Ferguson, Stephens, Ledwidge. Drama: Hamlet (Shakespeare)".

30 years we can do something with schools which get a Government grant and which, in effect, cause compulsory Irish to be negated by compulsory imperialism taught in English...I am not content to have my grandchildren taught that our national heroes are those of another country.²⁶³

Gabriel Doherty contended that “These criticisms implied that sympathy with the British bordered on the immoral and identified the Irish outlook as innately rural.”²⁶⁴ The debate does not uphold such a view. There was no promotion of a rural perspective in the speech. Moreover, Summerfield was very careful to demonstrate how he did “not wish to be disrespectful to the English.”²⁶⁵ His speech was more a call to celebrate Ireland and her historical figures through the reading prescribed for English.

This latter consideration was evident right up to the end of the period. In 1969, as part of the English Intermediate Certificate Examination (Paper II), students were asked to consider P.H. Pearse’s graveside oration at the funeral of Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa.²⁶⁶ This was a celebrated moment in Irish Republican history, where Pearse proclaimed, *inter alia*, his vision of Ireland “not free merely, but Gaelic as well, not Gaelic merely, but free as well.”²⁶⁷ In a review of the examinations, the ASTI English sub-committee considered the question to have been “Badly phrased: assumes a reaction: would have been better to ask candidates to indicate what feelings Pearse intended to arouse in his hearers.”²⁶⁸ The question shows however that Pearse’s writings were part of the English course, and were expected to be read and studied by students at Intermediate level, without any great criticality.

The overt promotion of nationalist Irish history through other subjects was also evident in the teaching of Geography, namely through the textbooks used. A striking example, and a popular textbook used in secondary schools in the early decades of the period was Elenor Butler’s

²⁶³ *Seanad Éireann debates*, 26 November 1953, Vol. 3, No. 2, col. 147.

²⁶⁴ Doherty, ‘The Irish history Textbook’, p. 16

²⁶⁵ *Seanad Éireann debates*, 26 November 1953, Vol. 3, No. 2, col. 147.

²⁶⁶ ASTI/OP/1970, C.E.C. report, p. 38: ‘English sub-committee – Meeting held 1 July 1969’.

²⁶⁷ Eleanor Hull, *A history of Ireland and her people* (London, 1926), Vol. II, Appendix 2.: Full speech quoted.

²⁶⁸ ASTI/OP/1970, C.E.C. report, p. 38: ‘English sub-committee – Meeting held 1 July 1969’.

The Irish Student's Geography, originally published between 1923 and 1925.²⁶⁹ Defined by “an intensely nationalistic tone”,²⁷⁰ this work described Ireland (termed ‘Holy Ireland’) in its introduction, as a country which had ‘since the dawn of history, nursed generation after generation of brave men and women...’ and which holds ‘the ashes of the long line of long-suffering men and women to whom, under God, we owe most of what we are.’”²⁷¹ The book was to help young Irish students “in the task of love which the study of their homeland must be for them”²⁷² The inherently ‘whig’ and nationalist understanding of Irish history seen in a number of less sophisticated history textbooks²⁷³ was evident here also. While this does not represent the teaching of geography in secondary schools in its entirety during the period, it highlights how the subject was historically contextualised. Though not the principal aspect of the geography syllabus, this understanding of Irish history was present as an undercurrent through which the subject was engaged with.

Conclusion:

The Departmental syllabus offers a guide towards official attitudes regarding Irish history. Throughout the period, the Irish history syllabus was outlined along the chronological principle, from the ‘earliest times’ until independence. This mirrored structures seen elsewhere internationally.²⁷⁴ That schools should focus, not on isolated periods of Irish history but on the need to stress continuance, was acknowledged by both official and academic sources.²⁷⁵ This belief in studying a ‘breadth’ of knowledge’ before any periods of intense study be completed, as embodied in the structure of the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate programmes, has been discussed by a number of academics internationally, not always positively. John Fines, discussing history classrooms in England criticised calls for ‘breadth of knowledge’ as it resulted in “an

²⁶⁹ Elenor Butler, *The Irish Student's Geography* (Dublin, 1923). This text was advertised in the ASTI Convention Programmes under the heading ‘Perfect Teaching Books’ in 1927 and again in 1929. See ASTI, *Official Programme of fifth Annual Convention*, 20 April 1927, inside cover; ASTI/OP/1929.

²⁷⁰ National Collection of Children’s Books [NCCB], <https://nccb.tcd.ie/exhibit/6t053f99d>, viewed 01 Feb. 2017

²⁷¹ Butler, *The Irish Student's Geography*, pp 4–5.

²⁷² Ibid., p. 5.

²⁷³ These are discussed in the following chapter.

²⁷⁴ Zúñiga et al., *History Curriculm in Chile*, p. 39. Foster, ‘History’.

²⁷⁵ Auchmuty, *The teaching of history*, p. 37. See also Rules and Programmes definition.

attempt to swallow all of it, however superficially treated, so that students should do ancient, then medieval, then modern.” The idea of a curriculum governed first by breadth and then depth of knowledge was criticised for resulting in “infinite harm” being done to history teaching in schools. “It turned history into a race which nobody could ever win, with the teacher getting faster and faster the nearer the exams they get, leaving out greater and greater chunks of reality in the hopes of making it to the winning post.”²⁷⁶ This, it was stated “paints history not as it is, confused and confusing bedraggled and messy...and sorts it out into one almighty washing line”, that is a neat and linear story. Connected with this rejection of ‘Toutism’ (as it was termed by Fines) was the critique of History teaching as ‘development’, in line with the whig interpretation of history, discussed in Chapter 4.²⁷⁷ Despite this, the Toutist approach remained the rubric through which the Irish history programme was organised throughout the period under investigation

This chapter highlighted the late 1930s and early 1940s as a period of development in curricular terms, with numerous attempts being made to alter what and how Irish history was to be taught. Not all of the proposed reforms were adopted, with a number being attempted and disregarded. This was due to both practical and political concerns. Despite this, it is important to acknowledge the failed attempts at reform, to challenge the consensus view²⁷⁸ that this was a period of quiet acceptance, and consistency within Irish history teaching, and not in fact one of trial, error and experimentation.

In terms of overall purpose, scant attention was paid to providing any overt objective as to what Irish history was to be taught for. For this reason, one cannot fully grasp its purpose within the school from solely reading the official curriculum. However, by looking at the views of the major architects of the school programmes, between state and church officials, and relating this to the content provided therein, it has been possible to evaluate what Irish history was to

²⁷⁶ John Fines, ‘Making Sense Out of the Content of the History Curriculum’ in Christopher Portal (ed.), *The history curriculum for teachers* (London, 1987), pp 108–9.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ O’Callaghan, *Teaching Irish independence*.

promote -namely a narrative of Irish history seen through a Gaelic Catholic lens- despite the lack of any overt declaration on the State's part to this end.

This perspective was even more pronounced in the portrayal of Irish history in other subjects. Irish history maintained an important position in the English, Irish, and Geography classes. Moreover, these subjects adopted a crudely nationalistic perspective as to it; the examples highlighted being exclusively from this tradition. When it came to poetry, students were obliged to learn the cited poems off by heart. ‘Learning’ was less concerned with critically assessing this poetry than committing it to memory. As for the examination, there was little consideration beyond this. This meant that in these other subjects, students were learning specific aspects of nationalist Irish history with little criticality. This was especially the case at Intermediate level, and in English classes in particular, where detailed discussion of literature and poetry from English writers was limited. This did not happen, for the most part, until Leaving Certificate level. This would have shaped students’ understanding of Irish history to a considerable degree, by encouraging and normalising a specific perspective on Irish history which was pervasive throughout the education system.

This overall chapter also touches on the official desires as to how history should be taught. Official reports as well as a number of academic articles stressed the importance of autonomy for the schools, and for history teachers to be able to devise their own programmes. These ideals were however, limited by the impact of examinations on schools. As one influential commentator on this noted, the “hopes so frequently expressed in these documents fall disappointingly short of fulfilment” due to, but not limited to “the basic contradiction of attempting a lively, imaginative approach within the confines of a highly conventional syllabus and a rigid examination system.”²⁷⁹ The importance of the state examination alongside the centrality of textbooks to guiding Irish history classes is therefore crucial to acknowledge.

²⁷⁹ Milne, *New approaches to the teaching of Irish history*, p. 27.

Chapter 4: Irish History Textbooks, 1921-69:

"I went into a book store and asked for a history of Ireland, and secured the one which is now taught in the schools... I was overwhelmed first with horror at England and then with despair over Ireland. The record, apart from foreign oppression, is one long series of wars or predatory raids between the great chieftains."

The major textbooks used in secondary schools between 1921 and 1969 provided a generally consistent narrative of the Irish past. The quote which begins this chapter, from a 1923 book entitled *In Many Places*, by Clare Sheridan, speaks of the portrayal of Irish history as taught to Irish children immediately following Independence and Civil War, and is testament to the nature of textbooks at the time. The passage -quoting the words of Baroness Spenser-Churchill- continued by arguing that “not even the advent of a foreign enemy could unite [the various clans] in a common cause. Rivalry and jealousy have always characterised their policy. Not only have they fought each other continuously, but they have betrayed and murdered one another.”¹ Examples of this kind are instructive in demonstrating the narrative to which the textbooks which emerged in the Irish Free State and beyond were reacting to.

The Irish history textbooks published and used in the Free State (or immediately preceding its establishment) until the late 1960s comprise the focus of this chapter. It examines issues of content, narrative, and themes, historiography, gender, political influences, and translation and publication as Gaeilge. It establishes which textbooks were used in schools at this time, and by analysing these specific works and cross-comparing them, demonstrates how a generally consistent narrative of the Irish past was being promoted through these texts.

The fledgling status of the newly independent Irish state provides an ideal context to analyse. The textbooks used rarely changed, for a number of reasons, both practical, in terms of costs, and ideological, with the textbooks reflecting the ethos and beliefs of the wider society and those in positions of power, namely the various Church bodies in charge of education. Consequently, it can be accepted that a reasonably similar account of the Irish past was

¹ Clare Sheridan, *In Many Places*, (London, 1923), pp 40-1

transmitted in print to secondary students across the period, as due to the small size of the Irish text book market, books which found favour were known to attain a position of great influence and be widely used in a majority of schools.²

This study engages in an analysis of the most popular textbooks, before analysing the respective emphases placed in these works on the course of Irish history. Developing from the work of Mariam Chughtai in Pakistan, it acknowledges the three crucial (though not exhaustive) factors in the Irish context as to why textbooks were chosen: (1) Political and class leanings (2) Religious leanings, and (3) Affordability.³ It offers the first comprehensive breakdown of the major textbooks used to teach Irish history at Post-Primary level between 1921 and 1969, charting what was being discussed and to what extent.

Ultimately it argues that the traditional perception expressed by John O'Donoghue, that Irish history as taught in the schools was “not a subject, but a creed, not a discipline but a weapon”⁴ must be modified. O'Donoghue's claim is too extreme. While the textbooks were conventionally nationalist in their emphasis, they were not xenophobic and driven exclusively by religious fervour or anti-English sentiment. A general narrative of Irish history was maintained across each of the textbooks, which tended to focus on a traditional ‘Great Man’ approach to history with a strong emphasis on high politics. This consistent approach would point to an educational environment in which there was an overall consensus in terms of what the textbooks' general message should be- in line with the moralistic and cultural ‘Policy of Gaelicisation’ implemented by the Department of Education.⁵ A wide range of choices were offered within that tradition. To this end, the narrative expressed in these texts was not necessarily oppressive or

² Milne, *New approaches to the teaching of Irish history*, p. 27.

³ In her D.Ed Thesis examining the creation of history textbooks in Pakistan, Mariam Chughtai established that there were in fact seven key factors to how textbooks were chosen by states; these being (1) “Religious ideology”: (2) “Identity politics”: (3) “Military revisionism: (4) “Political power” (5) “Financial vulnerabilities (6) “Systemic inefficiencies and (7) “Past history textbooks. The three discussed were the most prominent in the Irish context however. See Chughtai, ‘What Produces a History Textbook?’

⁴ John O'Donoghue, ‘A Critique of the Theory Underpinning the Junior Certificate Course in History and the Reality for Pupils in the Classroom’, in Áine Hyland, (ed.) *Issues in Education*, Vol.2, (Dublin, 1997) p.99: See also Garrison, ‘Struggles of immigration at the doorstep of Irish education’, p. 172.

⁵ Coolahan, *Irish Education*, pp 72–3; Ó Buachalla, *Education Policy*, pp 340–50.

rigid, as there was no single consensus view as to what aspects of Irish history were most important. Different emphases were placed on various events and figures in Irish history, according to the political and class bias of the author. It is also worth noting that unlike other nation-states at that time, there was no state-sanctioned textbook in Ireland, mirroring the private nature of the Irish secondary schools themselves.

The ‘Faith and fatherland’ version of Irish history was more prevalent in the works of James Carty and Mícheál Ó Siocfhradha than the other works examined. The former two were the most popular texts, in English and Irish respectively, (Carty overall, Ó Siocfhradha in Christian Brothers Schools), meaning that this was the predominant version of Irish history transmitted in text to secondary students during this period.

Discussion of events and figures which differed from this narrative or which acted as a counterpoint was still possible. Mary Hayden’s account notably differed in places, due to its more detailed nature. However, the depiction in general of ‘great men’ and events from a ‘Whig-nationalist’ perspective tended to promote a narrative grounded in a contemporary framing of Irish nationalism and a united identity and culture.

In terms of themes, land and religion were central to all texts examined. In line with Spenser-Churchill’s quote, the theme of political and cultural unity/disunity was also prevalent. Importantly however, this ‘disunity’ did not preclude there being an ‘Irish’ nation and civilisation in Pre- and Post-Norman times. In fact, the existence of this was central to the overall narratives within the textbooks. By connecting the disparate clans and figures along ethno-cultural lines, claims could be made about an ‘Irish people’, even if the historical actors did not see themselves as united.⁶ The prevalence of discord and disunity could then be highlighted, without undermining the belief that an Irish people had existed from the Celtic age to the present.

Considerations as to representations of gender in Irish history textbooks form part of this chapter’s overall analysis. It demonstrates how women were not included as part of the overall

⁶ See also James Carty, *A Class-Book of Irish History. Book I: From the Earliest Times to the Norman Invasion* (London, 1929), p. 101. “It is worthy of note that, although there were many kingdoms, the same legal customs were in force throughout the island.”⁶

narrative, except in exceptional circumstances. This stemmed from the subject material and what ‘history’ was considered to be, namely military and political history, with an emphasis on ‘Great men’. There was no correlation between the gender of the textbook author and the level of inclusion of women in accounts of Irish history. This suggested that the more recent emphasis by Osler and others of the need for more female textbook writers, to make up for the lack of female representation in historical accounts, would not have made any difference in the particular cultural context of post-independence Ireland.⁷

The chapter also considers Irish history textbooks written as Gaeilge. The work of An Gúm was to aid the government’s policy of Gaelicisation, including provision of such textbooks. The governmental policy favoured the translation of previously published texts which had been successful in English. These were to cater for the Class A and Class B schools, alongside private publications as Gaeilge, such as Ó Siadhail’s work. An Gúm proved unable to satisfy demand for history texts as Gaeilge, which played a significant role in the decline in teaching history through Irish in the late 1940s and 1950s. The internal workings of An Gúm however demonstrate the very real attempt by officials to avoid advocating overtly sectarian or culturally partisan stances during this earlier period. Overall, a simple binary of Bad English vs Good Irish was not being promoted, in texts in English or Irish. Enemies of ‘Ireland’ could just as easily be of Irish descent, while champions could be of English descent, such as W.E. Gladstone.⁸ What was common is that the figures chosen to be celebrated were those who adhered to and furthered a nationalist cause. These heroes and villains, as well as the general ‘glorious failures’ and resistance narrative could be identified most tellingly through the use of descriptive language when describing key moments in Irish history.

⁷ Audrey Osler, ‘Still Hidden from History? The representation of women in recently published history textbooks’ in *Oxford Review of Education*, xx, no. 2 (1994), p. 230.

⁸ Mary Hayden and George Aloysius Moonan, *A short history of the Irish people* (Dublin, 1921), p. 541. “Ireland should remember with gratitude the Statesman to whom she owes the Disestablishment of the Irish Church, the first important Land Bill, and the two attempts to restore her legislature, to which he devoted so much of the evening of his days.”

The texts chosen for in-depth analysis were not the sole works that were in use in schools, especially throughout the 1920s. Other important works include Irish history textbooks by P.W. Joyce,⁹ Mrs Thomas Concannon, and A.M O’Sullivan, as well as the respective works of Constantia Maxwell, and H. Kingsmill Moore which were used in many schools run by the Church of Ireland. Though important that they be recognised, these texts do not constitute the main focus of this chapter, as their use in secondary schools was largely superseded by the textbooks listed below, especially from the beginning of the 1930s onwards

At home and abroad, the issue of school textbooks has been and continues to be a point of contention. Viewed by many as the closest way, after direct field work, of finding out the content of teaching, History textbooks have also been seen to act as a condensed version of the society which produced it.¹⁰ In the Irish context, it was widely acknowledged that history teaching was heavily dependent on the use of textbooks.¹¹ The quality of history teaching during this period was understood in official circles to be closely connected with the type of textbooks available to teachers.¹² They were seen not only as an exposition of a particular branch of study, but also, (and in certain instances, exclusively) as a programme book for pupils, containing the course to be taught, and the manner and order in which this was to be done.¹³

The central texts:

In order to engage in a comparison of Post-Primary Irish history textbooks, one must first establish the main textbooks in use between 1921 and 1969. Due to the lack of archival preservation work done by the Irish publishing houses, with print run and sales figures not being

⁹ P. W. Joyce, *A short history of Gaelic Ireland from the earliest times to 1608*. (Dublin, 1924). For a discussion of a number of these textbooks, see Fischer, ‘Another Irish Nation’. See also John Coolahan, ‘The Contribution of P.W. Joyce to the Irish Education System’ in *Oideas*, xxxiv (1989), pp 75–93.

¹⁰ Fischer, ‘L’histoire irlandaise à l’école en Irlande, 1921-1996’, p. 31. See also Fischer, ‘School Textbooks and their place in twentieth-century Irish History’.

¹¹ Milne, *New approaches to the teaching of Irish history*, p. 26. See also *Report of the Department of Education,, 1944-45* (Dublin, 1946), p. 26 “B’fhéidir gur mó tairbhe dei-théacsleabhair i múineadh na Staire ná i múineadh aon ábhair eile.” [translation: “Quality textbooks are perhaps more beneficial in the teaching of history than in the teaching of any other subject.”]

¹² See *Report of the Department of Education, 1946-47* (Dublin, 1948), pp 15-16. “Tríd is tríd, beidh staid na Staire ins na scoltacha ag brath cuid mhaith I gcónaí ar an saghas téacsleabhar a bheas le fáil.”

¹³ N.A.I./GAEL/AN GÚM/G072; ‘Téacsleabhar Mheanscoile, 1938-62’; Seoirse Mac Niocaill, ‘What is a “Text-book”?’, 7 February 1939

readily available,¹⁴ a more circuitous method was required in order to ascertain this. Popularity has been gauged according to accounts from the time, and surveys conducted about the time; from newspaper reviews of textbooks and their authors, and finally from noting the (limited) sales figures and repeat editions (which demonstrate that a textbook had sold out, and was considered popular and profitable enough by the private publisher to issue another edition).¹⁵ Through this, it emerged that by the mid-1930s, the three textbooks most recommended and widely used for teaching Irish history were: Fr John Ryan's *History of Ireland* Vol. I and II (Dublin, 1929), James Carty's *Class-Books of Irish History, I-IV* (Dublin, 1929-31), and the more "advanced book" by Mary Hayden and George A. Moonan, *A Short History of The Irish People* (Dublin, 1921).¹⁶ In the following decade two further titles emerged as increasingly popular, Mícheál Ó Siocfhradha's *Stair Sheanchas Éireann*, (Dublin, 1933) and Dora Casserley's *History of Ireland I and II* (Dublin, 1941).¹⁷ These five works comprised the standard school textbooks used in the majority of Irish secondary schools until the introduction of the influential Gill and Macmillan series in the late 1960s.

This latter series was seen as the first significant move away from the predominant focus on political and military history, and underpinned 'a long-overdue modernisation of the history curriculum.'¹⁸ The language adopted in the Gill and Macmillan texts and thereafter was seen as more temperate, with the series being defined by one writer as the 'Moderate' texts, in comparison to the 'purist' texts on Irish history which preceded it: the latter were defined as those which tended to venerate the 'heroes' of Irish history, while the former were more prone to revise many

¹⁴ I personally contacted each publishing company, as well as investigated a number of archives in this regard, but to limited success.

¹⁵ Furthermore, because production was most costly in the initial print, once the proofs and galleys were completed for a text, it would be cheaper to republish than to begin on a new work. This would further incentivise publishers to reissue a book, if deemed to have a market.

¹⁶ Edmund Curtis, 'Irish History in Secondary Schools', quoted in *Irish Press*, 15 April 1936

¹⁷ That is not to say that these texts stopped being used after 1969, or that different textbooks were not used as well throughout this period. They were chosen however due to either their popularity (as shall be quantified later in this chapter), or for their importance in other ways, such as the relation between Casserley's work and the Church of Ireland Board of Education.

¹⁸ *History Ireland*, Vol. 20, Issue 2 (March/April, 2012): Eulogy of Mark Tierney

of these earlier assessments.¹⁹ A change in textbooks meant a change in how the Irish past was being portrayed. Stuart Foster has argued that the nationalistic focus and narrative style of textbooks contribute to their use as propaganda that ideologically reinforces a particular national identity.²⁰ The older Faith and Fatherland views of Ireland, of struggle, defeat and triumph, whilst not rejected, were to be more critically engaged with. One historian has gone so far as to argue that “In the field of Irish history, the changes could initially seem more radical in the Republic of Ireland, since the great identity principles proclaimed, were abandoned in 1969-71, with the introduction of programmes, and the publication of new textbooks which sought, up to a certain point, to [re]give Protestants a place in Irish history.”²¹ The publication of this series marked ‘a new era in Irish history school texts’ and was seen to set ‘a standard in presentation and in format which is radically different from that which preceded it.’²² This was in keeping with a more recent belief expressed by Pauric Travers that “the most effective way to change classroom practice is to change the textbooks.”²³ A 1975 review of this series in *The Education Times* stated that

No other text books have done more to revolutionise Irish school history than this Gill and Macmillan history of Ireland. Without depreciating the quality of the writing, it is the lay-out and the selection of illustrations which represent the greatest break with past practice. Most of the illustrations were previously unknown, even to history teachers, and they admirably complement the main themes of the text. In addition, the books are firmly rooted in recent research and the entire approach is lively and exciting.²⁴

Whereas the early school texts on Irish history, such as Hayden and Moonan in the 1920s and Carty in the 1930s were very much content heavy, with little to no illustrations, the Gill and

¹⁹ Mulcahy, ‘A Study of the Relationship between Ireland and England as Portrayed in Irish Post-Primary School History Textbooks’.

²⁰ Stuart Foster, ‘Re-Thinking History Textbooks in a Globalized World’ in Mario Carretero, Mikel Asensio and María Rodríguez Moneo (eds), *History Education and the Construction of National Identities* (Charlotte, NC, 2013), pp 49–62.

²¹ Fischer, ‘L’histoire irlandaise à l’école en Irlande, 1921-1996’, p. 644.

²² Mulcahy, ‘A Study of the Relationship between Ireland and England as Portrayed in Irish Post-Primary School History Textbooks’, pp 7–8.

²³ Pauric Travers, ‘History in Primary School; A Future for our Past?’ in *History Ireland*, Autumn 1996.

²⁴ John Darby, ‘History at World and Local Level and the problem of bias’, *Education Times*, 24 April 1975, p.16

MacMillan series contained far more pictures and primary source material; being divided into more easily digestible chapters. It also contained lesson plans within them with sections at the end of chapters asking specific questions for students to engage with.²⁵

The change in the economy, and in general structures of education contributed to this change in textbook, and the narrative of Irish history. In the aftermath of free post-primary education (announced in 1967), along with a rise in attendance, money which previously would have gone on tuition for many, could now be spent on supplies and equipment, meaning that, unlike previously, new textbooks were not only published, but were possible to buy. In 1979, Kenneth Milne argued that this ‘exciting development in the area of textbook production’ facilitated, if not outright inspired the changing in teacher practice, which ran concurrent with the changing of the rigid examination system.²⁶

[Textbook Historiography:](#)

Yet the focus of this study is necessarily on the textbooks used up to the late 1960s. Having outlined which texts were most popular, it is crucial to examine the background and perspective of the writers. The earliest of the five textbook series was Hayden and Moonan’s *A Short History of the Irish People*. Published in 1921, in the midst of the War of Independence, this textbook was co-written by Barrister-at-law (and later Circuit Court Judge) George A. Moonan and Mary Hayden, University College Dublin Professor of History. Moonan covered the prehistoric era through the fifteenth century, as well as the brief sections on language and literature, while Hayden wrote the bulk of the textbook. Adopting a Catholic nationalist perspective, Hayden presents the story of the Irish Catholics (while allowing some discussion of protestant patriots and nationalists from the eighteenth century onwards), by focusing on moments of political and military conflict, from the Tudor period until modern times. Her work was lauded for avoiding many of the weaknesses of previous nationalist historians -namely for

²⁵ This was also a feature of Carty, Ó Siadhail and Casserley. It is mentioned here as an acknowledgment of the features of the Gill and MacMillan series, as opposed to a claim against the earlier texts.

²⁶ Milne, *New approaches to the teaching of Irish history*, p. 27

not adopting a simplistic ‘whig-nationalist’ conceptual framework when analysing the various uprisings in Ireland²⁷ as well as in its treatment of religion.²⁸ Hayden was involved in the Dáil commission of 1921, as part of Separate Committee #4, which discussed the future secondary school programmes for History and Geography, Economics, and Sociology.²⁹ Not only did she co-author one of the pivotal texts then, but she was also involved in devising the course to which the textbooks would eventually cater to. Thus Hayden’s politics and general perspective are hugely important when assessing Irish history in secondary school during this period.

Described as representing “an orthodox, state-sanctioned national narrative that would later be attacked by revisionist historians”, Hayden and Moonan’s work was “part of the post-1922 consolidation period” and was important for “giving the new state a meaning and an interpretation that was widely disseminated...”³⁰ It set the standard for textbooks in the Free State, differing from the ‘scrappy textbooks’ which preceded it.³¹ At 559 pages of octavo print, it offered the most comprehensive general survey of Irish history for students at University and Second-level. Many of the textbooks which followed, notably Carty’s *Class-Books* and Casserley’s *History of Ireland*, tended to share many of the same structural traits and overall depictions (though written for a much younger audience). Carty’s piece did differ in terms of its more explicit political leanings, however, as noted below.

Created initially for university students, *A Short History of Ireland* acknowledged in its preface that “While written from a frankly national stand-point, the authors have made every effort to attain accuracy and avoid prejudice. Events are dealt with, as far as possible, in the spirit

²⁷ Nadia Claire Smith, *A ‘Manly Study’?: Irish Women Historians 1868-1949* (Basingstoke, 2006), p. 71. cites how the Silken Thomas Rebellion of 1534 “cannot be considered a National rising” as his object was merely “to avenge...his father’s death, [and] to assert the uncontrolled feudal independence of his House...” See Hayden & Moonan, *A short history of the Irish people*, p. 199.

²⁸ *New York Times*, 7 January 1923; “The authors are remarkably free from prejudice: the discussions of religion are frank and clear, particularly as regards the Reformation in Ireland; such slight bias as it present of course favours the Roman Catholic Church, for the National University, with which Miss Hayden is connected, is Roman Catholic.”

²⁹ Thomas A. O’Donoghue, ‘The Dáil Commission on Secondary Education 1921-1922’ in *Oideas*, no. 34 (1989), p. 64.

³⁰ Smith, *A ‘Manly Study’?*, p. 74.

³¹ See *Report of the Department of Education, 1927-28* (Dublin, 1929), pp 57-8.

and atmosphere of their times, but are judged by their final effects upon the destinies of the nation.”³² It aimed to show Ireland’s history, not as a series of unconnected events, but as a *sequence*. Like its note on Irish literature, Irish history -as taught in secondary schools- was to be seen “as the product, not of an isolated age or period, but of successive generations from the remote past down to the present day.”³³ In terms of popularity, ‘Hayden and Moonan’ (as the text became known) has been widely considered as being among the “the standard history texts of this era”³⁴ and “the most popular Irish history textbook in the National University system and in secondary schools until the 1960s”.³⁵ While accepting the difficulty in corroborating this claim, especially considering the major issues of affordability in relation to its nearest competitors, the book is generally recognised as having exerted a considerable influence in shaping Irish students’ perceptions of their history.³⁶

Among the few texts for which sales figures do exist are the translations of the two volume series on the History of Ireland ...*From the Earliest Times to 800 A.D.* and ...*From 800 to 1600 A.D.*, by Fr John Ryan S.J., lecturer (and thereafter professor) of medieval Irish history at UCD, (succeeding Eoin MacNeill).³⁷ Originally published in 1929, (with Rev. Corcoran as series editor) and commended by his academic peers for their quality, Ryan’s textbooks were also immediately successful among a more popular audience.³⁸ As a later review of the translations, referring to the original demonstrated.

³² Hayden & Moonan, *A short history of the Irish people*, p. iii.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ferriter, *A nation and not a rabble*, pp 45–6. See also Jim Smyth (ed.), *Revolution, counter-revolution, and union : Ireland in the 1790s* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 2. where Hayden and Moonan was described as “the standard history textbook in the new Irish state.”

³⁵ Smith, *A ‘Manly Study’?*, p. 70.

³⁶ Mary O’Dowd, ‘From Morgan to MacCurtain: Women Historians in Ireland from the 1790s to the 1990s’ in Maryann Gialanella Valiulis and Mary O’Dowd (eds), *Women & Irish history: essays in honour of Margaret MacCurtain* (Dublin, 1997), p. 52.; See also Milne, *New approaches to the teaching of Irish history*, p. 40, where ‘Hayden and Moonan’ is described as being “highly influential”, along with Carty’s *Class-Books*.

³⁷ Fr John Ryan, S.J., *Stair na hÉireann ó thosach anuas go dtí 800 A.D. : Ireland from the earliest times to 800 A.D.* : ins an mBéarla bunaidh (Baile Átha Cliath, 1931); Fr John Ryan, S.J., *Stair na hÉireann ó 800 A.D. go dtí 1600 : Ireland from A.D. 800 to A.D. 1600.* : ins an mBéarla bunaidh (Baile Átha Cliath, 1934);

³⁸ Edmund Curtis, ‘Irish History in Secondary Schools’, quoted in Irish Press, 15 April 1936

Ryan's school text-book "Ireland from the Earliest Times to 800 A.D."...is favourably known even outside the classroom for its excellence of style and of matter...The school text itself is a model for what a history primer ought to be. It is based soundly upon the latest researches of contemporary scholars. Legend and rhetoric are subordinated to the ascertained facts of history, and for once, guess work is replaced by reasoned argument on doubtful points.³⁹

Lauded by teachers as 'an excellent book for the teaching of Irish history'⁴⁰, Ryan's work was proclaimed to have differed from previous works which were seen to be "dull and uninspiring"⁴¹ and which left the challenge for teachers to distil what the accurate facts actually were, as opposed to the author's biases. Whilst not entirely free from any opinions, on the rare occasion that this was done, as noted in an *Irish Independent* review of Mícheál Breathnach's 1931 translation, these were said to be based on the facts in the book, and the facts alone.⁴² Similarly, when Moonan engaged with the legends and myths concerning the first settlers of Ireland, he was especially careful (unlike the works of Carty which succeeded it⁴³) to stress how "[t]he earliest legends and traditions are treated with caution. Some of the most improbable are rejected, and some are given a place in the literature of the country rather than in its history...In general, apart from the development of the permanent political forces...the reliability of early tradition is left open for future discoveries by workers in that field."⁴⁴ The extent to which Moonan was successful in this is a different matter, with one *New York Times* reviewer criticising

³⁹ *Irish Times*, 18 Sept. 1931, 'Review',

⁴⁰ *Irish Independent*, 4 Sept. 1931, 'Review'; translated from "Is é tuairim na múinteoirí gur leabhar ana-mhaith é chun stair na hÉireann do mhúineadh."

⁴¹ Curtis, 'Irish History in Secondary Schools' in *Irish Press*, 15 April 1936; Curtis was referring specifically to the work of P.W. Joyce.

⁴² *Irish Independent*, 4 Sept. 1931

⁴³ Carty features sections on the Ossianic and Red Branch Mythologies in his first Class-Book. Though these are dealt with as part of Irish literature, once this caveat is initially acknowledged Carty makes very little distinction between legend and history. See Carty, *Class-Book I*, pp 104–21. The differentiation between legend and myth, and their respective use in teaching Irish history was not a consensus topic. See Auchmuty, *The teaching of history*, pp 14–5.

⁴⁴ Hayden & Moonan, *A short history of the Irish people*, p. iv. Carty did however acknowledge that "we cannot believe everything in the stories about the Parthalonians, Nemedians, Fir Bolg and Tuatha Dé Danann" and so the criticism of him should be somewhat tempered as such.

his portrayal of the period as ‘too rosy’, as well as his understanding of what constituted authentic history.⁴⁵

As for wider popularity, the positive reception of Fr. Ryan’s work had been anticipated by An Gúm. As a 1927 letter to the Stationery Office demonstrated, publishers were requested to consider that the textbooks produced by An Gúm “are not purely and simply school texts. They were accepted by the Department, as well for their excellence as reading material for the general public who feel the shortage of suitable literature as keenly as do the schools.”⁴⁶ The first volume of Ryan’s *Stair na hÉireann* sold out its entire print run of 4,982 copies by March 1937.⁴⁷ By the start of the 1940s, 5,934 copies of Fr Ryan’s *Stair na hÉireann Vol. I* had been sold in total.⁴⁸ This is even more impressive considering how in 1935, a fire in the publishers, Brown and Nowlan destroyed a considerable amount of stock of this textbook.⁴⁹ When it is remembered that these were the sales figures for the translation of one volume only, and that the English text was both widely available and recommended (as demonstrated elsewhere) the popularity of Ryan’s works as school textbooks throughout the 1930s and early 1940s can safely be assumed.⁵⁰

As the 1920s neared to a close, a lack of suitable textbooks for Irish, in comparison to European, history, was widely noticed, with repeated complaints lodged by Departmental inspectors as to the use of unfit out-of-date textbooks.⁵¹ This led to the publication, not only of Ryan’s *History of Ireland*, but also the first of James Carty’s *Class-Book of Irish History* in 1929.

⁴⁵ *New York Times*, 7 January 1923, ‘Review’, which noted how “In spite of the assertions of the Preface, he does not make entirely clear the difference between what may be and what really is authentic history. In spite of the honor accorded to learning and the arts, the Irish State was tribal and primitive- hardly a State at all in the sense in which the word is used today.”

⁴⁶ N.A.I./Gael/ G008 (3); Letter to Mr. Coveney (Stationery Office), 20 June 1927

⁴⁷ N.A.I./An Gúm/ A0101 (ii); Letter to S.B. O’Faoileacháin from Publications Office (on behalf of Seán MacLellan), 30 March 1937. This letter called for the textbook to be re-printed.

⁴⁸ Gabriel Doherty, ‘The Irish history textbook, 1900-1960, problems and development’ in *Oideas*, no. 42 (1994), p. 25, fn 25. Doherty uses this figure to criticise the production capabilities of An Gúm, with this being the most popular textbook of this sort. However, when compared against the attendance figures for Secondary Education at the time, these sales figures are actually quite impressive.

⁴⁹ N.A.I./An Gúm/ A0101 (ii).

⁵⁰ It is important to note however, that while the predominant audience for An Gúm were secondary school pupils, they were not exclusively confined to this group, and members of the wider public also purchased works which they produced.

⁵¹ *Report of the Department of Education, 1927-28* (Dublin, 1929), pp 57-8; *Report of the Department of Education, 1928-29* (Dublin, 1930), p. 45 as an example.

The introduction of these new texts was welcomed by the Departmental inspectors, owing to “the importance of selecting history text-books which combine accuracy with a high standard in style and language, and are not merely a dull, meagre, inaccurate and scrappy representation of events.” The new texts were considered ‘better’ and were expected to “undoubtedly develop the historical knowledge of the students.”⁵²

It should be acknowledged that the Department of Education did not commission these texts, this being beyond their remit. The creation by private publishers of textbooks which the Department felt were desperately needed merely fulfilled a ‘supply and demand’ situation, by which both private and public sector equally profited.⁵³

By far, the most popular textbooks in use in secondary school from the beginning of the 1930s until the late 1960s were by James Carty.⁵⁴ His *Class-Books*, vol. 1-4 were repeatedly stressed in contemporary newspapers as the “best introduction to Irish history extant”⁵⁵ and were invariably mentioned whenever secondary school history textbooks featured in any newspaper account up until the mid-1970s.⁵⁶ Highlighting its ubiquity, a 1975 *Irish Times* article for example, which went on to cite Carty by name, was able to lament the “the odd circumstance that most people in Ireland who had a secondary education were educated out of a particular book.” The same article however considered them to be “an astonishingly effective simplification.”⁵⁷ In line with this evaluation, H.Rex Cathcart’s 1978 published lecture on the teaching of Irish history, criticised “the universal textbooks of the time written by James Carty” for “entombing the

⁵² *Report of the Department of Education, 1928-29* (Dublin, 1930), p. 91.

⁵³ Note for example *Dáil Éireann debates*, Vol. 61, No. 2, 25 March 1936. Col. 193, where Hayden and Moonan is described by Eamann Ó Ciosáin, as being ‘produced for the Department of Education’ despite being published by Longmans and Co., and the Educational Company of Ireland). Translated from “a tairgeadh do Roinn an Oideachais”

⁵⁴ As a critique of his work, John O’Callaghan failed to make any reference to Carty whatsoever, nor does he discuss any of the other major textbooks in use during this period, beyond the work of Stopford Green, Joyce, and Kingsmill Moore. This is a serious oversight on his part. See O’Callaghan, *Teaching Irish independence*, pp 46–52.

⁵⁵ *Irish Press*, 25 April 1939; Further examples include *Irish Press*, 10 June 1941, where Carty’s name, we are told “is well-known to hundreds of our younger generation as that of the author of the most interesting and up-to-date class book of Irish history.”

⁵⁶ See for example *Irish Times*, 24 Feb. 1960.

⁵⁷ Anthony Cronin, *Irish Times*, 4 April 1975. This article is particularly interesting as a critique of the portrayal of Irish history in the opening decades of the State, as compared with the changes which were being implemented in the mid-1970s.

prevailing orthodoxy” of an Us vs Them binary between Irish and English/British/Normans.⁵⁸

This assessment was grounded in the revisionist context in which Cathcart was writing.

Carty, a librarian with the N.L.I., had previously been employed by Dáil Éireann in 1921, before being expelled for opposing the Anglo-Irish treaty. A prominent journalist as well, Carty featured regularly in the *Irish Times* and the *Irish Press*.⁵⁹ Lauded at the time for a general sense of balance and judiciousness,⁶⁰ his textbooks were immediately popular,⁶¹ with contemporary reviews declaring them ‘an indispensable working-tool for all those who teach the history of Ireland’.⁶² This was further demonstrated in later reviews of his other works, notably his *European History, Part I and II*, (which became central texts for secondary schools in their own right).⁶³ As one reviewer noted in 1941 “His history of Ireland has for years been an accepted text-book in the Irish schools, and is recognised in many parts of the world as [the] standard history of this island and its people.” As for his reputation and style, the review went further, commending “his repute as a careful and unprejudiced historian” while also noting how Carty’s work will “command a far wider public than that to which it is chiefly addressed.”⁶⁴ Published in the same year as Ryan, the two were often discussed and compared together in contemporary accounts.⁶⁵ Ryan’s texts were more advanced than Carty’s, catering more for the secondary

⁵⁸ Cathcart, *Teaching Irish history*, p. 1.

⁵⁹ It is of interest to note as well that Carty was one of four members of the bibliographical sub-committee of the Irish Committee of Historical Sciences, alongside R.Dudley Edwards, T.W. Moody, and K. Povey. See ‘Writings on Irish History, 1938’ in *Irish Historical Studies*, ii, no. 5 (1940), pp 54–79.

⁶⁰ Ferriter, *A nation and not a rabble*, p. 46. See also Ciara Boylan, *National Collection of Children Books*, <https://nccb.tcd.ie/exhibit/3197xm07c>, viewed 12/07/16 for her discussion of Carty’s *Junior History of Ireland*, which were written as “a history of Ireland suited to the needs of younger pupils...The Junior Books form a suitable introduction to the Class-Books of Irish History, in which the social, political and literary history of Ireland is treated more fully, to meet the requirements of students in higher classes and of those preparing for examinations.” James Carty, *A Junior History of Ireland, Part II; From the Flight of the Earls* (London, 1948), p. 3.

⁶¹ *Irish Press*, 14 December 1931, in an article on the Confederation of Kilkenny and the ‘Ships and Seamen of Wexford’, the article, written in small text, was signed off in large print (roughly one third the size of the total article) “by James Carty, Author of ‘A CLASS-BOOK OF IRISH HISTORY’” Its prominence would support the argument that Carty’s work was widely known and widely recognised as being of quality. Considering the date of the article, this would also suggest that Carty’s work was both instantly recognisable and immediately popular.

⁶² *Irish Times*, 13 March 1937.

⁶³ McMahon, ‘A review of changes in the pattern of history teaching’. In this thesis, McMahon explicitly cites Carty’s *European History* and Hayden and Moohan’s *Short History* as the two central History texts being used in the Dublin Secondary Schools she investigates.

⁶⁴ *Irish Times*, 25 Jan. 1941, ‘Review of European History, Part II’.

⁶⁵ See for example *Irish Times*, 18 Sept. 1931, ‘Review’: “Another Irish history, by Mr James Carty...is

school market, whereas Carty, as acknowledged in the sleeve of each text, was aimed at both primary and secondary school students.

Carty's *Class-Books*, between reprints and new editions, were in constant production during the four decades after their original publication. Book IV for example, originally published in 1931 was reprinted three times in the following five years alone, in 1932, 1934, 1936, and again in 1940, 1942, and 1943. New editions of the Class-Books were published in 1945 (hard cover) 1946 (I and II), 1948 (III-IV), and 1951 (I). The textbooks were rebranded, in terms of cover layout from the original dark green sleeves, to a blue/cream edition between 1955 and 1957, while a further edition was published in 1965. Carty's popularity is also highlighted by the promptness in which his texts were recommended for translation into Irish, as discussed later in the chapter.

As for other textbooks, wider cultural and religious factors were hugely important when it came to popularity, as highlighted by Mícheál Ó Siocfhradha's *Stair Sheanchas Éireann, Cuid I agus II* (Dublin, 1933) and Dora Casserley's *History of Ireland* (Dublin, 1941).

Ó Siocfhradha, M.A., was a trained primary school teacher, a Professor at Coláiste Caoimhín Preparatory School Glasnevin,⁶⁶ and later worked as a Primary and (from 1935 on) secondary school inspector with the Department of Education. He became Chief Inspector in 1965, the same year that his textbook had a new edition published. He was also an important figure in the Irish Language movement, alongside his brother, famed Gaelic writer and philologist Pádraig Ó Siocfhradha ('An Seabhad'), and was an active member with An Coiste Téarmaíochta, tasked with ensuring that educators through the medium of Irish were provided with comprehensive and accurate terminology in all subjects. His textbooks *Stair Sheanchas Éireann Cuid I agus II*, published as part of the *Sraith Téacs Oideachais i nGaedhilg*⁶⁷ was the first full textbook series *as Gaeilge* which dealt with the whole course of Irish history taught in

available. Book I chooses a better terminal date than the first volume of Father Ryan's work; for it extends to the Norman Invasion (1169), and thus brings the Norse period into review..."

⁶⁶ *Irish Independent*, 13 September 1928, 'New School Inspectors: Appointments in the Saorstát'.

⁶⁷ This series, geared towards the Secondary Schools, featured textbooks on Geometry, on Irish language, literature, and dialects, as well as history among other topics, and were edited by An Seabhad.

secondary schools, from ‘The Pagan Era’ to the War of Independence. This was especially important in line with the growing number of Class A and Class B schools, (as discussed in Chapter 2), which taught the general curriculum, (and history in particular) through the medium of Irish. Ó Siadhail’s work therefore proved not only popular, but important, in providing for a substantial number of schools from the 1930s onwards to teach Irish history through Irish.

Furthermore, the connection between Ó Siadhail’s text and the Christian Brothers was widely known, being the central textbook for use in schools run by the order throughout the period⁶⁸ and continued to be used even into the 1980s in certain schools.⁶⁹ Though more modest than the more exclusive Catholic Colleges, in terms of fees, facilities, and curriculum choice, the Christian Brothers were the largest providers of education in the country,⁷⁰ thus granting additional weight to Ó Siadhail’s text, in terms of its content and its audience.

Finally, following a number of complaints that the standard textbooks on Irish history were promoting an understanding of national identity which they disagreed with,⁷¹ the task of providing a suitable textbook to teach members of the minority Protestant denominations was seemingly addressed in 1941, with Dora Casserley’s *History of Ireland* (Dublin, 1941). This was published upon receipt of a one hundred guineas prize granted by the General Synod of the Church of Ireland. As Martina Relihan noted, the Board of Education,

sought either specific textbooks for Protestant schools, or, alternatively, books which had been sanctioned for general use in schools which were purged of references which they considered offensive. Thus, the Church of Ireland authorities sought to position themselves in isolation from

⁶⁸ The introduction to the 2005 edition of the textbook acknowledged *Stair Sheanchas* as “a standard history book in Irish for school children in Ireland from the 1940s to the ‘60s.”⁶⁸

⁶⁹ Interview with Dónall Ó hAiniféin, (12 Dec. 2014). Ó hAiniféin, at time of interview, (12 Dec. 2014) was chairperson of the *Gaeilgeolaíonna* organisation, member of the National Advisory Committee for Education, and worked as a primary school principal. He attended Dingle CBS, Co. Kerry, from 1980 to 1985,. Through the interview it emerged that he and his fellow classmates were still using Ó Siadhail’s *Stair-Sheanchas Éireann* for their history lessons. Ó hAiniféin stressed the strong nationalistic bias being propounded by both the text and by his teachers.

⁷⁰ Ciaran O’Neill, *Catholics of Consequence: Transnational Education, Social Mobility, and the Irish Catholic Elite, 1850-1900* (Oxford, 2014), p. 63. See also Patrick Duffy, *The lay teacher: a study of the position of the lay teacher in an Irish Catholic environment* (Dublin, 1967) for a breakdown of the major providers of Catholic education in Ireland

⁷¹ *Irish Times*, 12 May 1939; See also Akenson, *A mirror to Kathleen’s face*, p. 194.

the pervasive cultural influences of the Irish state rather than encouraging a process of dialogue with it.⁷²

A teacher in Alexandra College, member of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland,⁷³ and a prominent member of the Irish Union of Assistant Mistresses (and from the mid-1940s, of the ASTI History Sub-Committee)⁷⁴ Casserley was the author of an extremely popular textbook. Originally published as one volume, it was re-issued in 1943 by the Educational Company of Ireland in two parts.⁷⁵ By 1947 it had sold over 26,000 copies, and was used widely in Protestant schools (both primary and secondary).⁷⁶ It was re-published in 1962. It is worth noting however that Casserley's overall account of Irish history differed little from the other texts, apart from a greater emphasis in parts on historical movements and events especially relevant to the Church of Ireland and Protestantism in general. This would help explain why the General Synod later criticised aspects of the work, despite having funded it.

Popularity was not solely due to acceptance of academic quality of the text⁷⁷ but was also largely influenced by affordability. Whereas the original print of Hayden and Moonan sold for 20/- each in 1921, Carty's *Class-books* sold for 1/- each, while Mícheál Breathnach's translation of Ryan, Vol. I sold at 2/6, and Vol II (*From A.D. 800 to A.D. 1600*) at 3/-.⁷⁸ Before the widespread availability of Ryan and Carty's work, it was readily acknowledged in the Dáil that "the prices of school books are absolutely out of all proportion to the capacity of many parents in

⁷² Relihan, 'The Irish Educational System and Irish Language and History', p. 161.

⁷³ 'Proceedings' in *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, ii, no. 1 (1932), p. 129. In terms of the Public Sphere and of her general social circles, the President of the society was Goddard H Orpen, famed historian of Ireland under the Normans, and relation to William Orpen, while Professor Edmund Curtis of TCD was a member of the Council.

⁷⁴ See ASTI/OP/1947: 'Meeting of the History Sub-Committee, 18 June 1946; 19 June 1947; ASTI/OP/1949, - C.E.C. Report, pp 22-24 for mentions of Casserley's involvement with the Teachers' Union.

⁷⁵ Part One up to the Flight of the Earls, Part Two 'From the Flight of the Earls to the Present Day'

⁷⁶ Relihan, 'The Irish Educational System and Irish Language and History', p. 161.

⁷⁷ Hayden and Moonan for example, though widely accepted, was also openly criticised due to its depiction of recent history, namely the Civil War in the 1927 re-edition. Brian Ó hUigín, “‘A History Text-Book’” in *Irish Press*, 28 May 1935. In this article, after outlining his objections to the depictions of the ‘Irregulars’, Ó hUigínn commented that “...In a free, self-respecting Ireland this book would be publicly burned and its authors punished for their insult to the patriot dead. In an unfree Ireland one of them is set up as a dispenser of justice and the other is specially honoured by the National University!”

⁷⁸ N.A.I./GAEL/AN GÚM/G072; 'Téacsleabhar Mheanscoile, 1938-62' Liosta: Téacsleabhra Meáns-Scol (foilsithe) [Stair], 1953.

the country to pay” and even more so if the additional hidden costs of education (copybooks and equipment) are factored in.⁷⁹ When one considers that Irish history was only one half of one subject in the school curriculum, and that textbooks would be required for all, the 20/- price of Hayden and Moonan would inevitably have resulted in it being inaccessible for a significant proportion of those attending secondary schools, and helps explain the continued popularity of the cheaper coarser paperbacks. This was specifically highlighted for example when Ryan’s works were first published, where the acknowledgement of their being “inexpensive” was a major selling point.⁸⁰

This issue of cost also helps explain why after 1927, there was no re-edition of Hayden and Moonan until 1960. As there was a cheaper alternative in Carty’s *Class-Books* those less well-off parents could purchase this over Hayden. Furthermore, due to the superior quality of the Hayden and Moonan textbook itself (in terms of binding and cover durability), once an edition was purchased, it would last longer than its paperback rivals, and so there would be less need to re-publish the text. Conversely, the cheaper Carty paperbacks were not as durable as Hayden. Along with their affordability, this may help to explain why new prints appeared on a more regular basis, when the old copies were worn out.

Furthermore, though Hayden and Moonan was originally published in 1921, that did not mean that parents immediately rushed out to purchase it, with its high cost being a definite deterrent. This would help explain, despite the availability of this more advanced and appropriate text, why complaints were raised during the first few years of the Department of Education about how certain schools were using ill-suited ‘pemmican’ textbooks.⁸¹ Hayden and Moonan is consistently noted as one of the more prominent textbooks from the time. This in itself testifies to the class breakdown of those students in Secondary Education who could afford to use it.

⁷⁹ *Dáil Debate*, Vol 29, No. 4, Cols. 414-5, 17 April 1929.

⁸⁰ *Irish Times*, 6 Sept. 1929; “The teaching of Irish history ought to gain greatly by... The Rev. John Ryan, S.J. [who] in two inexpensive volumes, has brought the story of our country, firstly down to the year 800, and then to the year 1600... There is no reader who would not be charmed by the lucid exposition; there are few readers who would not find much to learn.”

⁸¹ *Report of the Department of Education 1925-26-27*, (Dublin, 1928), p. 64.

The Department of Education additionally influenced the choice of textbook through the existence of an official list of books which they recommended to the School managers for use.⁸² When considered alongside the seriousness with which inspectorate recommendations were held,⁸³ despite the private nature of secondary schools, this demonstrates how the Department had more control over the material used in these schools than previously assumed.

The suitability of the available textbooks to cater for the Department's syllabus was a key issue, as was their utility for the examinations. In later years, it was acknowledged that the Irish textbook market was considered "so small that it would be difficult to find a publisher to accept a text book for publication if it could not be strongly associated with the examination syllabus."⁸⁴ In the mid-1940s, it was acknowledged by the Department of Education that while they were satisfied with the available texts on Irish history, they would also have favoured greater choice.⁸⁵ As the curriculum developed, there was no corresponding growth in newly available texts. Both teachers and departmental officials alike criticised the dearth of texts which ably covered the courses for intermediate Irish history and specifically, for the rotating courses at Leaving Certificate level throughout the late-1940s and 1950s.⁸⁶ This had numerous consequences, both immediate and long-term. However, in order to gauge suitability it is first necessary to examine what exactly the textbooks were saying.

Textbook content analysis:

To understand the narrative that is being propounded in a history textbook, it is crucial to examine the emphases placed upon specific events, personalities, and periods in the past. By cross-comparing the indexes from the respective textbooks, it was possible to see not only what

⁸² N.A.I./An Gúm/ A0101 (ii); Letter 18 June 1931, addressed to Seán McLellan; This letter noted how the translation of Vol. II of Ryan's book would be incorporated "in the catalogue which we have on the stocks for Secondary Schools and Managers of Primary schools with post-primary classes" highlighting two things 1. The acknowledgement of a list written up by the state on which texts they recommended to be used for teaching 2. The awareness of Secondary tops, with what appears to be an open acceptance of such a situation.

⁸³ N.A.I./AN Gúm/G0008; Letter from Educational Company of Ireland (As Figurehead for publishing firms in Ireland) 14 October 1926, and the expressed belief that "the recommendation of an Inspector to a teacher is tantamount to a command."

⁸⁴ McMahon, 'A review of changes in the pattern of history teaching', p. 76.

⁸⁵ *Report of the Department of Education, 1946-47* (Dublin, 1948), pp 15-16.

⁸⁶ *Report of the Department of Education, 1956-57*, (Dublin, 1958), p. 17.

elements of Irish history were stressed consistently, but also, the noticeable differences in terms of the weighting different authors gave to specific aspects of Irish history. These differences, it is argued, reflect the different political beliefs and contextual considerations of each writer. It is important to note how the levels of sophistication varied across the textbooks, with some being more abridged and simplified owing to their intended audiences.

By examining the extent to which certain events or personalities are engaged with, in proportion to the overall work, it is possible to understand what aspects of Irish history were dealt with in more, or in less depth, in line with issues of emplotment. From this, the areas most emphasised can be systematically established. Some of the themes which emerged out of this investigation are then briefly discussed, before moving on to the issue of narrative.

In order to create a fair comparison, the indexes were compiled by author as opposed to by individual textbook. This was done as Carty, for example, discussed the course of Irish history over four texts, Hayden and Moonan did so in one (or six, depending on how you read their work), while Casserley and Ó Siadhail both had two volumes to their primers. Ryan's work covered the period from the earliest times until 1600 in two texts. Written as part of an 'Historical Course for Schools' this series was to be brought up to the present day through Corcoran's own *School History of Modern Ireland*, with a proposed translation to be completed as well.⁸⁷ This did not emerge. Ryan's series was the exception then to the texts examined, in that it did not cover the entire period.

Methodology:

It is possible to calculate the percentage of each book dedicated to any given episode, topic, or historical personality. This is done by dividing the amount of pages on which a topic was discussed by the total amount of pages in each textbook/Textbook series, (and multiplying by 100). From this, we see the varying emphases placed by each author, and can compare them to

⁸⁷ N.A.I./GAE/L/G0008, 'Preliminary Correspondence', Letter from Fr. Timothy Corcoran to Joseph O'Neill (Secretary, Ministry of Education.) 13 Oct. 1924; Corcoran had arranged for a translation of his *School History of Modern Ireland* (17th Centruy to 1921) to be prepared by Rev. Michael McGrath, Professor at the House of Studies, Milltown Park, Dublin whose "competence as a writer and speaker of Irish is well known: he has devoted great attention to Irish history, and has had ample experience as a class-teacher in Irish secondary schools."

see if there were any significant differences in the general accounts given of Irish history. Having read each textbook and graphed their index and sub-chapters, the textbooks were cross-compared, to see what percentage of each was shared across all of the works. The discrepancies between the total figures cited for each text in percentile form and a complete 100%, represents the areas not consistently discussed across all of the others. As an illustrative example, Hayden spent 19 pages (or 3.4% of her total work) discussing the period between the Ulster Plantation and the 1641 Rebellion; a period barely touched upon in the other works, besides Ó Siadhail. This discussion is not then included in the calculations for direct comparison. This comparison is specific to subject topic. It is distinct from the actual discussion and perspective taken as to these topics, which differed according to the respective size, scope, and general outlook of each textbook.

In terms of findings, the textbooks were remarkably similar to one another, in terms of general narrative and content structure (see Appendix 1). Over three quarters of Hayden and Moonan for example discussed matters also discussed in all of the other works (*Ryan post-1600 excluded). In total, the textbooks maintained a high level of consistency in terms of the content addressed, as underlined in the comparison of subject content in Table 1 below. The major percentile difference between Carty and the rest can be attributed to its dissimilar structure in Part two of each text, which meant that it discussed a number of issues not unanimously featured in the other texts, all of which followed a more straight-forward chronological structure.

Table 1: Degree of consistency in topic engagement across all textbooks

Textbook	Consistency of topic engagement (%)	Total pages in text	Pages by volume
Hayden and Moonan	77.44	559	– CB1: 168
Carty	68.25	674	CB2: 173 CB3: 164 CB4: 169
Ó Siadhail	82.12	308	Cuid 1: 133 Cuid 2: 175
Casserley	86.29	314	Part 1: 164 Part 2: 150
Ryan	73.75*	419	Vol. 1: 167 Vol. 2: 252

Emphasis and Presentation:

Though dealing with similar material, the textbooks did not always align with one another in terms of structuring. The tailoring of textbooks to their audiences resulted in a number of differences, especially between Hayden and Moonan in contrast to the texts which followed. Carty, Casserley and Ó Siadhail (all of which were geared towards a younger audience) followed a reasonably similar structure of events. Hayden and Moonan however, which was initially intended for university students, did not follow the same abridged rubric seen in the others, being more comprehensive and content-heavy. When discussing the late seventeenth century for example, Carty, Ó Siadhail, and Casserley all use the Battle of the Boyne to frame their discussion, whereas Hayden and Moonan maintained a general focus on the Williamite War (in three sub-chapters). It incorporated the Battle of the Boyne into its wider discussion, as opposed to it being the exemplar through which the wider narrative could be continued. Consequently, this study did not compile its direct index comparison according to the specific wording of each text. Instead, it aggregated certain people and events into general categories, (while attempting to remain as faithful to the original wording and organisation as possible). Discussions of the 1870s and 1880s in Ireland for example, were grouped together under two categories, Parnell, Davitt and the Land League, and Home Rule politics and the Irish Parliamentary Party (as structured by Casserley), while accepting that there was interplay between the two. The largest segments in each textbook were as follows:⁸⁸

Fig 1.8: Textbook emphases:

⁸⁸ When discussing Carty, his discussion of literature, and the ‘Lives of the People’ were omitted from the rankings as, while central to Carty’s texts, it would be incorrect to treat them as one consistent unit, as they covered numerous topics, varying from text to text, under these umbrella terms. Likewise, discussion of literature across the entire period, as this was done in separate sections in each textbook.

Hayden and Moonan	The Norman Conquest (1175-1257)	5.37%	30pp
	Patriots/Grattan's/Irish Parliament	4.29%	24
	From Edward Bruce to Art Mac Murchadha	4.11%	23
	O'Neill, O'Donnell / 9 Years' War	4.11%	23
	Early eighteenth Century	4.11%	23
	Lords and Chieftains (1418-1535)	3.94%	22
	Celts to St Patrick (5 Cúige/7 Sevenths...)	3.76%	21
	Parnell/The Irish Parliamentary Party	3.58%	20
	War of Gaedhil with the Gaill	3.40%	19
	1609-1640	3.40%	19
	The Battle of the Boyne/ Williamite war	3.40%	19

Ó Siochradha	Land League, Parnell/Davitt ('Struggle for Land')	6.17%	19 pp
	O'Neill and O'Donnell/ 9 Years' War	3.90%	12
	Brian Borumha	3.25%	10
	From 1914 to the Treaty	3.25%	10
	The Irish Recovery (1257-1315)	2.92%	9
	From Edward Bruce to Art Mac Murchadha	2.92%	9
	Lords & Chieftains (1418-1535)	2.92%	9
	The Insurrection of 1798	2.92%	9
	The National Revival, Sinn Féin	2.92%	9**
	Literature (across entire period)	2.92%	9
	Celts to St. Patrick (5 Cúige/7 Sevenths...)	2.60%	8
	The Irish Kingdom (1014-1169) High Kings with Opp	2.60%	8
	The Irish Defence (1558-1583)	2.60%	8
	Patriots/Grattan's /Irish Parliament	2.60%	8

Casserley	Celts to St. Patrick (5 Cúige/7 Septenths...)	5.10%	16 pp
	Brian Borumha	3.82%	12
	The Irish Kingdom (1014-1169) High Kings with Opp	3.82%	12
	Coming of the Normans/Fall of High-Kingship	3.82%	12
	The Irish Defence (1558-1583)	3.50%	11
	The Norman Conquest (1175-1257)	3.50%	11
	St Patrick (389-461)	3.50%	11
	From St Patrick to the Northmen/ Isle of S&Sch	3.18%	10
	O'Neill and O'Donnell/ 9 Y.War	2.87%	9
	From Edward Bruce to Art Mac Murchadha	2.87%	9
	Patriots/Grattan's /Irish Parliament	2.87%	9
	War of the Gaedhil with the Gaill	2.87%	9
	The Early People of Ireland	2.87%	9

Carty	Coming of the Normans/ Fall of High-Kingship*	3.41%	23 pp
	O'Neill, O'Donnell /9 Years War	3.26%	22
	Land League, Parnell/ Davitt (Struggle for Land)	3.12%	21
	From 1914 to the Treaty	2.97%	20
	Celts to St Patrick (5 fifths/7 7ths...)	2.52%	17
	The Insurrection of 1798	2.52%	17
	St Patrick (389-461)	2.37%	16
	The Norman Conquest	2.08%	14
	Lords and Chieftains (1418-1535)	2.08%	14
	Parnell/ Irish Parliamentary Party	2.08%	14

Ryan*	From St Patrick to the Northmen/ Isle of Saints & Scholars	13.37%	56 pp
	The Irish Defence (1558-1583)	9.79%	41
	War of the Gaedhil with the Gaill (9 th /10 th c)	6.92%	29
	Lives of the People/ Learning/Industry/Commerce	6.92%	29
	The Norman Conquest (1175-1257)	6.44%	27
	Literary and Artistic Development	5.97%	25
	Celts to St. Patrick (5 fifths/7 7ths...)	5.49%	23
	From Edward Bruce to Art Mac Murchadha	5.49%	23
	Irish Missionary Work Abroad	5.01%	21
	St Patrick (389-461)	4.77%	20

Both Carty and Hayden maintained a strong emphasis on the Norman Conquest (the immediate build-up to it, and the actual Invasion respectively).⁸⁹ If the two were taken together as one general period, (as was the case with Ryan), this topic would have represented 5.49% of Carty's total series, at 37 pp, and even more significantly, would have accounted for 7.87% of Hayden and Moonan, at 34 pp of text. This would also have been the most emphasised period in Casserley (7.32% at 23 pp) and jointly the second most emphasised period in Ó Siocfhradha (3.90% at 12 pp). The overall importance granted to this period of Irish history in each of the textbooks aligned with the examinations whereby the Norman Conquest was the single most asked question between 1926 and 1968 at Intermediate Certificate level. The fact that Casserley, Ó Siocfhradha and Ryan favoured other issues ahead of it is important also, demonstrating how the alignment between textbook and exam was not a straightforward one. What was emphasised at exam time (as discussed in Chapters 5 and 6) was not necessarily the same as what the textbooks (and their authors) viewed as most important.

Despite the centrality of the Norman invasion to each of the texts, by analysing the figures highlighted above, a very noticeable difference in overall emphasis can be seen between individual texts. As discussed in more detail later, Hayden's constitutional nationalist leanings⁹⁰ can be detected at times in her work, with Grattan and Parnell and the Irish Parliamentary Party featuring more heavily than in the other texts.

Likewise, Carty and Ó Siocfhradha's republicanism and their conceptualisation of the dominant motifs in Irish history. Both Carty and Ó Siocfhradha favoured the more militaristic aspects of Irish history, and showed a strong focus on conflict over land. The period most emphasised by Ó Siocfhradha was the land agitation of the late nineteenth century, followed by his discussion of the Nine Years War, (and the Norman Conquest in total). When discussing the 1641 Rebellion and the Confederation of Kilkenny which followed, (See Appendix 1) Carty

⁸⁹ This was categorised as separate from the High Kings with Opposition period (1014-1169), owing to how the textbooks themselves broached the topic (except for Ryan.)

⁹⁰ Hayden for example was strongly against the 1916 Rising, despite being a personal friend of Pearse, later stating that she "could not in conscience help." See Ruth Dudley Edwards, *Patrick Pearse: the triumph of failure* (London, 1977), p. 329. See also Joyce Padbury, 'Mary Hayden (1862-1942), historian and feminist' in *History Ireland*, xv, no. 5 (2007).

provides nine pages on the Rising itself, with 13 pages on the Confederation and 13 pages on the Cromwellian Settlement. Leaving aside questions of quality and sophistication of discussion, Hayden gave more attention to the Confederation and associated conflict, but less to the violent uprising and subsequent Cromwellian settlement (five pages on the Rising, 15 on the Confederation, and five on the Settlement).⁹¹ Carty and Ó Siadhail were also the only two of the five who featured the 1798 Rebellion among their top 5 topics of discussion. When discussing the Rebellion and the United Irishmen, Carty dedicated a considerable 17 pages, totalling 2.52% of his work to the ‘Insurrection’ as it was termed. In contrast, Hayden dedicated only 1.07% or 6 pp to this.

Similarly, differences in perspectives are noticeable in the categorisation or periodisation of topics. While Casserley divided the Parnell period into two groupings: the Land Question, and the Home Rule question, Carty grouped the whole period under the heading ‘The Struggle for Land’ (as does Ó Siadhail), and thus downplayed the importance of the constitutional nationalist aspect. Hayden offered a comprehensive breakdown of the period, being broken into several episodes of interest arranged chronologically. In total, Carty dedicated 3.12% (21 pp) of his work to the Land Question, whereas Hayden and Moonan dedicated only 1.79% (10 pp), and Casserley even less (3 pp, 0.96% of her total). Ó Siadhail maintained the largest focus of all the textbooks on this topic. In contrast, the parliamentary actions and attempts for Home Rule were practically ignored, comprising only 0.64% of his total, at under two pages. Hayden on the other hand, dedicated twice as much discussion to this aspect of Parnell’s career than his work with the Land League and Davitt, allocating 3.58% of her work (20 pp) to discussing the matter.

Carty was unique in that his textbooks followed a slightly different structure to the other texts. Each featured sections on the ‘Lives of the People’, usually dedicated to art, architecture, literature, and education. Notwithstanding the classroom exercises outlined at the end of each chapter which focussed on some aspect of Irish poetry or literature to be read and learnt, 3.86%

⁹¹ In percentage form, Carty spent 1.34% of his text on the Rising, 1.93% on the Confederation, and another 1.93% on the Settlement, in comparison to Hayden, whose comparable figures were 0.72%, 2.68%, and 0.72%.

of Carty's work (26 pp) was dedicated exclusively to literature. This preference was echoed in Hayden and Moonan's work, with 4.29% of the total (24 pp) devoted to literature. Ryan, and Ó Siocfhradha also separate this aspect of their work out, and so it is very easily quantifiable. Casserley, on the other hand, subsumed this part of her work within her wider discussion of Irish history.

Despite this, a reading of the various textbooks does not highlight any major difference in this regard.⁹² All five textbook writers acknowledged the interconnection between Irish history and Irish literature. As exemplified by Carty, "We cannot read the history of our country, or of any other country, without realising the importance of literature and learning and of good education. A nation will not be respected or admired if it is without men of genius. It must not merely produce such men, but it must honour and reward them." Quoting Charles Gavan Duffy's work *Young Ireland* Carty went further while discussing the nineteenth and early twentieth century, stating the need to honour those literary and artistic figures who "made Ireland their home, whatever might be their political opinions, *for great men make a great nation.*"⁹³

Themes:

Each of the textbooks (and especially the four which moved beyond the Elizabethan Era) maintained the importance of the *Great Man* approach to history writing, with an overall focus on high politics. Though Carty could boast sections in each of his texts devoted to the social, economic, and industrial history as part of his 'Lives of the People' sub-chapter, or on Irish industry, these were always framed as an addendum to the overall work. By his own admission, his works emphasised "the periods of our History which are most inspiring and better calculated to lead to pride of country" and the narrative was "largely written around the careers of great personalities." This is qualified by stating that Irish history was not just a dull chronicle of battles and slaughters. This does not, however, negate the high politics approach, centred on the history

⁹² Ó Siocfhradha, *Stair Seanchais Éireann II*, (Dublin, 1933) pp 93-6; James Carty, *A class-book of Irish history. Book IV: From the act of union to the present day* (4th ed., London, 1936), pp 9–11.; This was similar to how Ó Siocfhradha had a sub-section on Robert Emmet, consisting of 3 pp. Carty had a similar account, however, this was under the wider discussion of 'Ireland after the Union'.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 161.

of Great Men, such as O'Connell and Parnell, Brian Boru and Shane O'Neill for example.⁹⁴ Hayden tellingly embodied this approach, categorising the Nine Years War for example as 'The War of O'Neill and O'Donnell'. This approach was not unique to Ireland nor school textbooks, being the dominant approach in writing history at the turn of the twentieth century.

A further theme which emerged from the texts, and emphasised widely was that of religion, the importance of which is a generally accepted feature of post-Independence Irish Education.⁹⁵ Carty was particularly prominent in this regard, especially in his first *Class-Book* and his discussion of St Patrick and Early Christian Ireland. In terms of emphasis, Carty's first text used Irish history to promote religion in a very definite manner. When discussing St Patrick, the pagan ways of Ireland are set in stark contrast to the period that later emerged, being a "time of war and tumult" before "Christianity, with its message of peace and hope, began to reach our shores."⁹⁶ Carty's extensive celebration of St Patrick⁹⁷ was in line with wider calls, not least by influential educators such as Corcoran, for Irish history to promote Catholic morality.⁹⁸ St Patrick "according to the traditional belief ...prayed for Ireland, and that the Irish people might never lose the Christian faith."⁹⁹ Thus, by inference, the reader is encouraged to follow St Patrick's ideal and uphold Christianity in Ireland. Having described the 'Golden Age' of Irish history being the 'Isle of Saints and Scholars', Carty continues this line of inferences. When the Vikings arrived, their animosity towards the Irish was directed primarily at the monasteries and churches as, according to Carty, they "hated Christianity."¹⁰⁰ Such associations directly connected the Irish with Christianity in direct contrast to their enemies. What is more, their conversion to Christianity

⁹⁴ James Carty, *A Class-Book of Irish History. Book II: From the Norman Invasion to the Flight of the Earls* (1607) (London, 1930), pp ii–iii.

⁹⁵ Numerous studies have been done on this, such as O'Donoghue, *The Catholic Church and the secondary school curriculum in Ireland, 1922–1962*. For a more general study on the relation between the Church and State at this time, see Whyte, *Church and state in modern Ireland, 1923–1979*.

⁹⁶ Carty, *Class-Book I*, p. 34.

⁹⁷ Ibid., pp 36–7.: An example of this promotion of Patrick's Christina mission: "God took pity on my youth and ignorance and watched over me before I knew Him, and relieved and consoled me as a father his son...Often in the day I prayed. The love of God and the fear of Him increased within my heart. My faith was strengthened, and in one day I said as many as a hundred prayers, and in the night the same..."

⁹⁸ Corcoran, S.J., 'New Programme: History'.

⁹⁹ Carty, *Class-Book I*, p. 43.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., pp 61, 152.

was highlighted as marking the Northmen's assimilation to Irish culture, and made them part of the 'Irish people'.

Carty was not alone in stressing the importance of religion. Casserley dedicated a considerable proportion (6.68%, 21 pp) of her texts to Early Christianity, between St Patrick and the Isle of Saints and Scholars period. The most prominent writer as regards religious matters was John Ryan. Whereas the other four textbooks for example all subsumed discussion of the reform of the Irish Church in the eleventh and twelfth century into their general discussion of the 'High Kings with Opposition' period, Ryan specifically separated both this, and the Irish Kingdom of Scotland out as separate chapters. While this aspect of Irish history was discussed in most of the other works, none granted it anything near an equivalent importance.¹⁰¹ The centrality of religion to Irish identity, along with stressing of the 'Gaedhil' was thus being promoted. Considering Ryan's religious vocation, this increased emphasis is understandable.

Land

While the centrality of religion to the identity of the 'Irish people', and the importance of political and cultural unity between these has been noted, one of the most prevalent issues across the textbooks was the theme of land. Initially stressed in Hayden and Moonan, and continually highlighted in the subsequent textbooks, the centrality of land to the Irish people and the historical debates over possession, confiscation, plantation and reform were crucial to the national narrative which was propounded in these texts. While discussing the period immediately prior to the Battle of Clontarf, the Vikings were presented by Moonan as having joined the fold through their having resided on the land for over a century, having abandoned their previous sea-faring and raiding ways "Landsmen and town-dwellers for the most part, their ways were becoming the ways of peace and commerce rather than of war... [T]hey were getting a better understanding of the Irish amidst whom they lived. They could not escape the fact that *Ireland was their home.*"¹⁰² It was

¹⁰¹ Hayden and Moonan for example, discussed this over the course of a page and a half, as part of a wider discussion of Ireland from St Patrick to the Northmen. Hayden & Moonan, *A short history of the Irish people*, pp 49–50. Ó Siadhail included a page on Dal Riada and Drom Ceat, Micheál Ó Siadhail, *Stair Sheanchas Éireann I & II* (First published 1933, Cork, 2005), p. 39.

¹⁰² Hayden & Moonan, *A short history of the Irish people*, p. 69.

the “settled policy of conquest” to “acquire the very soil of the Irish clans” which was seen to differentiate the Norman invasion with the earlier Norse incursions.¹⁰³ The hostility between Irish and feudal ideas of land ownership was seen to affect the very basis of social and political life and lay at the root of the future struggle between the two races. This conflict was portrayed by Hayden as having begun by the grants of Henry II, and continued to the present day.¹⁰⁴ Despite the repeated discussion of conflict as well as discussions over religion and national identity, it was the issue of land ownership which Hayden declared as most prescient in attempting to understand Irish history, especially during the Tudor and Stuart period; “Of all the evils and miseries which afflicted Ireland during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, none certainly caused suffering so widespread or produced results so evil as what is called "the Plantation Policy.”¹⁰⁵ A declaration of this sort, fits into the wider emphases of the examinations, (as outlined in Chapter 5), whereby the Plantations were the second most popular exam topic at Intermediate level throughout the period, but especially in the opening two decades of the course.

Tellingly, the issue of land was used to explain moments of religious bigotry and persecution throughout Irish history; at the hands of both Protestants and Catholics. Hayden, having repudiated any claims that Irish Catholics could actively persecute persons of other religions, specifically cited agrarian motives as the cause of the massacre of Protestants in 1641 for example, whose victims “with few exceptions, suffered not as Protestants, but as Planters, or the kin of Planters.”¹⁰⁶

This description sought to elevate land over religion as a motive for massacre, and while not condoning the acts, made the atrocities more justifiable. This qualification of why acts of violence occurred remained an issue up to the time that the textbook was being written.¹⁰⁷ As David Fitzpatrick writes as regards revolutionary Ireland, it is extremely difficult to establish whether

¹⁰³ Ibid., pp 80, 109.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 120.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 218.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 297.

¹⁰⁷ See for example, Richard McMahon, *Homicide in pre-famine and famine Ireland* (Liverpool, 2013) in which he repeatedly highlighted the risks in privileging one factor over another in attempting to explain the motives behind violent activity.

attacks on Protestants were motivated by economic or sectarian reasons: “The line between sectarian and social conflict was always indistinct, since Protestants dominated the landed gentry and were heavily over-represented in banking, business, and manufacturing.”¹⁰⁸ Whilst it was obviously seen as less problematic by Hayden and Moonan to make such distinctions in discussions of the mid-seventeenth century, the very make-up of the Confederation which followed, uniting the Old English and Gaelic Irish for the first time along religious lines, meant that in reality it was no less of an issue and Hayden’s concern to acquit the Ulster rebels in 1641 of sectarian or religious motives, inseparable from disputes over land, had more to do with asserting a non-sectarian basis to modern Irish nationalism than historical fact.

The centrality of land to the national narrative continued into the late nineteenth century as well. The significance of landlordism, the Land League and Michael Davitt was evident in each of the textbooks. The issue was especially important to Carty who, as seen earlier as regards topic emphasis, dedicated a substantial proportion of *Class-Book III* to the issue of land reform.¹⁰⁹ While not overly simplistic in their depictions (with Carty and Hayden both commenting on how fair landlords did exist), the general portrayal of landlordism was a negative one.¹¹⁰ With the agrarian reform of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the claims for the ‘ownership of Ireland by the people of Ireland’ was seen to be vindicated, supporting the ‘whig’ inference that the historical struggles culminated in the independent Irish Free State.

¹⁰⁸ David Fitzpatrick, *The Two Irelands, 1912-1939* (Oxford, 1998), p. 96.

¹⁰⁹ Over one fifth of Carty’s *Class-Book III* is dedicated exclusively to the concept of land, with specific sections on ‘The Struggle for Land, I & II’, as well as on ‘Agriculture and Industry’. (34 pages from a total of 169) See James Carty, *A Class-Book of Irish History. Book III: From the Flight of the Earls to the Act of Union (1800)* (London, 1930), pp 66–87, 128–141. What is more, ‘Land’ featured heavily in other sections of the text as well, notably when discussing the Great Hunger, and so this 1/5 is not a final amount.

¹¹⁰ Hayden & Moonan, *A short history of the Irish people*, p. 498. “Of the resident landlords many did their duty nobly. Some were ruined by the lavishness of their charity. On the other hand, there were surprising instances of heartlessness, amongst the absentees especially. There were parishes in which practically the whole population was reduced to a state of utter destitution, while the lord of the soil, dwelling in London or in Paris, subscribed not a penny for their relief, and merely grumbled that his rents were not remitted to him as usual. Perhaps even, he desired his agent to serve notices of eviction on the starving peasants, and to fling them out to die on the roadside.”

The final issue specific to this discussion of emphasis was that of translation,¹¹¹ and whether or not texts would change their emphases when translated into the Irish language. The translations of Carty and Ryan would suggest that this was not a major issue. While certain descriptions could occasionally be more severe (for example Ryan's description of the Vikings as "barbair fhíochmhara gan truagh gan taise"¹¹²) generally there was no major difference between the two accounts.¹¹³

Narrative and textbooks on Irish history:

In order to examine how Irish history was portrayed in secondary schools between 1924 and 1969, it is crucial to establish the narrative being propounded through the textbooks used in schools, owing to their central place in classroom practice in the Irish context.¹¹⁴ A common practice of teachers is, and has been, to rely on textbooks as the main source of the teaching activity. Textbooks comprise a body of content knowledge and are understood to present a range of pedagogic methods and reflect external or imposed sets of social purposes.¹¹⁵ Thus, they have been seen to comprise the 'official' view of a nation's past, as established by societies over time.¹¹⁶ What is more, as one textbook historian has noted, the form and use of textbooks is not a neutral delivery procedure, but is itself a determinant of meaning.¹¹⁷ Textbooks do not simply reproduce historical scholarship. In order to make complex historical issues accessible to schoolchildren, authors have to engage in a process of selection, and often of simplification.¹¹⁸ By examining the issues of narrative and emplotment and by interpreting what was written as a

¹¹¹ The issue of textbooks as Gaeilge will be examined in greater detail later in the chapter.

¹¹² Ryan, S.J., *Stair na hÉireann ó 800 A.D. go dtí 1600*, p. 1.: translated to "ferocious barbarians, relentless and without pity."

¹¹³ There was a slight difference in emphasis between Ryan's work in English and Mícheál Breathnach's translated version, published with An Gúm. The Irish translation was longer by 50 pages, with four extra pages specifically dedicated to the Irish 'Golden Age' from St Patrick to the Northmen, and the 'Island of Saints and Scholars'. This discrepancy can be attributed to the linguistic differences between the two languages, as opposed to any alteration in topic emphasis and perspective, with both accounts being incredibly similar.

¹¹⁴ For a discussion of the importance of textbooks in different contexts see Jason Nicholls (ed.), *School history textbooks across cultures: international debates and perspectives* (Oxford studies in comparative education, v. 15 (2), Oxford, 2006).

¹¹⁵ Zúñiga et al., *History Curriculum in Chile*, p. 40.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Thornton, 'History in US History Textbooks?', p. 15.

¹¹⁸ Osler, 'Still Hidden from History?', p. 233.

‘perspective’, as a ‘story’, with the various tropes and functions which such an understanding entails, textbooks can be exposed to a wide vista of interpretative lenses and epistemological criticism.¹¹⁹ It allows one to focus, not only on the historicity of what was being stated, but on the values which the descriptions espouse, and the modes through which this narrative is propounded, namely the use of descriptive language, characterisation, and theme.

The first task to tackle is how we define and establish narrative.¹²⁰ The narrative form has been defined by one educational historian as a ‘mode of comprehension’, a “structure designed to create knowledge about and understanding of the events of the past. A historical narrative does not portray the past itself; it is not a story supported by evidence but the statement of the evidence itself, organised in narrative form.”¹²¹ This chapter interprets it according to a few select criteria: first, by understanding the various modes of explanation and the modes of emplotment of each textbook,¹²² or in other words, by examining the events chosen to be discussed; secondly, by the order in which they are laid out and the connections made between events and people throughout the textbook/series of textbooks and how these are fitted into a wider arc; and finally by considering the descriptions given by the authors of these events and characters. Historical ‘facts’ only derive their ‘meaning’ from their place in the narrative. The three central issues of subject-matter, aim, and mode of representation, are all crucial to understanding the function of a piece of writing¹²³ specifically here, the story of the Irish past being presented in these textbooks.

This section establishes the nature of content through a simple cross-referencing of indexes before identifying common themes from the subject matter. From this, it establishes the

¹¹⁹ Hayden White, ‘The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory’ in *History and Theory*, xxiii, no. 1 (1984), pp 1–33.

¹²⁰ For more on defining narrative see M.L. Ryan, ‘Toward a definition of narrative’ in David Herman (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative* (Cambridge, 2007), pp 22–36; Bronwen Thomas, *Narrative: The Basics* (New York, 2016).

¹²¹ Bert Vanhulle, ‘The path of history: narrative analysis of history textbooks - a case study of Belgian history textbooks (1945–2004)’ in *History of Education*, xxxviii, no. 2 (2009), p. 264.

¹²² White, ‘The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory’. See also Hayden White, ‘Interpretation in History’ in *New Literary History*, iv, no. 2 (1973), pp 281–314.

¹²³ White, ‘The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory’, p. 5.

main narratives which were prevalent. This is done to see what issues were repeatedly being discussed, and in what manner. Moreover, schoolchildren do not tend to question the accounts presented in their textbooks, especially considering how ‘critical thinking’ was not a central part of history teaching during this period. This consequently leads to a “strengthening of the ontological character of the historical narrative; simply put, the historical narrative of history textbooks seems to present its readers with an untouchable, objective and absolute truth.”¹²⁴ This section considers what this ‘absolute truth’ consisted of in the various textual accounts of Irish history.

A definite narrative of resistance and ‘glorious failure’ emerged from an analysis of the texts. This was primarily identified through the concept of an ‘Irish’ people, united under a common Gaelic culture, language, and especially from the sixteenth century onwards, religion and sense of ‘nationalism’ (though not necessarily expressed in these explicit terms). Each of the textbook series cover Irish history from the earliest time until the present, bar Ryan. They first establish who the ‘Irish’ were, outlining their development as Gaelic adherents of Christianity.¹²⁵ The ‘protagonists’ are then faced with the threat of invasion, from the seafaring Norsemen,¹²⁶ and more significantly from the Normans after 1169, to which a response is necessary. Thus the resistance narrative is developed, and maintained due to the repeated losses sustained by the Irish to this foreign element.

The coming of the Normans was highlighted, especially by Hayden and Moonan, and in the structure of Carty’s Class-Books, as a definitive moment, shaping the arc of Irish history to the present day. This was done by portraying the conflict, not as between rival clans, ethnicities or nations, but between rival civilisations. This understanding of Irish history was specifically

¹²⁴ Vanhulle, ‘The path of history’, p. 265.

¹²⁵ Ryan structures his texts around this, using the high point of Gaelic Christianity, before the coming of the Vikings as the end of his first volume. See Fr. John Ryan, S.J., *Ireland from the earliest times to A.D. 800* (Dublin, 1929).

¹²⁶ Mícheál Ó Siocfhradha, *Stair Sheanchas Éireann I & II* (First published 1933, Cork, 2005), p. 53 specifically laudes the fact that the Norsemen never placed Ireland under their control, unlike other more powerful countries which they subjugated, “agus ní beag an cháil ar Éirinn sin.”

acknowledged in a 1923 New York Times review of Hayden and Moonan.¹²⁷ The Norsemen were not seen in similar terms to the Normans, despite being represented as an alien group in relation to the Gaelic chiefs, condemned for their violence and hatred of Christianity. When they held dominion over lands and towns however, they were seen to be less antagonistic towards the Gaelic system and were quick to assimilate;¹²⁸ they became Christians, married Irishwomen, paid tribute to the Irish kings, and would often offer tribute and military support to the ruling Gaelic clans.¹²⁹ The Norse, as portrayed in these texts, never pretended to the thrones of the Irish, instead ruling over the town forts which they created.

The Normans on the other hand, though also noted to have later assimilated, differed from their Norse predecessors, and were condemned by Moonan, for attempting “to force upon it [Gaelic Ireland] a system which was hostile to everything that it considered wise, just, and practical in these great matters [of government, laws and ownership of lands].”¹³⁰ The assumption of Richard de Clare to the title of King of Leinster, upon the death of Diarmuid MacMurrough, was seen to alter the character of the invasion.

Up to this, it had been the effort of an Irish provincial king to regain his throne with the help of foreign adventurers. It was a claim with which many of the Irish chiefs must have nourished a more or less secret sympathy; even those who opposed him must have regarded the contest as a purely personal one. But all now beheld a stranger declaring himself to be an Irish King in defiance of all their known principles of succession, and introducing methods and laws which were essentially

¹²⁷ *New York Times*, 7 January 1923, ‘Review’, “Irish history, through the able interpretation of Miss Hayden and Mr Moonan is clearly shown as a conflict between civilizations rather than a series of instances of the malignity of nations and of individuals.” Review by American born poet of Irish descent, Norreys Jephson O’Conor, educated at Harvard and renowned for his interest in Gaelic literature and culture.

¹²⁸ Hayden & Moonan, *A short history of the Irish people*, p. 69. “For over a century their colonies had existed in the towns on the coast in which they had settled. Here had grown up many generations whose lives and habits were very different from those of the fierce sea-raiders from whom they had sprung. Landsmen and town-dwellers for the most part, their ways were becoming the ways of peace and commerce rather than of war... [T]hey were getting a better understanding of the Irish amidst whom they lived. They could not escape the fact that Ireland was their home.”

¹²⁹ Carty, *Class-Book I*, pp 64, 72.

¹³⁰ Hayden & Moonan, *A short history of the Irish people*, p. 56.

opposed to all their conceptions of justice and government. The conflict of *two hostile systems* had begun.¹³¹

This clash of civilisations was further highlighted by Moonan in his discussion of art and literature, which he saw as mirroring the context in which it was produced. During the ravages of the Norsemen, Ireland had produced some of its greatest works of literature and art. The Norman invasion however was said to have had “a more paralysing effect upon Irish genius. The advent of the new invaders inaugurated a period of decay in both literature and art. Their warfare was one that threatened the extermination of a people, or, at least, the destruction of their social and political system.”¹³² The Normans were seen as more of a permanent, even an existential threat, not merely a temporary aberration. The conceptualisation of Irish history as a struggle between the ‘Irish people’ and an alien civilisation was furthered throughout Hayden and Moonan’s work.¹³³

Moonan’s handling of accounts from the earliest settlers on the island, up to the early medieval Ireland was grounded in the modern scholarship of nationalist historians, and was in line with their positive portrayals of early Irish Celtic life.¹³⁴ The importance of the Church, the development of the Clan and Brehon law system, and the significant advances in art and literature of each successive period was highlighted.¹³⁵ ‘Ireland’, the reader is told, was ‘the intellectual head of Europe’: Armagh was the Metropolis of Civilisation.¹³⁶

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 113.

¹³² Ibid., p. 147. See also Ibid., p. 152 and the special ‘Remonstrance’ to the Pope by Domhnall O'Neill King of Aileach from the late twelfth century, which demonstrates the perspective of the textbook writers with regards to this period in Irish history

¹³³ This would also help explain the different depictions of the Bruce and the Norman invasions, with the Bruce’s being seen to belong to the Oirghaedhil of Dál Riada. Consider this in relation to both the 1929 Leaving Certificate and Inter Cert exam questions on the Scotti, Department of Education, *Exam Papers*, 1929 (Dublin 1929) as well as how Brian Boru’s proclamation as ‘Imperator Scottorum’, and so the connection between Scotland and Ireland was one of kindred clans, rather than separate civilisations.

¹³⁴ Eoin MacNeill, *Phases of Irish history* (Dublin, 1920) cited in Mary Hayden and George Aloysius Moonan, *A short history of the Irish people: Part One, From the earliest times to 1603* (Dublin, 1921), pp 25–6 as an example. See also Ibid., p. 40

¹³⁵ Moonan’s praise for early Irish culture has been interpreted as an attempt to reinforce the MacNeil-Green view against older, but still prevalent unionist depiction of this period as a turbulent, barbaric society, until the coming of the English influence to Ireland. See Smith, *A ‘Manly Study’?*, pp 70–5.

¹³⁶ Hayden & Moonan, *A short history of the Irish people*, p. 40.

Central to this view was the conceptualisation of the ‘Irish’ as a continuous, united people, who despite military losses, and despite the changing demographic and the ordering of society, remained resilient and at least culturally unified. Invaders and planters were increasingly seen to become more like those whom they defeated. Through the assimilation of the foreign element, through the development of a culture which was derived from those who lived in Ireland, and through the continuation by later generations of this way of life, and the ‘fight’ against their enemies, a wider narrative of survival and resistance could be sustained. This concept of rival civilisations operating in Ireland was notably evident in Hayden and Moonan’s discussion of the Statute of Kilkenny, 1367.¹³⁷ Their descriptions combined two lines of enquiry: the resistance narrative being bolstered by the conceptualisation of the rival civilisations in Ireland; the latter driving the former.

In terms of recurring themes, this theme of unity was seen in Hayden and Moonan, Carty, Casserley and Ó Siadhail from very early on. Moonan sought to find an historical explanation for why the Norman Conquest was so successful. He traced the lineage of the ruling Gaelic clans back to three families in the second century. From this time “We find...the origin of the *three great dynasties*, which supplied the independent rulers of all parts of Ireland (except Ulaidh) for hundreds of years, and which contested with each other the supremacy of the country. Here, too, we have the clues to the alliances and rivalries which took place up to the coming of the Normans, and also to the historical reasons for the conflicting claims which prohibited unity before and after that event.”¹³⁸ Their historical ties were seen to demonstrate their interconnection, and also to explain why disunity reigned when the ‘Irish’ were faced with a foreign ‘oppressor’. Carty continued this line of reasoning when he argued that the reason that the Normans were successful in Ireland was not that the Irish kings did not resist, but that they “were

¹³⁷ Ibid., pp 165–8.: “In every phase of life, barriers were to be erected between the two races in Ireland; the process of assimilation was to be arrested; the island was to be permanently divided into two hostile nations, between whom all intercourse, social, economic, intellectual (and even spiritual) was prohibited.”

¹³⁸ Ibid., pp 15–16. See also Dora Casserley, *History of Ireland: Part One- Earliest Times to Flight of the Earls* (Dublin and Cork, 1941), pp 61–2 where Casserley discusses why the Vikings were initially so successful, until the time of the Battle of Clontarf.

not patriotic enough, or not sufficiently organised to unite together for the good of the whole country.”¹³⁹ This theme was explicitly stressed by Ó Siadhail, when discussing the Convocation of Caol-Uisce, 1258 for example,¹⁴⁰ as well as when highlighting the greatness of Art MacMurrough Kavanagh and how he never made war with his own people.¹⁴¹ As part of the class assignments accompanying his text, Ó Siadhail explicitly asked as regards the post-Battle of Clontarf period, and the ‘Kings with Opposition’ “What was the cause of disunity among Irish kings, and which of them were most involved?”, as well as questions on when the Irish first attempted a united stand against the Normans, and how they fared.¹⁴²

Discussions on unity were not solely confined to examples of military squabbling and internal rivalry, but importantly, comprised culture as well. In his discussion of the decades immediately prior to the coming of the Normans, and the ‘Kings with Opposition’, Moonan makes a point to mention that

This period, so often represented as one of purposeless turmoil and general confusion, was one most fruitful in both literature and art....And the writings of the time afford clear testimony to the unity in culture of the nation at the time that it was forcibly developing unity in political life. To all the writers of the time the identity of the Gael was unmistakably definite and distinct; Eire was their common country.¹⁴³

By connecting the disparate clans along ethno-cultural lines, claims could be made about a distinct Irish civilisation and an ‘Irish people’, even if the people did not see themselves as united.¹⁴⁴ The prevalence of discord and disunity could then be highlighted, without undermining their central argument. Hayden and Moonan asserted that

¹³⁹ Carty, *Class-Book I*, p. 91.

¹⁴⁰ Ó Siadhail, *Stair Sheanchas Éireann*, p. 71.; At the Convocation of Caol Uisce, the three greatest Gaelic Kings met to select a high-king, in order to rally against the Norman threat. Only two of the three agreed, uniting and facing a Norman force at the Battle of Downpatrick the following year, and were ultimately defeated.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 76.

¹⁴² Ibid., pp 107–8.

¹⁴³ Hayden & Moonan, *A short history of the Irish people*, p. 103.

¹⁴⁴ See also Carty, *Class-Book I*, p. 101. “It is worthy of note that, although there were many kingdoms, the same legal customs were in force throughout the island.”¹⁴⁴

Of a country so circumstanced there can be little continuous history. Most of the incidents are petty and local; the few important events are of a varied nature. The quarrels, dissensions, and ambitions of clans, the rivalries of lords, the spasmodic malevolence of the Crown officials, the desperate efforts of the Pale to save itself from annihilation, form a strange medley to which the echo of English political strife constantly adds a discordant note.”¹⁴⁵

At the same time, such assertions could be relegated to a position of lesser importance by highlighting elements or individuals, though different from the status quo, who represented a ‘true Gaelic ideal’. This also demonstrates the understanding that, though an overall narrative might be present, it did not necessarily need to be seamless. Hayden and Moonan were perfectly willing to accept that the ‘Irish people’ were not united throughout their history, or that many of them did not see themselves belonging to a given nation. “During this period, [fifteenth century]...English influence was at its lowest ebb. The country was independent, and the nation was unified in culture; but the one had no centre, and the other no head — there was no national focus. The conditions were remarkably like those after Clontarf (chap. VII) or like those of the Italian States down to recent times.”¹⁴⁶ This is important to consider as, while Irish history may have been fashioned into a particular narrative, in terms of emplotment, description, and overall purpose (with the past converging neatly on the present as teleological end goal)¹⁴⁷ these textbooks, especially Hayden and Moonan, were not overtly stressing this to the detriment of the contextual considerations of these periods in history.

Specific events may have been seen as ‘chapters’ in the ‘story of the Irish people’, the ‘great movements’ of the nation and her people, but they did not have to present themselves as a continuous march of progress. Nor even, did many of the historical actors see themselves as part of this wider story. For example, while discussing the early 1590s and the Nine Years War, Hayden notes how Aodh Ó Néill was planning for a war aimed towards “uniting all Ireland in

¹⁴⁵ Hayden & Moonan, *A short history of the Irish people*, pp 177–8.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., pp 184–5.

¹⁴⁷ For examples of how the present was portrayed as the end goal, consider James Carty’s discussion of Parnell, where he stated that “Like Moses...Parnell had led his people within sight of the promised land.” See Carty, *Class-Book IV*, p. 94.

one great effort to shake off the yoke of the stranger, and attain actual or virtual independence.”¹⁴⁸ However, this understanding was not being imposed upon those involved at the time. As she declared “The conception of the struggle as a national one, in which the whole future of Ireland was involved, seems to have been scarcely at all present in the minds of most of them, and probably was understood fully by none but O’Neill himself.”¹⁴⁹ This also highlighted how special praise (and inclusion into the canon of Great Irish men) was generally reserved for those characters who despite the tumult and the general division, viewed their actions as being for a national (and/or Catholic) cause, and thus proved themselves to be exceptional. Conversely, it could be argued that such an understanding was an historical construct, with Hayden ascribing her contemporary outlook onto these leading figures in Irish history.

This special praise was especially prevalent in depictions of Irish leaders from the sixteenth century onwards, for example, the reaction of Aodh O’Neill to Aodh Rua Ó Domhnaill’s escape from Dublin Castle in 1592: “Had O’Neill been a mere Celtic chief, whose political aims went no further than the aggrandizement of his own clan, this news would have afforded him little satisfaction...But the present head of the Ui Niall was a politician of wider views. He saw that a united Ulster must be the first step towards the united Ireland of which he dreamt. He sent a message to Hugh Ruadh, asking him to come at once to him, and Hugh Ruadh came.”¹⁵⁰ Likewise, Shane O’Neill was commended by Carty for his understanding of the political context from a cultural-nationalist perspective, being said to have known, unlike the majority of the Irish, how Queen Elizabeth’s plantations were not a result of local disturbances, but that she had planned “to make Ireland fully obedient to England, both in religion and secular affairs.” In a letter to the Desmond John Fitzgerald, O’Neill declared that “The English have no other eye but to subdue both *Gaill* and *Gaedhil* of Ireland, and I and you especially.”¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ Hayden & Moonan, *A short history of the Irish people*, p. 246.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 250.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 248.

¹⁵¹ Carty, *Class-Book II*, p. 99.

Praise was also forthcoming for upholders of the Catholic religion (the interconnection of which to Irish nationalism in the twentieth century has been widely documented).¹⁵² James Fitzmaurice Fitzgerald, for example “more than any other of those who in Ireland rose against the rule of Elizabeth... seems to have been actuated mainly by the motive of opposing the spread of the new doctrines, and doing battle for the Old Faith. He was a man of high and pure character and a skilful soldier.”¹⁵³

Having established what the Gaelic culture and religion was from earliest times to the Tudor era (In the opening 200 pp of Hayden and Moonan, Class-Book 1 and the majority of CB2 by Carty, and the first ‘Five Periods’ or ‘Ré’ of Ó Siocfhradha), the resistance of a ‘people’ united against a foreign oppressor could be specifically highlighted and linked to the Catholic religion. As noted in Hayden and Moonan

This very connection of the Reformed doctrines with the imposition of foreign rule and a foreign tongue proved, in effect, one of the greatest obstacles to their progress, and joined together the Irish, both the natives and the descendants of the colonists, in resistance to them.¹⁵⁴

But while the prior lack of ‘Nationality’ that “love of country as a whole” was discussed “gradually, under pressure of foreign interference, a broader Patriotism grew up, and entwined itself so closely with Catholicism, that the two ideas became, to the majority, inseparable.”¹⁵⁵

The narrative of resistance was not solely grounded in the ‘unity’ of the ‘Irish people’ however, nor was the concept of an ‘Irish’ people promoted to specifically mean all of Gaelic stock. Enemies of Ireland could just as easily be of Irish descent¹⁵⁶, while champions could be

¹⁵² See for example Doherty, ‘National Identity and the Study of Irish History’, p. 342. Doherty claims that “the dominant theme of history teaching in Ireland was the belief in an inner spirituality of the Irish people, demonstrated by their abiding fidelity to the twin ideals of Catholicism and political freedom.” On first glance, Hayden and Moonan’s work would seem to confirm this. It is worth noting, especially when discussing Carty however, that while the people are said to have clung to the Catholic faith, this is not overly emphasised. The national spirit is emphasised more.

¹⁵³ Hayden & Moonan, *A short history of the Irish people*, p. 237.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 232.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ See for example, Hugh O’Donnell’s brother-in-law Niall ‘Garbh’ as a prime example, who betrayed Aodh Rua, defected to the English side, and gave English forces control of the castle at Lifford, in the hope of gaining the chieftainship from Red Hugh. Carty, *Class-Book II*, pp 133–5.

of English descent (for example, the celebration of William Gladstone, in the nineteenth century.)¹⁵⁷ A simple binary of Bad English vs Good Irish was not being promoted.¹⁵⁸ What is common is that the figures chosen to be highlighted and celebrated were those who adhered to and furthered a nationalist cause (though not necessarily independence.)

These heroes and villains, as well as the general ‘glorious failures’ and resistance narrative could be identified most tellingly through the use of descriptive language when describing key moments in Irish history. Despite suffering repeated defeats, the actions of the Irish were nearly always qualified or promoted; the Irish forces ‘fought bravely’ until forced to concede, or else betrayed by a traitor of sorts. Moreover, in certain instances, military failures were promoted in these textbooks, by stressing their cultural importance or symbolic value to later generations. Carty, for example, stressed how “The Fenian rebellion, like the Repeal movement and the Confederation of ’48, seemed to end in failure. But it would be a mistake to think that the Fenians achieved nothing. They kept alive the spirit of nationality. Their courage, unselfishness and patriotism were honoured by the people.”¹⁵⁹ Likewise, as regards Robert Emmet’s failed rebellion of 1803, Hayden argued for its inspirational value for future patriots:

no material gain [was achieved] for his country; rather the contrary, for severe Coercion Acts were the immediate consequence of his abortive rebellion. Nevertheless, in the Hearts of the men and women of Ireland his name has remained enshrined, more intimately, and with deeper love than that of many who gave long lives of strenuous, self-sacrificing, faithful service to her cause. Around him is the halo which rarely anywhere, but most rarely, perhaps, amongst peoples whose national history

¹⁵⁷ Hayden & Moonan, *A short history of the Irish people*, p. 541. “Ireland should remember with gratitude the Statesman to whom she owes the Disestablishment of the Irish Church, the first important Land Bill, and the two attempts to restore her legislature, to which he devoted so much of the evening of his days.”

¹⁵⁸ This differentiation is important as for example, the likes of Cromwell and Lord Mountjoy could be described in terms which respected their skill in arms without supporting them. “Oliver Cromwell was a great soldier, a man of stern, gloomy and pitiless character and a fanatical enemy of the Catholic religion.” Carty, *Class-Book III*, p. 41. On the other side of the political spectrum, the 1641 rebellion was described as having “been provoked by terrible injustice, but it was accompanied by regrettable acts of cruelty and violence.” The insurgents we are told “lacked discipline and were badly led”, seeing as the natural leaders had all been killed or forced into exile. Sir Phelim O’Neill, their chief leader “though he received a good education in Ireland and England, was vain and incompetent.” *Ibid.*, p. 23.

¹⁵⁹ Carty, *Class-Book II*, p. 59.

has been predominantly one of defeat, is denied to youth made eternal by death, joined to lofty patriotism, and ending in tragic failure.¹⁶⁰

By observing the specific description of important events and players, the perspective and ideology from which the textbook authors were writing can be assessed.

A pattern emerges when the use of personalisation and depiction are analysed across the texts. Those figures who were on the ‘side of the Irish’ were described in generally positive terms,¹⁶¹ and given physical characteristics to match their feats,¹⁶² while those who were on the ‘wrong side’ of this nationalist narrative, or those who were too preoccupied with internal rivalries and local squabbling to see the larger picture, were either described in negative terms, or simply left undefined.¹⁶³ Shane O’Neill for example was described by Hayden as “the most remarkable man who had appeared in Celtic Ireland since the days of Art MacMurrough.”¹⁶⁴ Shane’s words were more expounded upon, in terms of what they ‘actually meant’ as opposed to being taken at face value.¹⁶⁵ While historians could still criticise such figures, this was usually done as a qualification, rather than a negation.

It can be argued that such depictions were inherently biased, and ahistorical, with wrongdoing committed by the ‘Irish’ being either denied or else qualified,¹⁶⁶ while similar actions

¹⁶⁰ Hayden & Moonan, *A short history of the Irish people*, p. 458.

¹⁶¹ This was evident throughout the course of Irish history as outlined. For example, before the Battle of Clontarf, the language differed greatly for Brian’s allies vs his enemies: His wife, Gormfhlaith, who left with her son, Maolmordha, and rallied a Norse alliance against Brian was described as ‘bitterly resentful’ and ‘vindictive’, while Malachy, the only chief of Leath Chuinn (*northern half of Ireland*) who joined with Brian was described as ‘patriotic’. *Ibid.*, pp 77–8.

¹⁶² This was also noted by Ciara Boylan in her review of James Carty *A Junior History of Ireland* for the National Collection of Children’s Books <https://nccb.tcd.ie/exhibit/3197xm07c>, viewed 12/07/16; For example, Sarsfield was a ‘fine handsome man, very tall and strong’, while O’Connell was a ‘tall, well-built and handsome man’. For a representative example, see the depiction of Hugh O’Neill, *Ibid.*, p. 271.

¹⁶³ For example, see Ó Siocghhradha, *Stair Sheanchas Éireann*, pp 62, 66. Diarmuid Mac Murrough is described as being ‘rough and repulsive’ (garbh gránna), Henry II as a ‘lúbaire’, or fraudster, and the Norman barons as ‘sladairí’ (people who cause ruination).

¹⁶⁴ Hayden & Moonan, *A short history of the Irish people*, p. 223.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp 226–8. For example when he stated his desire for an English wife to ‘civilise’ him and his people, Hayden notes how “though no doubt, he had only intended a sarcastic comment on the English views of Celtic Ireland, Sussex chose to take the wish as serious.”

¹⁶⁶ See for example Hayden & Moonan, *A short history of the Irish people: Part Two*, p. 436 and the piking and shooting of prisoners in Wexford town – being blamed on a “ruffian named Dixon” who encouraged some half-drunk pikemen to pull the prisoners from the gaol, and murder them before a “courageous priest, Father Curran...succeeded in stopping the massacre.” See also Carty, *Class-Book III*, pp 111–12. After blaming Dixon, Carty categorically stated that “these atrocities were not committed by

by their enemies were utterly condemned.¹⁶⁷ This is a fair criticism.¹⁶⁸ Yet, what is important to this study is the manner in which such accounts were framed, and the reasoning behind this, more than the validity of the portrayals by the textbooks. Rather than simply judging the nationalistic narrative, this chapter aims to identify what it entailed, and how and why it emerged.

Positionality of authors:

The positionality of the authors is important to the narrative established by their work. Hayden was described as a “Catholic constitutional nationalist and Free State supporter.”¹⁶⁹ This was a fair assertion. Her work often illustrated her personal politics, both in its identification with the Irish Catholics, and in its refusal to openly justify the use of violence in the name of Ireland. Religion became a crucial distinction with regards to the Irish people in Hayden’s textbook from the mid-seventeenth century onwards. During the Jacobite period, Hayden stresses how Protestants were not oppressed “as they and their ancestors had oppressed the Catholics in the past, and as they and their posterity were to oppress the Catholics in the future.” Moreover, Protestants were described as viewing “any extra favour shown to those on whom they had been accustomed to trample, as positive persecution to themselves...”¹⁷⁰ One could see where Church of Ireland members would find grievance in the depictions of their co-religionists, leading to calls for their own textbooks in the late 1940s.¹⁷¹

the fighting men. The insurgents wished... “to promote a union of brotherhood and affection among our countrymen of all religious persuasions.” These earlier texts, due to examples like these, were described as the purist’ texts, in comparison to the ‘moderate’ texts of the late 1960s by one historian in the field. See Mulcahy, ‘A Study of the Relationship between Ireland and England as Portrayed in Irish Post-Primary School History Textbooks’.

¹⁶⁷ Hayden & Moonan, *A short history of the Irish people*, pp 301–2.; discussing the Confederate Wars, and the cruel treatment by English soldiers of Irish combatants, and civilians alike. This was in contrast with the Irish Party who “after the first few months, cannot be charged with any such savagery. Captured garrisons were frequently suffered to depart where they would; prisoners often remained for long periods in the hands of the Confederate troops and were finally released uninjured. Eoghan Ruadh punished with great severity any attempt of his soldiers to plunder or ill-use the civil population, and he treated his captives with the utmost consideration and courtesy. When the English Parliament issued a decree (1644) that no quarter should in future be given to any Irishman " taken in hostilities " against it, the Confederate Council did not retort, as it might well have done, by a similar decree against the Parliamentarian soldiers.”

¹⁶⁸ Particularly in the case above of Shane O’Neill, who was a fierce warlord, known as much for his depredation against his Irish and Scottish neighbours as opposition to the English crown,

¹⁶⁹ Smith, *A ‘Manly Study’?*, p. 74.

¹⁷⁰ Hayden & Moonan, *A short history of the Irish people*, p. 336.

¹⁷¹ See chapter 2

While a firm nationalist, Hayden still demonstrated a degree of sophistication in her analysis of individuals and events. While discussing the Williamite Wars for example, and the siege of Derry in particular, George Walker is described as “a militant clergyman of remarkable courage and capacity”. It was not exclusively Catholic nationalist leaders therefore who were celebrated. The people of Derry were also noted as ‘brave’ during their suffering (though the siege was that of ‘Derry’, not ‘Londonderry’).¹⁷² Additionally, when describing the Battle of Boyne, Hayden criticises the Catholic King James and praises the Williamite leaders; James being noted for his “indecision and downright cowardly” behaviour, whereas William was described as a “skilled and experienced general” and his associates (notably Schomburg) being “bred to arms [having] seen many campaigns.”¹⁷³ But while a balanced account was noticeable in historical detail, the overall perspective from which the textbook was written certainly favoured the Gaelic Catholic point of view. This was especially demonstrated in the use of descriptive language, which highlighted implicit bias.

Hayden’s constitutional nationalist leanings were also plainly evident. Discussing the 1847 split of the Repeal Association and the establishing of the Irish Confederation, while the majority involved were said to be inclined to moderate counsels, “the extremists, of whom Mitchel was the most prominent, had the advantage of possessing a definite programme.”¹⁷⁴ Hayden criticised how the ‘physical force’ party made no attempts to conceal either their aims or the means by which they hoped to attain them, with Mitchel’s *Journal*, repeatedly advocating open warfare against the power of England as the only means by which national freedom could be achieved.

As she continued

The end of all this could easily be foretold. Soldiers were poured into Ireland from across the Channel, and, in March 1848, Mitchel, Smith O’Brien and Meagher were arrested. Two months later

¹⁷² Hayden & Moonan, *A short history of the Irish people*, p. 340.

¹⁷³ Ibid., pp 342–5.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 500. Hayden also noted how the resorting to physical force was not consented to by the majority of those within the Confederation, but that it was being planned for

Mitchel was arraigned under the new Treason Felony Act...After a trial which lasted only four days, he was found guilty and condemned to fourteen years' transportation.¹⁷⁵

When discussing the actions of the Fenian Brotherhood in 1867, James Stephens was said to be “ably assisted by O'Donovan Rossa, John O'Leary, Charles Kickham...and many others; most of them young and inexperienced men, but all filled with the spirit of the purest patriotism, and ready to sacrifice all their possessions, and even their very lives, for what they believed to be the good of Ireland.”¹⁷⁶ Hayden did not declare that their actions were for the actual good or ‘cause’ of Ireland, but that the men involved believed it to be so. This can be read as a statement regarding her own values, but also as a cautiously written piece which chose not to make declaratory statements regarding Irish nationalism.¹⁷⁷

Casserley’s work was notable for differences in emphasis with a number of other textbook writers in terms of militarism, but also for its similarities to Hayden and for a considerable measure of common ground with the other writers on the narrative of the ‘story of Ireland’. While it traces the course of Irish history along the same lines as the others, Casserley spent, by far, the least amount of time on the military ‘Risings’ of Irish history, often providing only a short and disparaging mention. Those previous military engagements (the six mentioned in the 1916 Proclamation) were given primacy of discussion in Carty and Ó Siadhail, (alongside the importance of land), and were described in generally positive terms despite their lack of success. For Casserley, physical force republicanism was not celebrated. 1798 was seen not as a national uprising to change the mode of governing Ireland, but a reaction to torture and oppression, which meant that “before it began it was doomed to failure.”¹⁷⁸ The Young Ireland Rebellion of 1848 was described as “even more hopeless than

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 501.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 509.

¹⁷⁷ Hayden’s political leanings can also be seen through her depictions of Parnell’s legacy Ibid., pp 538–9 After comparing Daniel O’Connell with Parnell, Hayden stressed how “this later champion of Ireland’s cause was deserving, too, of her gratitude. Future generations of his countrymen will remember the great services which he rendered to Ireland, and will allow the waters of time to gradually efface the record of his weakness and his fault.”

¹⁷⁸ Dora Casserley, *History of Ireland: Part Two- From the Flight of the Earls to the Present Day* (Dublin and Cork, 1941), p. 84.

Robert Emmet's" and when "O'Brien and few followers tried to raise a revolt in Munster...they got no support, and the rising collapsed almost as soon as it had begun." The 1867 Fenian Rebellion was described in much the same manner.¹⁷⁹

Yet Casserley's work also shared common ground with those which preceded it. She could still write positively about the Young Irelanders, for example, and their purpose "to make Irishmen realise that they had a country, a language, and a heroic history of their own, of which they ought to be proud. If they could once achieve this...either by peace or by war, [they] would win their freedom."¹⁸⁰ Furthermore, as demonstrated from Fig 1.9 her work emphasised Celtic Ireland, casting it in a positive light,¹⁸¹ and like Ryan lauded the period from St Patrick to the coming of the Northmen, Ireland's 'Golden Age' as she (and Ó Siocfhradha) specifically termed it.¹⁸² Her constitutional nationalism, as much if not more than her Protestantism, seemed to be the influencing factor for her disavowal of the violent uprisings. Casserley remained reasonably balanced, though with the occasional tell as to who was writing, and who the text was being written for. She included the list of Monarchs, from the Tudors up to the House of Windsor, and George VI at the start of the appropriately corresponding chapters. Thus, the English side of Irish history was highlighted more here than elsewhere. In the aftermath of the Williamite War, though she notes the persecution of Catholics that followed, she does not go into much detail as to the violation of the Treaty of Limerick, a prominent feature in all the other textbooks. She was also the only text which detailed the effects of the Disestablishment of the Church of Ireland in 1876 on the Church in general, considering it a blessing in disguise.¹⁸³ Overall though, her work broadly followed the accepted 'story of Ireland', as laid down by previous textbook writers.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., pp 110–11, 14.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 105.

¹⁸¹ Casserley, *History of Ireland Part 1*, p. 15. "They were literary and artistic to a very high degree, and honoured their poets and scholars, as few, if any, other European people did at the same time. They had as high a standard of right and wrong as any pagan people ever had..."

¹⁸² Ibid., p. 41. See also Ó Siocfhradha, *Stair Sheanchas Éireann*, p. 107.

¹⁸³ Casserley, *History of Ireland Part 2*, pp 115–6.

Similarly, Carty, Casserley, as well as Ó Siadhail included particular aspects of European and English history which played a central role in Irish affairs as part of their works. This was an important difference between them and Hayden and Moonan, being mostly omitted from the latter.¹⁸⁴ It also reflected general complaints made by the Department of Education in 1927-28, about students in their exams displaying a significant lack of knowledge on English history when it directly affected Ireland. This omission was a specific criticism levelled against Hayden and Moonan at the time of its publication.¹⁸⁵ Their inclusion in the later textbooks is unsurprising then.

In her role as Lecturer in Modern History at UCD, Mary Hayden was also responsible for supervising M.A. students. However, over the course of twenty years, Hayden only oversaw three M.A. theses, including James Carty and Dora Casserley.¹⁸⁶ Carty and Casserley were therefore very aware of Hayden's work, before beginning their own. Carty and Casserley share many similarities with Hayden's work, and highlight the interplay of these important figures involved in shaping second-level history, through their popular textbooks.

The Whig interpretation of Irish history:

The issue of how Irish history was being neatly structured tied into a wider academic problem, namely the manner in which history was being written at the turn of the century. In his 1933 treatise *The Whig Interpretation of History*, Cambridge historian Herbert Butterfield offered

¹⁸⁴ See for example Ó Siadhail, *Stair Sheanchas Éireann*, pp 83–5. and his discussion of Luther, the growth of Protestantism on the continent, and Henry VIII's feud with the Pope. Regarding the latter, and its importance to why Henry VIII declared himself King of Ireland in 1534, Hayden and Moonan specifically state that “The details of the dispute belong to English History and do not concern us here.” See Hayden & Moonan, *A short history of the Irish people*, p. 204.

¹⁸⁵ *New York Times*, 7 January 1923, ‘Review’ “The chief defect of the book as history is that the English policy in Ireland is not frequently enough related to the general European situation. This is especially true in the explanation of the Act of union, where there is scarcely a hint that one of the reasons for its passage was the desirability of binding the British dominions together against the increasing power of Napoleon. The old saying that ‘He who would England win/ Must first with Ireland begin’ is completely ignored. Almost the only attempt to relate Irish and European history is in the list of important dates given at the close of the several chapters: here are included in italics important events of contemporaneous European affairs.”

¹⁸⁶. UCDA/LA1/L/1/8, 01 Oct 1928, Eoin MacNeill Papers; Letter from Mary Hayden to MacNeill which mentions Carty presenting his MA thesis for a Travelling studentship of the National University of Ireland; See also Nadia Claire Smith, *A 'Manly Study'? Irish Women Historians 1868-1949* (Basingstoke, 2006), p. 68 concerning Hayden's supervision of Casserley's M.A. thesis. The third M.A. thesis supervised was by Robin Dudley Edwards, who would go on to become lecturer of Modern Irish History at UCD, before later becoming Chair of the Department.

a simple yet pointed criticism of how English history had been written in the late nineteenth century by the likes of historian Thomas Babington Macauley. English history, Butterfield contended, was being portrayed in a manner which stressed a continual narrative in which England progressed from an autocratic monarchy towards a parliamentary democracy, and in which the events chosen to be highlighted in the past were those which either furthered or detracted from this progression. Analysing past events with a “direct and perpetual reference to the present” resulted in the creation of a history of ‘champions’ of progress and villains who acted against this progress; it equated the motives of former players with those of modern times. It looked for the present in the past, and subsequently ascribed meaning to things based on present circumstances, as opposed to the context and concerns of the time being investigated. This, as Butterfield noted, ultimately produced a story “which is the ratification, if not the glorification of the present.”¹⁸⁷ “This immediate juxtaposition of past and present, though it makes everything easy and makes some inferences perilously obvious, is bound to lead to an over simplification of the relations between events and a complete misapprehension of the relations between past and present.”¹⁸⁸ By looking only for similarities, and not being “vigilant for unlikenesses”, the historian will find it easy “to say that he has seen the present in the past, [and] will imagine that he has discovered a ‘root’, or an ‘anticipation’ of the 20th century, when in reality he is in a world of different connotations altogether, and he has merely tumbled upon what could be shown to be a misleading analogy.”¹⁸⁹ Moreover, the organisation of historical works, especially general works of history in which abridgement is necessary was a crucial critique by Butterfield of the Whig historians. Any work of general history must leave things out by necessity, owing to constraints of space, and scope. The issue however is if certain events, personalities or movements are left out, not for being unimportant in their own time, or in shaping the worlds which followed, but because they have no direct relevance to the present, and to present sensibilities, or did not fit into the overall narrative being propounded. “Whig history in other words is not a genuine

¹⁸⁷ Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig interpretation of history* (London, 1931), p. 2.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 14.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., pp 11–12.

abridgement, for it is really based upon what is an implicit principle of selection. The adoption of this principle and this method commits us to a certain organisation of the whole historical story.”¹⁹⁰ In other words, the ‘march towards progress’ with the present as the goal of historical change, negatively leads to the result that only events in the past which seem important to the present, or figures who strove to achieve a world similar to the present, are represented; ignoring others (though of equal, if not more importance in their own time) which do not hold current capital, and importance in modern times.

In an Irish setting, the Whig interpretation deviates slightly, in that the end-goal was a separation from British rule, rather than an adjustment to parliamentary, constitutional monarchy, while history would tend to focus on the Catholic ‘Gael’, rather than the Protestant of British history. Nadia Clare Smith argued that, overall, Hayden “did not adopt the extreme ‘whig’ view of the Irish Free State as the inevitable outcome of over seven hundred years of struggle against the English invaders, noting that many struggles had goals far more limited than Irish independence.”¹⁹¹ While valid in its interpretation of Hayden’s consideration of historical detail, this assessment fails to appreciate how events and figures who did follow this ‘whig’ ideal were highlighted as more important, as demonstrated above.¹⁹² Discussion of events and figures which differed from this narrative or which acted as a counterpoint was still possible. The depiction of the ‘Whig-nationalist’ heroes and events however tended to promote a specific perspective concerning Ireland, grounded in a contemporary conception of Irish nationalism and a united identity and culture.

While Hayden and Moonan avoided an ‘extreme’ view, the construction of a national resistance narrative of Irish history was evident in all the main secondary school textbooks. This constituted, to varying degrees, an Irish ‘Whig Tradition of History’. Irish nationalism and

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., pp 25–6.

¹⁹¹ Smith, *A ‘Manly Study’?*, pp 74–5.

¹⁹² For a further example, when discussing Shane O’Neill, Hayden specifically criticises him (after having lavishly praised him through her characterisation) for lacking the foresight to seeing beyond his own dynasty and working for Ireland as a whole. “For all his abilities, Shane had not advanced beyond the position of an Ulster dynast. He did not see that his true policy would have been to conciliate his neighbours, and gradually to unite all Ireland against the growing power of the English.” See Hayden & Moonan, *A short history of the Irish people*, p. 229.

proponents of Irish nationalism across history were celebrated and often linked to one another, while those who failed to view matters through this ideological perspective were villainised or ignored. The narrative of glorious failure can be detected when analysing Hayden and Moonan in how they describe certain individuals involved in important moments in Irish history. Following the fighting at Vinegar Hill, and defeat to General Lake during the 1798 rebellion, the account of the rebels' surrender describes the insurgents as having “resisted stoutly” before they broke and fled. Likewise, the Hoche, on which Wolfe Tone was on board at Lough Swilly, was said to have “made a desperate resistance, and only surrendered when almost sinking.”¹⁹³

This perspective is even more evident in Carty’s *Class-Books*. Carty maintains most of the same themes as Hayden. The major ‘events’ of Irish history were depicted, for the most part in a ‘nearly, not quite’ narrative, in which the Irish nationalists fought bravely, almost succeeded, before ultimately being defeated due to some unfortunate series of events, or were overpowered by a superior force. This perspective begins with Pre-Norman Gaelic Ireland. Carty argued that a strong central monarchy was just beginning to develop, which would have made the country become “more united, more prosperous, more respected by foreigners, and better able to defend itself against an outside enemy.” . . . “But, before the Gaelic Kingdom had become strong enough to resist a shock from outside it was invaded by a gifted and war-like race called the Normans.”¹⁹⁴ This narrative is further evidenced in Carty’s depiction of (inter alia) 1796 and the failure to land French Forces at Bantry Bay, as well as accounting for why the 1867 Fenian rebellion failed, with leaders having been previously captured, as well as inclement weather being cited.¹⁹⁵ When discussing the siege of Limerick, Carty noted how the city “held out bravely for three months under the command of Hugh Dubh [O’Neill] but on October 27th the city was forced to surrender.”¹⁹⁶ This ‘nearly not quite’ narrative was especially noticeable in Hayden’s discussion of the battle of Aughrim, now seen as the defining battle of the Williamite War, in terms of military successes. It was not presented as a decisive defeat for the Jacobites, but instead was

¹⁹³ Ibid., pp 435, 438.

¹⁹⁴ Carty, *Class-Book I*, pp 90–1. See also Ó Siadhail, *Stair Sheanchas Éireann*, p. 66.

¹⁹⁵ Carty, *Class-Book III*, p. 102.; Carty, *Class-Book IV*, p. 55.

¹⁹⁶ Carty, *Class-Book III*, p. 44.

seen as being nearly won, until misfortune (the killing of General St.Ruth) allowed the army to become disorganised, and led to a Williamite victory. It was however stated that “This was a far better contested battle than the Boyne. All authorities agree that at Aughrim the soldiers on both sides fought valiantly.”¹⁹⁷ Thus the loss is not couched in exclusively negative or humiliating terms for the Irish Catholics.

The central textbooks generally discussed the same events and people, as noted earlier, and often from similar perspectives. The smaller size of Carty’s textbooks, as well as its younger audience, necessitated abridgement. This left many issues (if included) being depicted in a far more simplistic manner both in argumentation and description. The selection and depiction of events tended to promote this Irish ‘Whig Interpretation’, through the simplified narrative, in accordance with Butterfield’s admittance that “all history must tend to become more whig in proportion as it becomes more abridged.”¹⁹⁸ Carty did lament failed opportunities for national unity between Catholics and Protestants at certain junctures. The overall tone however is decidedly nationalistic. As a review of Carty noted “Suffering and oppression are stressed; there are frequent references to the ‘national spirit’; and the impression given is that freedom was the end point towards which Irish history was inexorably progressing.”¹⁹⁹

This narrativisation of Irish history into a nationalistic ‘Whig’ story was especially noticeable in Ó Siadhail, who for instance was able to frame the 1798 Rebellion as a ‘glorious failure’ despite the widespread chaos in its aftermath, and despite the complete defeat of the rebel armies, through its supposed effects on those who came afterwards. The United Irishmen, we are told, did not fail completely because “1) they exemplified patriotism and bravery to the Irish people; (2) their example was a guide and model for the people thereafter;

¹⁹⁷ Hayden & Moonan, *A short history of the Irish people*, p. 350.

¹⁹⁸ Butterfield, *The Whig interpretation of history*, p. 6.

¹⁹⁹ See Ciara Boylan, National Collection of Children’s Books, <https://nccb.tcd.ie/exhibit/3197xm07c>, viewed 12/07/16; While Boylan based her review on Carty’s *Junior History*, the same general assessment can be applied to the *Class-Books* as, by Carty’s own admission “...The *Junior Books* form a suitable introduction to the *Class-Books of Irish History*, in which the social, political and literary history of Ireland is treated more fully, to meet the requirements of students in higher classes and of those preparing for examinations.”; ¹⁹⁹ Carty, *Junior History of Ireland*, p. 3.

(3) Wolfe Tone bequeathed a doctrine, in words and deeds, which taught the Irish what it was that was worth fighting for.”²⁰⁰ The ‘whig’ tendencies of *Stair Sheanchas Éireann* were exemplified in the following line of text, which specifically declared that “we shall see later how these words and deeds ultimately bore fruit, (and that despite taking many years for this result to come, that it came for them [the successive generations of Irishmen and women])”²⁰¹ Ó Siocfhradha’s textbook, though balanced in its treatment of disputes within nationalism, particularly the bitter legacy of the civil war,²⁰² was more explicitly nationalistic than Hayden and Moonan and Casserley, and on certain topics, than Carty as well. When discussing the French Revolution as context for the foundation of the United Irishmen, (in a chapter entitled ‘Teagasc na bPoblachtaithe’ (or the Teaching of the Republicans’) Ó Siocfhradha openly defines the English in Ireland as ‘tyrants’ against whom the people of Ireland formed a united movement “in an intense effort to expel.”²⁰³ Thus the creation of ‘heroes and villains’ within a Whig narrative, as discussed earlier.

This nationalist ‘Whig’ narrative can also be seen in the historical connections which the textbook authors made. In Hayden and Moonan, explicit connections were drawn (for example) between Shane O’Neill and Art Mac Murrough Kavanagh [p. 223] Daniel O’Connell and the Confederation of Kilkenny [p. 468], the Fenians and 1798 [p. 509], Parnell and O’Connell [p. 521]. Other events and figures were connected more indirectly, through the choice of descriptive language, as already highlighted. Consider these alongside the preface to the 1927 edition, where it was stated that:

²⁰⁰ Ó Siocfhradha, *Stair Sheanchas Éireann*, pp 166–7.

²⁰¹ Ibid. The final piece in brackets was personally translated from the Irish text, as it was omitted from the accompanying English translation.

²⁰² Ó Siocfhradha’s work is specifically cited in Philip O’Leary, *Gaelic prose in the Irish Free State, 1922-1939* (Dublin, 2004), p. 271 for its objective account of the events leading up to the Civil War, 1922-3 (which most textbooks of the time simply avoided, though he passionately condemned the Civil War itself: “It is difficult to calculate the evil result that came of this unfortunate fight. A split beyond healing was caused among the group most loyal to Ireland. A seed of spite and suspicion was planted among Gaels; many of the best men in the country were killed and were shot in the Civil war, and in the destruction that happened incalculable damage was done to the goods and the business of the country. Ó Siocfhradha, *Stair Sheanchas Éireann*, p. 224.

²⁰³ Ó Siocfhradha, *Stair Sheanchas Éireann*, p. 157.

A Short History of the Irish People...is not a mere series of unconnected historical sketches; it is a philosophical and comprehensive statement of Ireland's story -seen steadily and seen whole-through her many struggles to preserve and elevate the national character in all its aspects.²⁰⁴

The accumulation and connecting of each episode in Irish history, culminating in this elevation of the national character, could easily be read as an ideological justification for the new Free State. This narrative of constant struggle and resistance by the Irish nation would provide reasons why many of these works were later criticised; first on the premise that independence was seen by many as being only partial, and so the end goal had not yet been reached. But more importantly, in terms of academic rigour, on the premise that such a teleological framing of Irish history constituted 'bad' history.²⁰⁵

Though they differed in terms of presentation and in terms of weighting of events, it is argued that a broadly consistent narrative was maintained across the five textbook series. This narrative was influenced by a variety of factors. First, the issue of previous textbooks guiding the newer editions is important, both in terms of style and general content. Considering how the Great Man approach was most prominent in academia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the earlier textbooks such as O'Sullivan and Maxwell influenced the works examined here, illustrated by Carty's repeated references to A.M. O'Sullivan.²⁰⁶ No work is created in a vacuum, and the context from which textbooks emerge is crucial to understanding their general approach.

Butterfield noted on the same phenomenon with regards to English history writing how "this...tendency is so deep-rooted that even when piece-meal research has corrected the story in detail, we are slow in re-valuing the whole and reorganising the broad outlines of the theme in the light of these discoveries...We cling to a certain organisation of historical knowledge which

²⁰⁴ Mary Hayden and George Moonan, *A Short History of the Irish People* (Dublin, New edition, 1927), p. i

²⁰⁵ The founders of the IHS, TW Moody and Robin Dudley Edwards were influenced by the views of Butterfield. See Smith, *A 'Manly Study'?*, p. 64. Moreover, Hayden was known for disagreeing with the IHS approach. See Diarmaid Ferriter on Mary Hayden, http://centenaries.ucd.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Hayden-Mary_Teresa.pdf.

²⁰⁶ For a study of the long process by which the nationalist narrative was defined and entered popular consciousness see Vincent Morley, *Ó Chéitinn go Raiftearai: Mar a cumadh stair na hÉireann* (Baile Átha Cliath, 2011).

amounts to a whig interpretation of history...”²⁰⁷ This view holds true when considering the indexes of the Irish history textbooks on a comparative basis, where each followed the same general chronological arrangement, stressing the same or similar moments in Irish history, though the emphasis given to each differed.

Gender and Irish history textbooks:

Following the emergence of gender studies as a new academic field from the 1980s onwards, educational historians have increasingly examined how the different sexes have been represented in history textbooks, in the curriculum, and in Irish history in general.²⁰⁸ This section examines this issue retrospectively, providing a gender analysis of the Irish history textbooks from the pre-1969 era, drawing on the work of Audrey Osler on representation of women in history textbooks in England as an international comparison. It argues that the near complete omission of women from the historical narrative was primarily based on the understanding of what ‘history’ entailed at the time, as well as being representative of the society in which these works were produced, where the differing roles of men and women were constitutionally enshrined and legally bound.²⁰⁹ It examines the language adopted in descriptions of women across Irish history, as well as considering the gender of the authors as a potential factor in the depiction and inclusion of women in the textbooks.

When analysing the gender dynamic of the Irish history textbooks, an obvious starting point is that the experience of women is excluded for the most part, with the almost total absence

²⁰⁷ Butterfield, *The Whig interpretation of history*, pp 5–6.

²⁰⁸ Osler, ‘Still Hidden from History?’ In the Irish context, see Margaret Ward, *The Missing Sex: Putting Women into Irish History* (Dublin, 1991); and significantly the 2004 Joint report by TCD and UCD, *Gender Perspectives in the Delivery and Assessment of Junior Cycle History*, by Dr. Maryann Valiulis, by Dr. Deirdre Raftery, by Jennifer Redmond, by Judith Harford and by Catherine Cregan, Final Report (2004);

²⁰⁹ Article 45.4.2 of the 1937 Irish Constitution provided that “citizens shall not be forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their sex, age, or strength, while more famously (or infamously) Article 41.2 specifically declared that 1. ...The State recognises that by her life in the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved. 2. The State shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home.” For a wider discussion on women during this early period. see Mary E. Daly, ‘Women and the Irish Free State, 1922-39: The Interaction Between Economics and Ideology’, in *Journal of Women’s History*, vol. 7, no. 1 (1995), pp 99-116.

of a female voice in the textbooks examined. In her brief 1983 article, Carol Adams, later first Chief Executive of the General Teaching Council for England (GTCE), noted that a valid response to the claim that history teachers were ignoring women's experience, and therefore seriously distorting the past, was that the majority of school texts had kept women firmly in their alleged place:

“they are scarcely apparent, either in text or illustration, whether the subject is toiling peasants or cloth-capped workers, in ancient kingdoms or in modern states. The use of the male gender excludes them by implication or contrives to belittle them.”²¹⁰

Adams' declaration highlights the need for further investigation into whether this was deliberate in nature, or otherwise. While she was discussing 1980s England, this omission of the female role in history was as apparent, if not more so, in the textbooks from the earlier Irish period. Osler makes a case that such omission was in part due to the gender of the textbook authors. She called for more female authors with the expectation that it would result in more time being allocated in their textbooks to discussions of issues relating to women; that “until more women are encouraged to write history textbooks, students in school are likely to continue to see history largely through the eyes of men, and this history is likely to be just 'about chaps—and white, middle-class chaps at that' (Moorse & Woodall, 1986).”²¹¹ An issue arises when this is applied to the Irish context.

[Gender and textbook historiography:](#)

In the Irish Free State (and after) the gender dynamic of Irish history textbooks writers is interesting, whereby a disproportionate amount of textbooks were written by women, in comparison to their general status in academia at the time. Of the five series discussed, two were written by women (Hayden and Casserley). In the period immediately preceding independence, a further two important textbooks were penned by women (Helena Concannon, and Contantia

²¹⁰ Carol Adams, ‘Off the Record’ in *Teaching History*, no. 36 (1983), p. 4; Osler, ‘Still Hidden from History?’, p. 221.

²¹¹ Osler, ‘Still Hidden from History?’, p. 230.

Maxwell).²¹² Alice Stopford Green's *Irish Nationality* was translated by An Gúm for use in secondary schools as a textbook (started 1928, published 1938).²¹³ During the 'Gill and Macmillan Revolution' of the late 1960s, of the three texts in their series, the central text was by M.E. Collins, while the textbook for modern Irish History was co-authored by Margaret MacCurtain (in conjunction with Mark Tierney).²¹⁴

This begs the question: during a period when women were generally excluded from academic positions (and until relatively recently, from University in general)²¹⁵, why did women have such a central position in framing the national narrative which students would receive? Moreover, if women were so central to framing this narrative, why was the female experience so conspicuously absent from these accounts? There were a number of reasons for this. First, as Smith notes, in accordance with the general academic atmosphere of the time, male academics were seen to favour writing monographs and articles, viewing the writing of textbooks to be beneath their station.²¹⁶ When this mentality is coupled with the exclusionary nature of high academia, with women not being part of the 'men's clubs'²¹⁷, the different prerogatives about publication makes more sense. These women belonged to a different public sphere²¹⁸ with its own considerations and exchange of ideas and ideals, as well as different expectations in terms of academic output. Second, the level of academic attainment of these textbook writers. For the most part, these women possessed a Master's Degree not a doctorate, which would further temper the

²¹² Constantia Maxwell, *A Short History of Ireland*, (Dublin, Belfast, 1914); Helena Concannon, *Irish History for Junior Grade Classes. The Defence of our Gaelic Civilisation 1460 – 1660* (Dublin, 1920)

²¹³ N.A.I./GAEL/AN GÚM/ A0021: Alice Stopford Green

²¹⁴ M.E. Collins, *Conquest and Colonisation*, (Dublin, 1969); Mark Tierney and Margaret MacCurtain, *The Birth of Modern Ireland*. (Dublin, 1969)

²¹⁵ Women had only been allowed to attend Trinity College Dublin as students from 1904 for example. It was not until 1908 and the passing of the Universities Act that women students and staff were admitted on equal terms with their male counterparts to the UCD campus on Earlsfort Terrace. Hayden began lecturing in 1909. For a discussion of the latter see Deirdre Raftery, *Irish Times Supplement* 15 May 2007.

²¹⁶ Smith, *A 'Manly Study'?*, pp 65, 92.

²¹⁷ Mary O'Dowd, 'From Morgan to MacCurtain: Women Historians in Ireland from the 1790s to the 1990s', pp 64–5.

²¹⁸ This differs from Juergen Habermas' understanding of a single 'Public Sphere' and is more connected with the concept of associational culture. See Juergen Habermas, 'The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article (1964)', in *New German Critique*, No. 3 (Autumn, 1974), pp 49-55; See also Jennifer Kelly, and R.V. Comerford, *Associational Culture in Ireland and Abroad* (Dublin, 2010)

type of academic work which they conducted. Similarly, none of the men writing textbooks at this time possessed a higher qualification than a master's degree.²¹⁹ The writing of school textbooks was therefore seen as an acceptable pursuit at that level of academia, but less so for those who possessed either chairs in the University or doctoral degrees.²²⁰

The Irish context mirrored international examples highlighted in UNESCO'S journal of educational policy and practice, *Prospects*. History textbooks, it argued, did not demonstrate any obvious correlation between the gender of the author and the level of gender fairness promoted in the texts.²²¹ Two of the five authors were female, yet discussion of females across history was almost non-existent in any of the texts. Like their international comparisons, the “main characters are all masculine; in history, women are wives and mothers of leaders”...in arts, there “are only male composers and artists.”²²² The issue at play then is not so much about who was constructing the narrative, but about what the dominant narratives entailed. Broadly speaking, by focussing on a whig version of Irish history, centred around the concept of nation-state building and Irish high-political history, the resultant accounts maintained a focus almost exclusively on men.

Osler argues that to achieve gender-balance in both the curriculum and the textbooks, there is a need for both the separation of women’s history as a distinctive aspect of history to be taught, and for the integration of women’s experience into the wider narrative.²²³ In the earlier Irish context, the omission of women’s history in general has been seen as one significant issue with Hayden’s *A Short History*, and its failure to account for the likes of Anna Parnell, the Ladies

²¹⁹ Mícheál Ó Siadhail James Carty, and Rev. John Ryan all possessed an M.A. as evidenced from the front cover of their works.

²²⁰ Consider how Hayden for example was criticised, especially by later historians, for writing “an unimpressive textbook, rather than a monograph.” Smith, *A ‘Manly Study’?*, p. 75. See also J.J. Lee, ‘Some Aspects of Modern Irish Historiography’ in *Gedenkschrift zur Martin Gohring. Studien zur Europäischen geschichte* (Wiesbaden, 1968), p. 439.

²²¹ Rae Lesser Blumberg, ‘The invisible obstacle to educational equality: gender bias in textbooks’ in *Prospects*, xxxviii, no. 3 (2008), pp 345–361.

²²² Ibid. Similar conclusions were reached by Ruth B. Ekstrom, ‘Intervention Strategies to reduce sex-role stereotyping in education’ in O. Hartnett, G. Boden, and M. Fuller, ‘Sex-Role Stereotyping. (London, 1979), p. 220 with the further awareness that “most curricula neglect almost entirely the contributions that women have made to our culture and civilization.” See *Gender Perspectives and Junior Cycle History*, p. 9.

²²³ Osler, ‘Still Hidden from History?’, pp 230–1.

Land League, the Women's Suffrage movement or female revolutionaries such as Constance Markiewicz. This was especially commented upon considering Hayden's personal involvement in many of these activities.²²⁴ The counterpoint between Hayden the activist and Hayden the historian is interesting, with no evident link between her political actions and her historical work. Nadia Claire Smith postulated that these omissions were likely due to Hayden deciding to concentrate mainly on the people and events that would appear on examinations.²²⁵ An issue arises here, in that the examinations for secondary school were not known at the time of writing the textbook, as Irish history was not yet part of the Intermediate or Leaving Certificate course. While an awareness of the exams in the NUI may support this explanation,²²⁶ it should not be overlooked that there was very little discussion of the post-1900 period in *A Short History*, with the final section being descriptive and concise.

The differentiation between *history proper* and the contemporary history and politics (which Hayden was personally involved in) must be acknowledged as a contributing factor.²²⁷ An important criticism of the contemporary historian is that they lack "the detachment of the historian who writes about the past, for in writing of events through which he has lived, he is writing as a participator rather than a detached spectator."²²⁸ This would apply not only to women's history but to all recent history, and would also explain much of the reproach of Hayden following the 1927 new edition of *A Short History* and its treatment of the Anti-Treatyites. It has been argued that "the most important of the factors which might impede an impartial study of the present are...personal interest and group loyalty."²²⁹ More importantly, the focus on women's rights, which Smith complains about Hayden ignoring, still portrays the female experience as significant

²²⁴ Smith, *A 'Manly Study'?*, p. 76.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ For examples of exam questions on Irish History set by Hayden, and the lectures they were derived from see NLI/MS 24, 007; Mary Hayden Papers. For a wider discussion of these see Ibid., pp 67–8.

²²⁷ W. H. Burston, 'The Nature and Teaching of Contemporary History' in W. H. Burston and Donald Thompson (eds), *Studies in the nature and teaching of history* (London, 1967), p. 108. "For most people, contemporary history is the recording by historians of events through which they have lived, as distinct from history 'proper', which the re-creation of a past beyond living memory, and which has to be imagined rather than recalled."

²²⁸ Ibid., p. 111.

²²⁹ Ibid., p. 113.

only insofar as it related to political history, and fails to account for a wide range of life where women were actively involved. The “metanarrative remains organised around matters that have been more characteristic of the experience of men than women” and thus tended to delegitimise experiences which failed to conform to this traditional understanding of history.²³⁰ Much as Cannadine lamented the constant focus on animosity between religions rather than peace, by focussing only on aspects such as political and military history, the experience of women has, by and large, been omitted from the public record; “rather like ignoring every other page while reading a book: The resulting account isn’t just incomplete, but misleading to the point of incoherence.”²³¹

Depiction of women in Irish history textbooks:

Hayden and Moonan’s treatment of gender issues is typical of its time (and of the textbooks which followed), propagating a High Politics approach to history (incorporating the dominant Great Man tradition) throughout the text, with women rarely included.²³² The gender dynamic in the textbooks may still be explored through the manner in which the different sexes are depicted. Moonan’s section of *A Short History* was oppressive in this respect, in that the only time that women are mentioned, besides simply being named as wives or sisters, is when they were treacherous or scheming. Like Brian Boru’s “bitterly resentful” estranged wife Gormfhlaith,²³³ the (unnamed) sister of Gearóid Óg FitzGerald who was married to the Earl of Ormonde, was described as a “restless and ambitious women” and “although a sister of Kildare, became more determined in her hostility to the Geraldines than any Butler had ever been”²³⁴, conspiring to

²³⁰ Thornton, ‘History in US History Textbooks?’, p. 20. Linda S. Levstik and Jeanette Groth, “‘Scary Thing, Being An Eighth Grader’: Exploring Gender and Sexuality in a Middle School U.S. History Unit’ in *Theory & Research in Social Education*, xxx, no. 2 (2002), pp 233–254.

²³¹ David Cannadine, *The Undivided Past: History Beyond Our Differences* (London, 2013), pp 35–6.

²³² Even when women were included, they were still seen as supplementary to the men involved. For example, when Hayden mentions the founding of the Ladies’ Land League, she accredits it “mainly to Michael Davitt” with no female associate mentioned. Hayden & Moonan, *A short history of the Irish people*, p. 525.

²³³ See also Carty’s description of Gormfhlaith and how she was seen to stir up trouble amongst the Norsemen in Dublin, as well as sent messages to the Danes/Norwegians telling them to invade Ireland; “Gormflaith was a very beautiful but an ill-natured and mischief-making woman, who hated Brian because he would not allow her to be his Queen.” Then stated that she also wanted to be Maol Sheachlainn’s wife, and that she was ravenous. Carty, *Class-Book I*, p. 77.

²³⁴ Hayden & Moonan, *A short history of the Irish people*, p. 189.

bring about Kildare's downfall. Anne Boleyn was said to have had a "sinister influence over the King."²³⁵ This vilification of women was not consistent throughout the work however. For Hayden, while women were not in any way a major part of the general narrative, they were not entirely excluded from consideration, nor were they exclusively portrayed in negative terms, on their rare moments of inclusion. Hayden's brief discussion of women aiding the 'non-importation' league, by not wearing English clothes is testament to this, being described as greatly helping the campaign.²³⁶ Here was an example of how the wider narrative could be expanded to include a female voice, though the traditional view of history as male-centred high politics was still evident.

As for the gender dimension of the later textbooks, Carty's *Class-Books* again reinforced the Great Man approach which history textbooks favoured at this time, with little discussion of women. History, as discussed in Chapter 2, was seen as suitable for shaping the next generation of students, morally and culturally, and was deemed to be central to the overall purpose of education which sought to reproduce the values of the middle classes.²³⁷ Within this society, the role and position of women differed greatly from that of men, as enacted in the Constitution of 1937, as reflected in policy instruments such as the Marriage Bar within the public service and in other practices such as the de facto exclusion of women from juries.²³⁸ Carty did stress examples of female piety in his works, such as his discussion of the two daughters of the Ard-Rí, Laoighre, Eithne the White and Fidelm the Red, who both converted to Christianity after Patrick explained to them about God.²³⁹ Carty further endorsed St. Brigid "a saint of the first order, [who] is the most venerated, and perhaps the greatest of all Irishwomen."²⁴⁰ Thus Carty can be seen to promote

²³⁵ Ibid., p. 191. This is also an example of the vilification through descriptive language of those who were on the 'wrong side' of the nationalist narrative, as Boleyn was a relative of Butler.

²³⁶ Ibid., p. 398. This awareness, though bucking the general trend, ought not to come as a complete surprise considering how Hayden was also an ardent feminist and campaigner for women's rights, See Padbury, 'Mary Hayden (1862-1942), historian and feminist'.

²³⁷ O'Donoghue, *The Catholic Church and the secondary school curriculum in Ireland, 1922-1962*.

²³⁸ The Marriage Bar, introduced in 1932 and remaining in operation until 1973 was a statutory norm which restricted the employment of women in the public sector, once they were married.

²³⁹ Carty, *Class-Book I*, p. 42.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 123.

both the importance of religion, as well as highlight the role of women in this socially acceptable sphere.

Women did not feature in Carty's texts solely in this manner. In a few select passages, they were even celebrated more than the Irishmen around whom the specific events were framed. When discussing Irish mythology, Queen Maeve was highlighted for her splendour and for her valour in battle;²⁴¹ when discussing the siege of Limerick during the Williamite War, Carty praised the action and bravery of the women who "crowded towards the breach and threw stones and other missiles at the besiegers. 'The very women' says a Williamite account, 'who boldly stood in the trench, were nearer to our men than their own.'"²⁴² Margaret O'Carroll (Maighréad Ní Clearbháill) was another female figure celebrated by Carty, this time due to her support of the arts by holding two famous assemblies of "clergy, poets and learned men" which marked the revival of Irish culture in the fifteenth century.²⁴³ Here is an example of how women, though usually excluded from the story, at least when mentioned, could be for positive reasons, unlike the more negative portrayals of Moonan.

What is more, no discussion of gender should focus exclusively on women, as the portrayal of men and masculinity was not only more prevalent, but equally as telling in terms of reflecting the contextual societal values. When discussing Daniel O'Connell and the Donerail Conspiracy of 1829, we are told how O'Connell "instilled courage and manliness into the people and won their admiration."²⁴⁴ Whilst acknowledging the different values and linguistic interpretations of 1930s Ireland, this promotion of 'manliness' as inherently positive was illustrative of the wider society in which the textbook was produced, where the concept of a Gaelic masculinity was being widely promoted and celebrated, for example, with the Tailteann Games.²⁴⁵

²⁴¹ Ibid., p. 106. In terms of validity, Carty was careful to acknowledge that these stories were 'written literature' and 'tales', though the distinction between fact and fiction is not always evident

²⁴² Carty, *Class-Book III*, p. 68.

²⁴³ Carty, *Class-Book II*, pp 71–2.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 19.

²⁴⁵ For an excellent exploration of this general issue, see Aidan Beatty, *Masculinity and Power in Irish Nationalism, 1884-1938* (London, 2016).

In line with the various descriptions, the gender dynamic was tellingly displayed in the textbooks through the use of illustrations. Being the most recent of the pre-1969 Gill and MacMillan texts, Casserley featured the most maps and illustrations of all the texts outlined (though without including a table of illustrations). However, women were not represented in any way. Part II for example features a Photograph of the Sarsfield Monument, Limerick (p. 40), as well as portraits of Dean Swift (p. 58), Grattan (p. 66), Wolfe Tone (p. 78), Henry Joy McCracken (p. 86), Emmet (p. 94), O'Connell (p. 100), Thomas Davis (p. 106), Parnell (p. 122), Hyde (p. 127- Photo), Pearse (p. 132), and Arthur Griffith (p. 138). This confirms the initial argument; that the experiences outlined in the textbooks were those of men, particularly men predominantly involved in war and politics. The historical experience of women were not included, except in exceptional circumstances, and even then, only as part of the traditional male perspective. While the concept of gender equality and balance is still a matter of great consideration, the nature of historical scholarship and the conservative society in which these textbooks were created resulted in a male-dominated narrative being promoted to all Irish children involved in secondary education at this time, regardless of gender.

Textbooks ‘as Gaeilge’:

A particularly important question when discussing the importance of textbooks in Irish secondary schools was which textbooks were chosen for translation into Irish, or specifically commissioned as Gaeilge, and why. To analyse this, it is necessary to consider the work of An Gúm, the Publication Branch of the Department of Education, whose prerogative was to further the Gaelicisation policy, especially at second-level.²⁴⁶

As noted in Chapter 2, the interconnection between Irish history and the Irish language was central to the ideology of the early Free State. This section, while bringing to light many previously unseen aspects of Irish print history, argues that those texts chosen for translation (despite declarations to the contrary by the Department of Education) represented approved and legitimised perspectives on Irish history. Also when this concept of writing through the medium

²⁴⁶ N.A.I., D.E., Finding Aide, on An Gúm, p.1;

of Irish is connected with Irish history textbooks, a further means to consolidate the new state and its ideology emerged, granting increased importance to these textbooks. Finally, the policy of Gaelicisation, so central to the Department of Education's overall purpose, was not the promotion of a simplistic Irish v English clash, or Catholic Gael/Protestant Gall dichotomy, as has been generally accepted.

The actual running of An Gúm highlights the level of critical appraisal which texts underwent before publication. Founded in 1926, An Gúm's first act was to set up an advisory board, comprised of "the best experts available, [to advise] on the MSS. submitted for publication under the scheme." These included secondary school inspectors, university professors, and language experts such as future president of Ireland, Dubhghlás de hÍde.

This was a necessary step, especially when one considers the quality of school textbooks which were being privately produced before this. As noted in a 1925 article in *An Branar*, "Books in Irish have been quite plentiful of late and if their quality matched their quantity we would be in good shape. Most of them are schoolbooks. Only a fraction of them would merit any great praise even as schoolbooks."²⁴⁷ An Gúm was established to rectify this and provide for the rising demand for texts as Gaeilge.²⁴⁸ Their output was to be seen as a "pragmatic tool, one that could repair national pride, protect and extend the language, and function as a pedagogical aid for language learners of all ages, particularly, of course, the young."²⁴⁹ As noted by Philip O'Leary, "For the Gaelic author in the Irish Free State, literature was not seen as a solitary pursuit of truth, but as a team sport in which he was expected to play his part in the push towards the goal of a Gaelic nation once again."²⁵⁰ The historical associations of the Irish language was to imbue Irish history with a special status in the classroom. The language was invested with "the feeling that it is the vehicle of a great treasure, that it is the vehicle of our past culture, that it represents the

²⁴⁷ *An Branar*, Mar. 1925, p.49; Quoted in O'Leary, *Gaelic prose*, p. 14.

²⁴⁸ This demand was not a top-down governmental agenda forced on the schools, but a universal desire, being called for by the teachers as well. See ASTI/97/47, 'Annual Convention Minutes, 1922-42'; 1927 convention: Education Sub-committee, 10 Oct. 1926, where textbooks as Gaeilge were specifically being called for "as such work was very important."

²⁴⁹ O'Leary, *Gaelic prose*, p. 10.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

most precious thing in the past history of Ireland, of our traditions.”²⁵¹ A review by *The Irish Press* of the translations of James Carty’s *Class-Books* (begun in 1933 and completed by 1939) pay further testament to this, as well as demonstrating the perceived value of An Gúm’s work. Hailing Carty’s *Class-Book* as “the best introduction to Irish history extant” the opening line of the review declared “I would not give sixpence to enable Irish children to read detective tales in Irish and anglicise themselves through Gaelic; but how different a thing to read history in the language in which it was made!”²⁵²

Similar to An Gúm’s general mandate for Irish literature, when it came to Irish history, it was declared by Seán MacLellan that “The type of history that we would be interested in is a book that would be suitable, in the first place, for the Secondary School programme.”²⁵³ This official position is important as it counters claims made by Gabriel Doherty, who dismissed An Gúm, in terms of its commercial output, for “never concern[ing] itself with the production of readers specifically intended for primary schools.”²⁵⁴ Doherty contended that this was a result of An Gúm folding to pressure from the private publications market.²⁵⁵ As Mac Lellan’s quote demonstrates, this was actually due to a concerted decision by the Publications office, to gear its work (including its history textbooks) towards a higher standard than primary school.

As discussed previously, from the 1920s through to the mid-1940s, History was one of the subjects consistently taught through the medium of Irish in a significant proportion of secondary schools. However, despite this growth in teaching history through Irish, the overall educational initiative of the Department was severely hampered in the secondary schools, (as well as the upper level of primary schools,) by the lack of suitable textbooks, as Gaeilge.²⁵⁶ This proved

²⁵¹ Dáil Debates, Vol. xxxviii 22 May 1931, col. 1828.; See also Doherty, ‘National Identity and the Study of Irish History’, p. 335.

²⁵² *Irish Press*, 25 April 1939, Review of An Gúm’s translation of Carty, *Class-Book I*: See N.A.I./GAEL/An Gúm/A0356 (99/52/4162).

²⁵³ N.A.I./GAEL/An Gúm/ N1023 – Seán Mac Lellan Publication Officer for the Department of Education, 20 April 1940, in a response to the proposed publication of Seaghan MacMeanman’s *Stair na hÉireann*, (published eventually in 1958.); Translated from “Sé an sort staire a chuirfimísuim ann ná leabhar a bheadh fóirsteanach sa chéad dul síos do chlár na meandon-scoil.”

²⁵⁴ Doherty, ‘The Irish history textbook, 1900-1960, problems and development’, p. 19.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., pp 19–20.

²⁵⁶ N.A.I./GAEL/An Gúm/G8 (1), ‘Preliminary correspondence 1924-5’, Letter from Department of Education (Not signed) to Seoirse MacNiocaill, Secondary School Inspector, 16 August, 1924.

an issue from the very outset. A draft of a 1924 letter from Seosamh Ó Néill to Arthur Codling, Secretary of Department of Finance, specifically noted how he was directed by the Minister for Education to draw attention to the “serious difficulties which his Department meets with in carrying out its work, especially in the Secondary Schools, owing to the want of suitable books in the Irish Language.” The draft was altered with pen to “...which the Department meets in carrying out *its policy of Gaelicisation*...owing to the want of suitable *textbooks for the teaching of the subjects of the Programme through the medium of Irish.*”²⁵⁷ Here we see the centrality of the policy of Gaelicisation to the Department of Education’s political mandate, and the fundamental importance to this policy, of textbooks as Gaeilge. Two subjects were later specifically cited as being in dire need for such textbooks: Maths, and History and Geography (taught as one subject).²⁵⁸

This issue was prevalent throughout the period, and especially during the financially lean ‘Emergency’ years, where the Departmental reports stated, despite a change in the history syllabus in 1942, how a corresponding emergence of textbooks as Gaeilge by An Gúm failed to materialise. “Because of the fair of life at the moment, it went hard on teachers to source appropriate textbooks for the new courses, and this neglect effected history teachers from doing their work through Irish, more than any other party.”²⁵⁹ The amount of quality textbooks available was a considerable issue. Only nine history textbooks were published by An Gúm between 1926 and 1970, despite history’s ostensible importance to the rationale for the publication branch’s existence, and despite the repeated calls by the inspectorate for their pressing need.

²⁵⁷ N.A.I./GAEL/An Gúm/G0008, Letter draft from Seosamh Ó Néill to Arthur Codling, 16 Oct. 1924

²⁵⁸ This was specifically stated in a major meeting between representatives of the Secondary School Teachers, Nuns, Christian Brothers and Education representatives from the University held in Cork to discuss Intermediate Education, and the proposed reforms to the system, during July 1924. The consistent lack of quality textbooks in the language was among the chief concerns raised at this conference; See N.A.I./GAEL/An Gúm/G0008 (1), Letter 30 July 1924, Eamon Ó Donnchadha (Lecturer in UCC) to Seosamh Ó Néill, (Secretary Of an Roinn Gaeilge (soon to be Department of Education); This complaint was also made nearly annually in the general Department of Education Inspectorate report on history up until the 1950s and early 1960s.

²⁵⁹ *Report of the Department of Education, 1942-43* (Dublin, 1944) p. 23; [translated from] “De dhearcadh an chóir atá ar an saoghal fá láthair, cuaidh sé dian ar mhúinteoirí téics-leabhartha foghanta ar na chúrsaí nuadha do sholáthar, agus is mó a luigheann an cheathraighe sin ar mhúinteoirí [staire] a ghníos an obair tré Ghaedhlíg ‘ná ar aon dream eile.’”

One reason for the inability of An Gúm to adequately provide for the demand was that it was perpetually at the mercy of the Department of Finance, who were not excessively forthcoming. In a 1925 letter from Ó Néill, to Codling (not signed), the Department of Finance were asked to include the provision of £4,000 in the Estimates for the following year “to provide financial assistance for the publication of Irish textbooks.”²⁶⁰ This provision was rejected. By 1928, two years after An Gúm were established, Proinnsias Ó Dubhthaigh felt in a position to state that the reason An Gúm was not succeeding in its goals was because “the scheme in operation up to the present has not supplied sufficient inducement to writers to produce textbooks of the kind required.” This led him to call for the “provision of an increased grant for the author” which would “greatly facilitate negotiations with prospective authors of books of this kind.”²⁶¹ In response, Minister for Finance Ernest Blythe agreed “to an expenditure up to a maximum of £20,000 in any one year on publications in Irish”, and was willing to extend the amount of the Grant-In-Aid for the same year, if this figure was deemed to be ‘insufficient’.²⁶² This agreement was a victory for education, especially considering how this department was considered to be a minor brief compared to Finance.²⁶³ The first Irish history textbooks translated by An Gúm were Fr John Ryan’s two volume *Stair na hÉireann*, completed by 1931, which were well received.²⁶⁴

New textbooks were rarely commissioned. A number of content-heavy general works were marketed as textbooks, regardless of the actual curriculum or of the suitability of these works for classroom learning and teaching.²⁶⁵ This should not come as a surprise, as teachers were, from

²⁶⁰ N.A.I./An Gúm/G0008, 23 December 1925, Letter from S. O'Neill to A. Codling

²⁶¹ N.A.I./An Gúm/G0008, ‘Preliminary Correspondence’, 9 June 1928, Letter from P. O’Dubhthaigh to W. Doolin (Secretary to the Minister for Finance),

²⁶² N.A.I./An Gúm/G0008, W.Doolin’s reply to S. Ó Néill, 30 June 1928 (received 2 July).

²⁶³ These figures however still paled in comparison to the amount spent annually on other departments; The files of An Gúm were replete with examples of this kind of correspondence between the Department of Education and the Department of Finance.

²⁶⁴ See reviews of Breathnach’s translations of Ryan in *Irish Times*, 18 Sept. 1931; *Claidheamh Solais* 12 Oct. 1931; *Irish Independent*, 4 Sept 1931; *Irish Press*, 7 Sept 1931, all of which were highly positive. The translations did receive one negative review in *An Lóchrann*, 9 Oct. 1931, with the textbook cited as being rife with grammatical errors, and repeated inaccuracies of language. That said, the newspaper committee of the same publication wrote to Breathnach personally to apologise for this review, stating their regret at the views expressed by the reviewer. N.A.I./GAEL/An Gúm/ A0101; 11 Dec. 1931

²⁶⁵ One example of such work was *Meanma Gaedheal*, a 1938 translation of the influential 1911 *Irish*

1924, ostensibly free to choose whatever material they wished to teach. This situation was not a widespread one however, and while An Gúm gave their stamp of consideration to some general works as textbooks, the actual sales figures, along with personal testimonies recorded, demonstrates how texts which had been specifically geared towards the classroom, most notably those by Hayden and Moonan, Carty, and Ó Siadhail, were the popular choices among secondary schools during the period under investigation.²⁶⁶

If one examines the textbooks produced by An Gúm, it is evident that, unlike in other subjects, few books on Irish history were ever commissioned or accepted for publication which had not already been successful in English. This would make sense, considering the preference for English as the language of academia in Irish Universities. The two central textbook series translated were by Carty, and John Ryan. Only one original textbook on Irish history was published by the late 1960s through An Gúm.²⁶⁷

A number of manuscripts in Gaeilge were rejected for publication. A telling example was the proposed (but ultimately rejected) textbook entitled *Scéal [Stair] na hÉireann I&II*, by Pádraig Mac Giolla Cheara, in 1937.²⁶⁸ Mac Giolla Cheara had previously published a work in 1924 under the same title. However, this history primer was severely criticised upon publication. As a 1924 *Studies* review critiqued

The name on the book is ‘The Story of Ireland’ and if the story of Ireland is only war, wrangling, and trouble, Father Patrick has given us that story. But it was not like this, there is another side to the story, and he does not discuss that side at all... therefore, after having read the book, children would

Nationality, by Irish historian and prominent Protestant nationalist Alice Stopford Green. See NAI/An Gúm/A0021.

²⁶⁶ A further work, *Story of Ireland*, was hugely popular as the history book of choice for primary schools, and its use was continued into the secondary schools in many instances. This was not widely encouraged for Leaving Certificate level however. As one 1939 departmental memo declared “I find it difficult to believe that Mr. Almond’s remarks in regard to ‘The Story of Ireland’ were intended seriously. No one could have dreamed of considering this book as a work to be used in connection with the Leaving Certificate intensive courses. It is most obviously a book for Intermediate Certificate classes, and the fact (if true) that it has been read “in nearly every farmhouse in this country” makes it doubly suitable for the purpose.” N.A.I./GAEL/AN GÚM/G072; ‘Téacsleabhar Mheanscoile, 1938-62’ Seoirse Mac Niocaill, ‘What is a “Text-book”?’, 7 February 1939.

²⁶⁷ Seaghan MacMeanman, *Stair na hÉireann - 1. Ó'n fhíor-thús go dtí 1616 A.D.* (Dublin, 1958).

²⁶⁸ N.A.I./GAEL/An Gúm, N 700 - *Scéal [Stair] na hÉireann I&II*- Pádraig Mac Giolla Cheara

think that what we were accused of by the enemies of our country is true, that we were always wrangling and fighting.²⁶⁹

When Mac Giolla Cheara's 1937 manuscript was being assessed by An Gúm, it was initially sent to Fr Ryan, for review. In his response Ryan effectively called Mac Giolla Cheara out for plagiarism, declaring that the book offered nothing that the translation of his own work did not.²⁷⁰ These claims were rejected, owing to the awareness that Mac Giolla Cheara had already published a work in 1924, and that this 'new' textbook was just a reworking of this.²⁷¹ The manuscript was subsequently sent to Trinity College Professor of History Edmund Curtis,²⁷² to assess its historical accuracy, its argumentation, and its standard of readable Irish. The manuscript (Part I) was rejected as "There is a good deal of this naïve treatment of Irish history in it, which allows no merits in any other race except the Irish, and eulogises the church all the time." In his review of part II (1603 to modern times) Curtis condemns entirely Mac Giolla Cheara's argumentation. He laments sections which described, for example, the Ulster planters as being "rascals as great as ever walked in shoe leather." More vehemently, he criticises Mac Giolla Cheara's "identification of 'Gall' with Protestant and 'Gaeldal' with Catholic", which he scathingly states

is hardly fitting for the dignity of history...the time has gone for such one-sided history as this, or rather one so simple, with no idea of the way things react and are complicated: and I cannot feel that this is the work of a man who has tried honestly to present the truth fairly.²⁷³

²⁶⁹ *Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 51, Sept. 1924, p. 486; translated in Philip O'Leary, *Gaelic prose in the Irish Free State, 1922-1939* (Dublin, 2004), pp 254, 600; See for similar opinions, An tAthair Eric Mac Fhinn, 'Local History' in *Studies*, June 1931, p.278

²⁷⁰ N.A.I./GAEL/An Gúm, N 700 - *Scéal [Stair] na hÉireann I&II*- Pádraig Mac Giolla Cheara; Response letter from Fr Ryan to Seán MacLellan, 23 January 1937: "[n]il smaointe ar bith gur fiú trácht air le faghail inti, ná fiul le faghail im leabhrán féin..."

²⁷¹ N.A.I./GAEL/An Gúm, N 700; Internal memo from D Mac S. to MacLellan: 9 March 1937.
²⁷² Curtis held the Erasmus Smith Chair for Professor of Modern History since 1914. He had also recently released academic material on Ireland in the pre-tudor years. He is considered a leading authority on Irish history, with his History of Ireland being republished in 2002 in its eight revised edition, some seventy years after its initial publication He also published *A History of Medieval Ireland from 1110 to 1513*, (Dublin, 1923) Richard II in Ireland 1394-5, (Oxford,1927), *A History of Ireland*, (Dublin, 1936).
Curtis's own influential book *A History of Medieval Ireland from 1086-1513* translated by An Gum ((translated by Tomás de Bhial; assisted by Gearóid Mac Spealáin (specifically mentioned by stamp on first page) (Dublin, 1956).

²⁷³ N.A.I./GAEL/An Gúm/N 700, Curtis' Review of MSS.

An Gúm published other texts by Mac Giolla Cheara in subsequent years.²⁷⁴ His Irish history textbooks were rejected then on the merit of the work rather than any personal issues against the author.

The review process also highlights the interaction between governmental officials and academics when discussing history textbooks in Irish. This connection between academic reviewers and government officials dealing with secondary education should not be overlooked, demonstrating how the respective levels of education were not hermetically separate. The acceptance of this review by An Gúm whose mandate was to further the ‘policy of gaelicisation’ demonstrates how this policy was not the promotion of a simple Irish v English clash, a Catholic Gael/Protestant Gall dichotomy. Furthermore this example emerged in 1937 during the Fianna Fáil administration, which was more nationalistic than its Cumann na nGaedheal predecessor and sought to intensify the policy of Gaelicisation.²⁷⁵

This points to an important issue; the extent to which changes in government effected the creation, and use of history textbooks. School textbooks, especially if commissioned or approved by those in power, have been accepted as one of the most useful instruments of cultural hegemony.²⁷⁶ Controversy over interpretations of Irish history was in fact one of the reasons specifically cited for the government’s refusal to accept responsibility for textbooks by means of official sanction. Proinnsias Ó Dubhthaigh and other leading officials repeatedly cited history as being the most provocative example and An Gúm were consequently careful in how they approached and promoted the history textbooks published under their scheme. The autonomy of the author was acknowledged, with the Department not engaging in active censorship or major editing.²⁷⁷ This was a worry when plans for a government subsidy for translating school texts first

²⁷⁴ See Antain Mag Shamhráin, *Foilseacháin an Ghúim: liosta de na leabhair a d'fhoilsigh an Gúm ó 1926 i leith* (Baile Átha Cliath, 1997). These included *Stair na hEaglaise i gcomhair na Meadhon-Scoil, I agus II*, (published in 1942 and 1949 respectively.)

²⁷⁵ See for example, Brian Girvin, ‘The Republicanisation of Irish Society, 1932-48’, in J.R. Hill, (ed.), *New History of Ireland VII, 1921-84*, (Oxford, 2003), pp.127-98

²⁷⁶ Smith, *Reckoning with the past*, p. 15.

²⁷⁷ N.A.I./GAEL/AN GÚM/G072; ‘Téacsleabhar Mheanscoile, 1938-62’ Mac Niocaill sends letter to MacLellan (17 Feb. 1940) “Ní ceart glacadh le leabhar ar bith go gcaithfeadh na heagarthóirí mórán mórc Cartughte do dhéanamh air.” “No book should be accepted if the editors have to make many major

began. In October 1924, when discussing plans for a translation of his *School History for Ireland* (17th Century to 1921), Rev. Timothy Corcoran specifically impressed upon Seosamh Ó Néill that while calling for a government subsidy for the translation, that this “does not in any way limit the liberty as to national and religious views, of either writer of the parallel books.”²⁷⁸ When it came to translating textbooks, and the call for official sanction, it was argued by the Department that any formal statement of approval by the Minister for Education,

in some cases would be accepted by Schools as an undertaking that the book contained nothing to which exception could be taken by any class of Schools...Books relating to history...will be published under the scheme...[which] may contain statements, references, or implications, to which no objection would be taken in some schools, but which might be regarded as unsuitable or objectionable in other schools.

For this reason, the Minister insisted that

responsibility for seeing that books used in a School contain nothing objectionable should be placed on the Manager and teachers of the school: he objects to any form of approval which might, even by implication, transfer to him such responsibility.²⁷⁹

There was official concern that some assertions in the texts could be viewed as contentious amongst members of the religious minority and others who differed in viewpoint from the dominant culture.²⁸⁰ As correspondence between Ó Dubhthaigh and the Department of Finance in January and February 1927 noted, “the form of approval might be so worded as to indicate that while he is prepared to approve of the use of a book, the Minister for Education does not accept responsibility for all its statements or theories, as the case might be.” The wording chosen instead was

corrections to it.”

²⁷⁸ N.A.I./GAEL/An Gúm/G0008, ‘Preliminary Correspondence’, Letter from Fr. Timothy Corcoran to Joseph O’Neill (Secretary, Ministry of Education.) 13 Oct. 1924

²⁷⁹ N.A.I./GAEL/AN GÚM/G8(III), Preliminary Correspondence, 1927: Letter by Proinnsias Ó Dubhthaigh (Deputy secretary, Department of Education) to J. Houlihan (Secretary, Department of Finance) 13 January 1927.

²⁸⁰ See N.A.I./GAEL/An Gúm/G008, Letter from Ó Dubhthaigh to John Houlihan, secretary of the Department of Finance, 8 December 1926.

‘Measta ag an Roinn Oideachais i gcoir foillsiúcháin fa’n nGúm chun cabhrúithe le foillsiú leabhar i nGaedhilg tá oiriúnach mar théacsleabhar ins na Mean-Sgoileanna’²⁸¹

History textbooks were not ‘sanctioned’ in the strictest sense, but were ‘approved for use in secondary schools’. Thus the government could be seen to legitimate certain viewpoints on history, without being directly tied to them. This analysis of the internal workings of An Gúm towards textbook production, suggests that the lack of any specific Departmental instruction or political responsibility for promoting certain ideologies was important. They demonstrate the very real attempt by officials to avoid directly advocating overtly sectarian or culturally partisan stances during this earlier period and challenge current historical interpretations of school history, particularly by Foster, which argue that the Department of Education openly promoted such a position.²⁸²

In terms of how textbooks were chosen by An Gúm, Mac Giolla Cheara stated that he was encouraged to write his MSS at the request of teachers who were suffering from a dearth of suitable texts as Gaeilge.²⁸³ Textbook writers were induced to create Irish history books as Gaeilge, usually of their own volition, or in response to an unofficial request. The translating of Carty’s *Class-Books* began shortly after their publication in English at the request of the author himself, owing to similar requests by teachers (already using the English texts) for an Irish edition, in order to teach through the medium of Irish.²⁸⁴ Carty believed that his books “would [suit] themselves readily to Irish, if one or two govd [sic] writers got to work on them (following my own version as closely as possible, so that teachers could then do their history course, either

²⁸¹ Letter by O’Duffy to J. Houlihan (Secretary of the Department of Finance) 13 January 1927, (translation: “Approved (or Sanctioned) by the Department of Education for publication under the Scheme for assisting the publication of books in Irish suitable as Text Books in Secondary Schools).

²⁸² This claim was posited by Roy Foster as part of his ground-breaking 1983 article ‘History and the Irish Question’. The argument was made that a distinctly nationalist view of Irish history was propounded by the Department of Education and institutionalised through textbooks “that did duty for the next forty years” and as shown earlier, not without just cause. This interpretation however failed to account for the complexities of the issue discussed above.

²⁸³ N.A.I./GAEL/An Gúm/N 700, In response to this claim, Seán Mac Lellan wrote Fr. Mac Giolla Cheara a letter, 30 August 1937, where he stated that, irrespective of why he wrote the text, “Má leanatar do na téarmáis in is iomdháí Gaedheal a bheadh ina Ghall agus vice versa.” (Translation: “if these terms are continued [to be used], it would be numerous Gaedheals who would become Galls and vice versa.”)

²⁸⁴ N.A.I./GAEL/An Gúm/A 0356; 1 September 1932, Letter from James Carty to Min. Ó Deirg

in Irish or English, according to the capacity of the pupils)" and called for them to be completed under the government scheme.²⁸⁵ In response, a departmental memo noted, as directed by an t-Aire Oideachais, how "it is proposed to print and publish, under the scheme for production of Secondary School Texts, an Irish translation of A CLASS-BOOK OF IRISH HISTORY" as the minister 'considered that an Irish translation of this book is badly needed for the purposes of the teaching of History.'" Furthermore, it was noted how "Such a translation would to a very large extent replace the use in the Schools of the original English book".²⁸⁶ Though a number of textbooks were written by departmental inspectors (*Stair Sheanchas Éireann* being a prime example, as well as Mícheál Breathnach's translations of Ryan's *History of Ireland*) this practice was not openly encouraged, and was censured in parliament in the 1940s, by the minister and members of the opposition alike .²⁸⁷

Private publishers and textbook shortages, 1940-69:

While An Gúm were important in supplying Irish history textbooks as Gaeilge, they did not hold a monopoly over the market, with the private publishers free to create works of this kind. Ó Siadhail's *Stair Sheanchas Éireann* was a notable example of this, being published by the Educational Company of Ireland. The two main issues which private publishers faced however was profitability and departmental instruction. After the creation of An Gúm was announced, private publishers became concerned, having published books of a similar type at their own expense, often by the same authors as the books that An Gúm proposed to subsidise. "Your Inspectors" they contended "will naturally recommend the subsidized books, and the recommendation of an Inspector to a teacher is tantamount to a command, and thus our Irish publications will be blocked in every school." While they appreciated "the fact [that] there is a certain type of book which it would be legitimate for a Government to subsidize in the interest of the Nation, we submit that the books you now propose to publish cannot be placed in that category." Ultimately, they feared that the textbooks proposed were being done not "in order to

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ N.A.I./GAEL/An Gúm/A 0356; 'James Carty'; Seán MacLellan, 6 March 1935,

²⁸⁷ *Dáil Debate*, Vol.87, No.7, cols.795-7, 2 June 1942.

give authors and publishers a model of the type of school book your Department approves of” but instead marked the commencement of a commercial campaign, to which they were compelled to raise a protest.²⁸⁸

This issue of informal state promotion also led to concerns over governmental involvement in setting the prices for the new texts. As noted in a 1925 letter between the Stationery Office and Proinnsias Ó Dubhthaigh, if there was to be no involvement “it might turn out a very good bargain for the Publisher who would have Official support for it, [the textbook], and would have no difficulty in extracting an enhanced price...with the certainty of big sales... say 6d a copy above the usual sale price.”²⁸⁹ Officials too were concerned that the texts chosen for translation could be conferred with a special status as the ‘official’ texts, which would ensure enhanced sales. While concerns of this nature, along with those of the Educational Company of Ireland, were clearly about private business interests, they were partly justified, in that few Irish history textbooks were published elsewhere between the 1920s and 1950s.

A noticeable rise in non-departmentally sponsored publications began to emerge from the early 1940s. The rise of private publishers was partially driven by An Gúm’s inability to provide the supply for the market demand, with their production of Irish history textbooks (as well as other subjects as Gaeilge) tapering off around this time. That few new Irish history texts were commissioned by An Gúm, between 1936 and 1969²⁹⁰ at first might seem to reflect the government’s satisfaction with the textbooks in use. This would especially seem the case considering claims by Minister for Education Jack Lynch, who in 1958 specifically called for textbooks not to be changed too frequently “unless there are special reasons for changing them” due to the high costs for parents to replace them.²⁹¹

²⁸⁸ N.A.I./AN GÚM/G0008; Letter from Educational Company of Ireland (As Figurehead for publishing firms in Ireland) 14 October 1926.

²⁸⁹ N.A.I./AN GÚM/ G0008: Letter from Mr. Coveney of the Stationery Office to P. O’Duffy, 26 Oct. 1925.

²⁹⁰ It would be 1939 by the time all four of Carty’s texts were published. MacMeanman’s 1958 work took 18 years to be finished, initially beginning in 1940 and would seem to demonstrate that there was not an immediate demand for it.

²⁹¹ *Dáil Debate*, Vol. 171 No.3, 30 Oct 1958, Col. 284: The following year Lynch acknowledged how “We all know that in secondary schools the texts are unchanged year after year. Text books I myself used

Such a view is problematic. The major reasons for An Gúm's shortcomings in this regard, and which directly affected the number of Class A and Class B schools, were summarised by Ó Siadhail (in his capacity as Secondary School Inspector) in a handwritten letter to Seán MacLellan, and Second-Level Chief Inspector Seoirse Mac Niocaill, 21 October 1953.²⁹² He noted how in the academic year 1940/41, an agreement was reached with the National University over matriculation, which resulted in a change in the Leaving Certificate courses and, for certain subjects, in set-texts. While a number of suitable texts were available in English for the changed courses, this was not the case as Gaeilge. Consequently, many schools discontinued "the Gaelicising of teaching" and reverted back to teaching the Leaving Certificate courses in English. Then, knowing that the Leaving Certificate would be taught in English, many school managers called for the Intermediate Certificate to be taught in English as well, so as not to disadvantage those students who wished to progress with their studies. History was specifically cited by Ó Siadhail in this respect.²⁹³ Owing to the economic and war-time context, An Gúm were not afforded the time to rectify this situation, which meant that scarcely any new textbooks could be created. Furthermore, due to the repeated changes made to the history course between 1940 and 1943, as outlined in Chapter 3, neither teachers nor publishers were sure whether the course would remain the same, resulting in a hesitancy to create new works.

Coupled with this issue was the minister's de facto prohibition on inspectors from producing textbooks.²⁹⁴ As noted by Ó Siadhail, between 1922 and 1940, certain departmental inspectors were heavily involved in the production of suitable texts as well as advising others who were producing them. With this behaviour now proscribed, "the production

over 25 years ago are, I find, still in the secondary schools with perhaps, in some cases, minor modifications and alterations where such proved necessary." See *Dáil Debate*, 9 April 1959, Vol.174 No. 2, col. 218.

²⁹² N.A.I./GAEL/An Gúm/G072; 'Téacsleabhar Mheanscoile, 1938-62'; Letter from Mícheál Ó Siadhail to Seán MacLellan and Seoirse Mac Niocaill, 21 Oct 1953.

²⁹³ Ibid.: Translation: "Mar shampla, an Stair: is mó scoil a chas ar ais ar bhéarla ó nár chuaigh ar aghaidh le Gaeiliú teagasc toisc ná raibh freastal téacs i nGaeilge ar na nua-chúrsaí a ceapadh 1940/41."

²⁹⁴ N.A.I./GAEL/An Gúm/G072; Memo from Proinsias Ó Dubhthaigh (Assistant Secretary of the Department of Education) to the Secondary School Chief Inspector Seoirse Mac Niocaill; 27/9/1940 "he (an tAire) would prefer that Inspectors did not publish books in Irish that could be introduced into the schools even for the purpose of general reading."

of textbooks in Irish faltered behind the new requirements that arose, especially from 1940/41 on.”²⁹⁵

The inability to create new textbooks was reinforced by the new standardised spelling and orthography introduced in 1944. This resulted in the Irish history textbooks on the market being unsuitable, as well as insufficient to their demand, and the work of An Gúm faltered. In a letter dated 15 September 1953, Secondary School inspector Toirdhealbhach Ó Raifeartaigh acknowledged to Proinnsias Ó Dubhthaigh that as they stood, the situation regarding textbooks in Irish was dire as “the publishers are not happy with publishing them as they might not be bought in the old spelling, and as it would be too expensive to publish them in the new typography.”²⁹⁶ Concessions had to be made with the publishers Browne and Nolan that Aodh Mac Dhubháin’s *Stair na hÉireann*²⁹⁷ (as well as Longmans’ *Latin I*) would not have to be published in the new standardised spelling for at least five years due to the desperate need of the Class A and Class B schools for these books at that time.²⁹⁸ This example was testament to the difficulties in publishing texts as Gaeilge, as well as demonstrating both the desire of the government to promote the teaching of history through Irish, as well as the financial constraints which hindered the ability to do so effectively.

The inability of An Gúm to cater for the needs of the Irish textbook market, (not publishing any history textbooks since 1939, or in any subject since 1946),²⁹⁹ led to the rise of private publishers by the mid-1950s, who were involved in addressing this deficiency. The most prominent private publisher in this regard was Sáirséal agus Dill, under the editorship of Seán O hÉigearaigh. Due to the severity of the shortage, An Gúm decided not to publish rival History

²⁹⁵ N.A.I./GAEL/An Gúm/G072; Ó Siocfhradha to MacLellan and Mac Niocaill, 21 Oct 1953. Translated from “gur thit soláthar téacs i nGaeilge chun deiridh ar na nua riachtanaisí a bhí ag teacht i gceist, go mórmhór ó 1940/41 i leith.”

²⁹⁶ N.A.I./GAEL/AN GÚM/G072; Letter from T. Ó Raiferatgh, to P. Ó Dubhthaigh, 15 September 1953,

²⁹⁷ Aodh Mac Dhubháin, *Stair na h-Éireann*. (Baile Átha Cliath, 1944); Mac Dhubháin, M.A. was a history teacher in St Enda’s Preparatory College, Galway for 28 years, before moving to Carysfort College, Blackrock, in 1962 when the Preparatory Colleges system was ended.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ N.A.I./GAEL/AN GÚM/G072; Ó Siocfhradha to MacLellan and Mac Niocaill, 21 Oct 1953, p. 5.

and Latin texts in Irish,³⁰⁰ leaving these subjects to Sáirséal agus Dill, while An Gúm focussed on other subjects, where their attention was most needed. An Gúm were willing to forego direct competition with Sáirséal agus Dill through not publishing history textbooks of their own, and between 1955 and 1959, provided funding for the private publishers in order to lessen the shortage of books.³⁰¹ They were not however willing to openly endorse those books published without governmental assistance, being unable to verify before publication whether they were suitable for use in secondary schools.³⁰²

The textbooks produced by Sáirséal and Dill not only covered Irish history in general, but were geared specifically to the secondary school courses, as highlighted by their titles; *Stair na hÉireann don Mhéan-Teist*, *Stair na hEorpa don Mhéan-Teist*, and *Stair na hEorpa don Ard-Teist* (covering the two specified periods for 1955), to name but three works in production in 1954.³⁰³ Similar to Carty specifying which classes his texts were suitable for in the inside sleeves of the *Class-Books*, these textbooks specifically catered for the secondary school courses and examinations, and not just general courses of history. This also underlined the failure of the original policy to allow an open course of instruction for teachers, alongside a centralised and unified examination system. As discussed in the following chapter, with the increased importance placed on the examination as a marker of academic attainment and also in relation to future employment, the desire to excel in exams, and not simply to learn Irish history in general resulted in textbooks which were more closely aligned to the examination. O hÉigearthaigh in this regard was acting less as an idealist, and more as a pragmatist, directing his prospective books at this target audience, by way of their structure and general framing.

³⁰⁰ N.A.I./GAEL/AN GÚM/G072; Letter from T. Ó Raifeartaigh to Seán MacLellan, 2 March 1954

³⁰¹ Between 1955 and 1959, Sáirséal agus Dill received £8,262 from governmental funds. The arrangement was discontinued due to dissatisfaction with the books that were chosen to be published, and their quality; See *Ibid*, Letter, 4 May 1959

³⁰² N.A.I./GAEL/AN GÚM/G072; On not going into competition with Sáirséal agus Dill as regards textbook production for specific subjects (history specifically cited); Memo to T Ó Raifeartaigh., Signed by MacLellan 3 Nov. 1954; on Acceptance of government to pay private publishers: Letter 25 May 1956 Sec D/F to Sec. D/E; On the end of the arrangement whereby Departmental money was given to Sáirséal agus Dill to produce school textbooks, Letter, 4 May 1959.

³⁰³ N.A.I./GAEL/AN GÚM/G072; ‘Téacsleabhar Mheanscoile, 1938-62’, Letter, from Seán Ó hÉigearthaigh (Sáirséal agus Dill) to T. Ó Raifeartaigh, 15 February 1954.

Conclusion:

The Irish history textbooks in use between 1921 and 1969 ultimately aligned with the traditional understanding of what national history entailed: being seen to promote in no uncertain terms political and militaristic history, at the expense of social and economic history, focussing on ‘Great Men’. Each of the textbooks within this broad continuum maintained a variety of differences, in emphasis and description. These were connected with their historiography, and the political (and in Casserley’s case, religious and class) leanings of the authors. The textbooks followed (to differing degrees) an Irish/nationalist Whig tradition of history, offering a teleological tale of Irish history as a series of connected events and moments, which culminated in the present. That said, this narrative was not oppressively formulaic, with each of the textbooks providing a reasonably balanced account. However, through the use of descriptive language, the ‘heroes’ and ‘villains’ of the Irish story could be discerned, and due to the target audience, these accounts were portrayed, not in a suggestive but in a declarative way. There was little discussion of the female experience, with women being virtually non-existent. This resulted more from the subject material and a traditionalist understanding of what ‘history’ was considered to be, as opposed to being a conscious effort to belittle women. This implicit bias had the result of largely omitting women from the official story. The interconnectedness between Irish history and the Irish language was demonstrated through the work done to publish textbooks as Gaeilge. The work of An Gúm and the Department of Education in this regard revealed much about the State’s promotion of its Policy of Gaelicisation, as well as the interplay between the Department of Education and the Department of Finance, and between An Gúm and the wider publication market. Contextual concerns, as well as general educational developments, notably from the early 1940s onwards meant that the supply of textbooks as Gaeilge was more limited than expected. Where they were produced, such texts were usually based on existing textbooks in English, such as those of Carty and Ryan. They were unable to cater for the demand in schools, and ultimately, resulted in the rise of private publishers who aligned their works closely to the state examinations. In conclusion, the production and dissemination of Irish history textbooks was not dominated by state intervention, but it was an area in which the concept of cultural

hegemony was at play. The textbook authors were consensus figures, and were not extremists. The narratives propounded by the respective textbooks were consistent in terms of overall perspective, but were not homogenous in terms of emphasis and detail. Hayden was more sophisticated, while Carty and Ó Siadhail were more nationalistic. Fundamentally though, a hegemonic nationalism was promoted across all of the major textbooks.

Chapter 5: Examinations and Intermediate Certificate History, 1926-68:

“In the case of most subjects, anything that was dealt with in class, any related homework given, any associated study tips, and the conducting of regular short exams and longer ones at the end of each term, were all geared towards the State exams.”¹

This chapter explores whether the Certificate history examination papers provide a condensed view of state ideology. What is set for examination each year points to what is being officially called for to be learned, and hence to be valued. This state examination is compiled according to the topics outlined in the syllabus set by the Department of Education in its annual ‘Rules and Programmes’. The formal syllabuses governing the teaching of History in schools were considered by Doherty to represent “the most detailed expression of official attitudes towards the subject,” meriting particularly close attention for being “indicative of authoritative opinion regarding the significant elements of the nation’s past.”² This study does not discount the importance of the syllabus, but suggests that it was a guide towards the most authoritative expression of official opinion, namely the state examination. As a breakdown of the examination questions demonstrates, not all the topics outlined on the syllabus should be seen as being of equal value. Certain topics were far more prevalent than others in terms of how often questions were asked, and consequently can be seen as being more important to expressing the official attitudes regarding Irish history.

The purpose of this chapter is first to demonstrate the aspects of Irish history deemed to be most important by the State during the period under investigation, and to relate it to the conceptualisation of Irish history in the post-Independence, post-colonial period. By providing data, and analysis according to topic, theme and period, this chapter qualifies John O’Callaghan’s argument that “the primary objective of history teaching was the transmission of the distinct nationality upon which the state was founded.”³ It agrees with O’Callaghan, while acknowledging

¹ Memories of Noel Kelly, Mount Sion CBS, quoted in O’Donoghue & Harford, *Secondary School Education in Ireland: History, Memories And Life Stories, 1922-1967*, p. 66.

² Doherty, ‘National Identity and the Study of Irish History’, p. 327.

³ O’Callaghan, *Teaching Irish independence*, p. 59.

that there was no agreed upon view of what constituted the central elements of Irish history, beyond a select few foundational episodes.

A considerable challenge is that very little has been written on Irish history education. One of the most significant pieces is an article by Gabriel Doherty, published in the English Historical Review, which assessed national identity and the study of Irish history from 1900 to 1960.⁴ However he did not look at examination papers as part of his assessment. While his thesis that “the dominant theme of history teaching in Ireland was the belief in an inner spirituality of the Irish people, demonstrated by their abiding fidelity to the twin ideals of Catholicism and political freedom”⁵ can be partially accepted, a more detailed exploration of the material demonstrates that this position was not consistently emphasised.

On a general level, the Department of Education set a syllabus to be learned, which schools were expected to follow (while allowing a certain amount of freedom to individual teachers to conduct their classes in whatever manner they wished). The state then inspected those schools and “exercise[d] a certain amount of supervision through its powers to make grants to schools as a result of these inspections.”⁶ Leaving aside the power dynamics of the lay inspectorate, the religious staff of the schools, and of syllabus committees for future investigation,⁷ it is important to note that it was through the exams that the inspectorate (representing the Department of Education) were predominantly recognised as having authority.⁸ As one influential educationalist noted “[t]heir importance can hardly be overstressed as they determine curriculum throughout secondary school, that is, for all schools that desire recognition, and they become the ultimate criteria for judging the academic success of schools, teachers and students.”⁹

⁴ Doherty, ‘National Identity and the Study of Irish History’.

⁵ Ibid., p. 342.

⁶ *Report of the Department of Education 1924-25* (Dublin, 1926).

⁷ Duffy, *The lay teacher*, p. 30. “Unlike the primary level, inspection of schools at the secondary level is looked upon as mere routine. In this case, the state is inspecting private schools and as far as Catholic secondary schools are concerned the diffidence of a lay inspector in the presence of a teaching staff of priests, brothers or sisters is to be expected from the nature of things. Even if he is regarded as an equal in education he must still merely expect polite toleration by superiors.”

⁸ Ibid., pp 30–1.; See also Coolahan, *Irish Education*, p. 74.

⁹ Duffy, *The lay teacher*, p. 30.

The Certificate examinations were integral to the teaching of Irish history in the Irish Post-primary context. The complaint that learning was being superseded in importance to passing the exam was repeatedly demonstrated. Both teachers and students, as argued by John Devitt, “based their patterns of work on the expectations of examiners”, highlighted in the “low, cute cunning” of many students, gearing their answers both in terms of language adopted and content covered, to what was expected as evinced from previous examination papers, rather than providing “authentic personal responses.”¹⁰ This was in no way unique to the history classroom. As Corcoran commented,

Following the mechanical routine of England, it [the exam] has imposed itself on Irish education from the humblest "preliminary" or "preparatory" test up to the most advanced University examination; and by long-established custom, teachers let examinations set bounds to their daily work.¹¹

An investigation into how this syllabus was examined is crucial, if not more important than the syllabus itself, being used as the official marker of a pupil’s aptitude and awareness of Irish history.

This chapter looks at History examinations in Ireland from Independence until the late 1960s at Intermediate level, specifically Section A: Irish history, in order to gauge the official narrative of Irish history as transmitted through the secondary schools. It looks at Intermediate level as unlike the more specialised Leaving Certificate, the Intermediate Certificate throughout the period comprised of an *overview* of Irish history and as such can provide a sense of which aspects of this long storied history were chosen to be recalled, and in what manner. For the great majority of those who attended secondary school during this time, (which was itself a minority of the general school-going population) the Intermediate Certificate was the culmination of their studies, with roughly only one in four students continuing on to Leaving Certificate level.¹²

¹⁰ John Devitt, ‘Post-Primary English in Ireland: An Analysis of Curriculum Provision and Teaching Methods in Literature in the Senior Cycle’ (Unpublished M.Ed thesis, TCD, Dublin, 1976), p. 128.

¹¹ Rev. Timothy J. Corcoran, ‘The New Secondary Programme in Ireland, Classical studies.’ in *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, xi, no. 44 (1922), p. 565.

¹² See *Report of the Department of Education, 1944-45* (Dublin, 1946), pp 125-27 for an example of examination figures in history at both Intermediate and Leaving Certificate Level.

In terms of sources, examination papers are a massively underused historical resource, and a further lens through which to gauge the official ideology regarding the history of the Irish nation. By looking over a considerable period of time at how the Intermediate Certificate course was engaged with and importantly at what aspects were stressed through the set papers, it is possible to glean not only what is generally seen as important (as highlighted by the syllabus) but what issues, themes or events were repeatedly stressed and therefore seen as the defining issues in the course of Irish history.

It is also important to investigate what issues are omitted from consideration at exam time. In order to elucidate and classify ideology and bias it is necessary to analyse the sequence in which topics are treated, and to detect significant omissions.¹³ The popularity of certain events, phases or personalities over others implicitly relegates the latter to a position of lesser importance. Decisions of this sort were not necessarily based on objective merit, but could often be politically motivated. By compiling a comprehensive list of each topic featured in the examination questions and analysing this data, correlations can be made with the wider political contexts, which can help explain the choices made, and their overall significance.

Methodology:

Drawing from the work of Braun and Clarke on qualitative research and thematic analysis in psychology for methodological guidance,¹⁴ research for this chapter is based on a form of simple coding to elicit themes from the examination questions. Initially, a comprehensive list was compiled of all the questions asked in the Irish history section of the Intermediate Certificate examination, and arranged according to their recurring general topics and by year. All topics included on the list needed a mandatory requirement of at least two mentions over the period, thus being seen as more than a statistical anomaly of any given year. After noting the raw data in its entirety, this information is then synthesised by counting the amount of questions asked on

¹³David Fitzpatrick, ‘The Futility of History: A Failed Experiment in Irish Education’ in Ciaran Brady (ed.), *Ideology and the historians: papers read before the Irish Conference of Historians, held at Trinity College, Dublin 8-10 June 1989* (Historical studies, 17, Dublin, 1991), pp 168–186. Ftn 75.

¹⁴ Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, ‘Using thematic analysis in psychology’ in *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, iii, no. 2 (2006), pp 77–101.

each individual topic within a certain number of years, and stating the total alongside the topic heading. Visual representations of this information are created, according to specified time periods. The periods chosen, for the sake of framing the graphs, range firstly from 1926 to 1937, from the first year for which examination papers were available for the new Intermediate Course established in 1924, and 1937 when the course was reformed to have a more pronounced emphasis on Irish history as well as being shortened. A further graph is included up to 1940, when the syllabus and examination papers were actually changed. The next period is from 1940 to 1948, from the beginning of the new syllabus and examination for history at Intermediate level, and considering the Emergency period and the aftermath of World War II. The final period is from 1949 until 1968 when the course and examination were altered for the first time since 1940.¹⁵ An overall visual representation is seen in Appendix 3. Finally the general topics are coded, arranged according to theme, and converted into tables.

The overall purpose of this is to compile a comprehensive list of each topic featured as part of the Certificate examinations and from this to see what questions/topics get discussed the most, when, and from what perspective. Such a survey also highlights issues of omission; what aspects of Irish history do not get mentioned in the State examinations. By having a periodical breakdown, as well as a graph marking the period in its entirety, it is possible not only to see what questions were asked, but also, to see any differences in the types of questions posed, and the topics broached in different decades and political eras. The stability in terms of syllabus structure, only significantly changing once during the period, can be seen as a boon, providing the framework for a comparative historical analysis, gauging content, and consequently ideology.¹⁶ This allows an investigation into what topics were repeatedly questioned on and what themes

¹⁵ 1969 saw the introduction of three alternative courses, according to how history and geography related to one another in terms of allocation of marks for scholarship purposes.

¹⁶ Though the system did not change during this period, it does not mean that there was universal acceptance of the structure and outline of Intermediate history. Throughout the period there were numerous demands for structural reform of both the examination and the syllabus, as well as calls for further specification of what the syllabus/exam entailed. It ought not to be accepted that teachers or departmental officials were happy with the system that was in place. This can be seen by the repeated calls by the ASTI to change the system, departmental correspondence with teachers on this matter, along with counterclaims in the late 1950s to retain the system as is, but for different pedagogical reasons than the early 1930s. These issues are considered in Chapter 7 and 8.

were prevalent. It shows who gets mentioned, and when. Furthermore, any potential correlations between the rise and fall of the different political parties and the questions being asked can also be gauged by this study.

In terms of periodisation, the statistics have been broken down into five separate sections in Appendix 3. Firstly, 1926 and 1937. The Irish history section of the course was to cover the “General outline of Irish history and of the historic relations of Ireland with Great Britain, the continent of Europe, American, and Australia” from the earliest time until the modern day (though no actual dates were expressly stated). The questions set were to be of “the most general type, and will test, not a familiarity with scattered facts, but a knowledge of ...the general causes and effects of the greater movements in Irish history.”¹⁷ By charting the questions asked in the examination, it is possible to determine what these ‘greater movements’ actually entailed.

From 1937 onwards, some attempt was made to outline what the course entailed, beyond the very broad definition in play for the previous twelve years. The newly defined syllabus called for the study of the “General outline of Irish History down to the end of the year 1921” with the examination questions to “test, within the prescribed period, a knowledge of

- 1) The lives and characters of men and women who have played a notable part in Irish or European history
- 2) The growth and decline of successive civilizations, movements, powers, and nationalities in European history, and
- 3) The main facts of and principal movements in Irish history.”

The earlier portions of Irish and European History (understood to be 1014 for Irish history, and 987 for European) were to be regarded as a “compulsory course for First and Second Year pupils to be tested by inspection and not by written examination.”¹⁸ In the graphs, these earlier periods are denoted with a wine shading, to demonstrate that they were asked pre-1937, and no longer featured in the end of year Certificate examination after this.

¹⁷ *Rules and Programmes for Secondary Schools* (Dublin, 1925), pp 13-15.

¹⁸ *Rules and Programmes for Secondary Schools’ 1936-7*, (Dublin, 1936), pp 13-15.

The following section builds on the first to include the following three years, before the examination (which remained the same after 1937 despite the periodisation being shortened) was itself altered in terms of structure and layout. The third section illustrates the questions asked and their frequency between the years 1941 to 1948, as noted above, charting the new syllabus and examination until the end of the Emergency, and the immediate post World War period.¹⁹ The fourth section tracks the examination of the syllabus from then until the final year before the syllabus was altered and the first year in which ‘free education’ was in operation, 1968. A final graph (Appendix 2) charts the entire period, and thus provides an overview of the examination and its questions between 1926 and 1968.

Throughout the period, the Intermediate course was to cover Irish history from the earliest times until 1921, in line with the belief that “in the Intermediate Course, a broad basis in education is desirable rather than specialisation”²⁰ In order to quantify the questions asked at exam time, this study has divided the course of Irish history up into ‘eras’ or ‘periods’, and from this, calculated which periods in Irish history were most likely to come up at exam time between 1926 and 1968. Following this, a breakdown according to the graph periods outlined above was conducted, in order to see whether these trends were consistently applied, or whether certain issues were more prevalent in different times.

Fig. 1.9²¹ provides a statistical breakdown of exam questions throughout the period. These figures would initially indicate that the most prevalent period was the late medieval period, from the coming of the Normans until the beginning of the Tudor Reign, followed closely by the Tudor period itself, and the Long nineteenth century.

¹⁹ The year 1949 was given further weight by Secondary School teachers themselves, when discussing the proposed revision of the Intermediate course, which came in 1969. As stated at the ASTI History Sub-Committee meeting held 25 May 1965: “The additional topics for study in the Irish History Course were unanimously approved. It was however, suggested...that the date 1949 should mark the end of the course instead of 1945 which has no particular significance in Irish history. (1949 at least marks a constitutional change.) ASTI Programme, 1966, C.E.C. REPORT, pp 52-4, ‘Reports On Educational Sub-Committees On Proposed Revised Intermediate Certificate Courses’. This study uses it as a starting point for its periodisation.

²⁰ ASTI/OP/1957, pp 63-64: “Section X- Council of Education: ‘Replies from the Association of Secondary Teachers to questionnaire from Council of Education, March, 1956

²¹ All figures compiled from Department of Education, *Examination Papers* 1926-68.

Fig 1.9: Periods in Irish History:	Amount of questions 1926-68: 43 years of exams
1. Pre-Norman, Celtic/Christian period <i>(Earliest Times to 1014)</i>	– 6 topics, 28 Qs <i>(Discontinued in exam in 1937)</i>
2. Normans to Tudors <i>(Anglo-Irish period, 12th century, to late 15th century)</i>	– 10 topics, 101 Qs
3. Tudor period: <i>(Geraldines/Elizabethan wars/Plantations)</i>	– 9 topics, 97 Qs.
4. (17 th -mid 18 th c.) <i>Rebellion/Confiscations/Penal Laws</i>	– 7 topics, 73 Qs
5. Long 19 th century <i>(Grattan's parliament to Land League)</i>	– 9 topics, 93 Qs
6. Turn of 20 th c./Rising to Independence <i>(Home Rule, Parnell to 1916 and beyond)</i>	– 13 topics, 50 Qs

Within these overall categories, certain specific topics were more prevalent than others.

As demonstrated through Appendix 2, the topics most frequently questioned on between 1926 and 1968 and therefore deemed most important by those who set the examinations were as follows:

- The Norman Invasion (32 questions in 43 years),
- The Plantations (24 questions),
- The 1798 Rebellion and the United Irishmen (22 questions),
- The Nine Years War (including specific questions on O'Neill and O'Donnell) (22 questions)
- The 1641 Rebellion and the Confederation (21 questions)
- The Williamite War (19 questions)

By comparison, specific question on the 1916 Rising only amounted to 7 questions in total during the period.²² If expanded out into wider themes, these more prominent questions would seem to

²² If 1916 as a whole were taken altogether: the lead-up to the Rising, the central figures involved, and the events of the rising itself), this could be seen to constitute the fifth largest topic, with 18-20 questions being asked over the period. An issue arises however, in that questions on individual figures were usually asked in relation to others as part of the ‘important figures’ type short questions, in which, for the same amount of marks as would go to specific topic questions, the students were asked to describe a number of details about a few individuals. Thus, in any one year, there could be reference to four or five different

point to a narrative which stressed land (and its confiscation), English invasion, and open rebellion against this foreign force. However, before this narrative is verified by fully assessing these themes, this chapter will first analyse which topics were most prevalent in terms of periodisation.

Most Popular Topics:

As highlighted in Appendix 2, it emerged that the Norman Invasion of Ireland was the most dominant aspect of Irish history throughout the period of this study. Its consistent presence on the Intermediate exam, beyond basic structural reasons, points to an understanding of Irish history at Intermediate level, whereby this event in history marked the ‘break’, the point where the English arrived, and one narrative of Irish history ended, and another began. This positioning of the Norman invasion as a starting point was further demonstrated after the examination became more structured from 1937, and especially from 1940 onwards, as discussed previously.

The top thirty examination question topics for the Intermediate Certificate were as follows

Norman invasion	32	Emigration/diaspora/Europe	10
Plantations	24	Patriot Party, 18th c./1782	10
Reb of 1798, United Ir.	22	Parnell	10
9 Years War, O'Neill, O'Donnell	22	Land, 15th/16th/17th c.	9
1641-52, Confed., Owen Roe	21	Great Irish Leaders/ 'important' figures	9
James II/ William III, war	18	Penal Laws/Code	9
Bruce invasion	14	Fenians	9
Henry VIII/ Elizabeth	13	St Patrick/ Pre-Norman Christianity	8
Geraldines specifically	13	Statutes of Kilkenny 1367	8
O'Connell	13	Brian Boru, Vikings ('northmen')	7
Young Ireland	12	Cromwell	7
Land League	12	Treaty of Limerick	7
Art Mac Mur Kavanagh/ Richard II	11	Act of Union	7
Gaelic chiefs/Old English/Pale	11	Great Famine	7
Desmond Rebellion, J.F.F.	11	Rising 1916	7

individuals within a single question. This would then skew the statistics into assuming that a given period (say 1916 here) was of more importance than was actually the case. This issue is discussed again later with regards to the 1641 Rebellion.

The colours, representative of different eras in Irish history, also clearly demonstrate that more recent history (1870 on; blue)¹ was generally omitted from popular consideration.

Periodised breakdown of exam questions:

Beyond the ‘starting point’ of question one in general, a specific choice was still required as to which aspects would be set for examination. Moreover, the overall narrative which stressed Land, foreign invasion, and native resistance to this foreign force, while prevalent, was not uniformly maintained throughout the period, as a periodical breakdown demonstrates. Out of the six periods cited in Fig. 1.9., it was in fact pre-Norman Christianity and the Celtic period which received the most attention in the first decade and a half of the Certificate exams; 28 questions being asked on the six topics within this period. The Tudor period also had 28 questions asked, spread out over nine topics, while the Norman to Tudor period² had 25 questions asked during the same time. There were 23 questions asked on the long nineteenth century, 21 questions asked on Ireland in the seventeenth century, and only four on the turn of the twentieth century in Ireland (two on Parnell, and one each on Hyde and the Gaelic League during short questions).

Up until 1937 there were repeated complaints by unions and departmental officials that the course was too long to the detriment of student learning.³ From 1937 on, pre-Norman Irish history was to be examined by inspection, with the examination course being shortened considerably, much to the delight of teachers.⁴

Between 1941 and 1948, the most popular topic for question at exam time was again the Norman Invasion, with five questions in eight years. This period however saw a considerable

¹ These are defined in Appendix 3.

² This period is specifically defined as ‘Medieval Ireland’ in Art Cosgrove, F. X. Martin, F. J. Byrne, W. E. Vaughan and Jacqueline R. Hill (eds), *A new history of Ireland. 2, Medieval Ireland 1169-1534* (2nd impression, Oxford, 1993).

³ ASTI/*Official Programme*, 1928, p. 19, ‘Education Sub-Committee Report’ 1 November 1927, “The Sub-Committee feels that the courses in History are much too wide and that the standard and scope of the questions set in recent examinations is extreme, involving much too wide a knowledge.” Further examples include ASTI/ *Official Programme*...1932, p. 20 “the course was much too wide for examination purposes, and that it was difficult for teachers to prepare pupils satisfactorily” as well as Department of Education, *Report of the Department of Education*, 1928-29 (Dublin, 1930), pp 90-1

⁴ *Report of the Department of Education*, 1935-36 (Dublin, 1937), p. 61; “Rinneadh athrú ar an gcúrsa Staire I dtosach na sgoil-mbliana seo agus de réir gach cunnias taithnígheann an cúrsa nua go mór leis na sgoltacha.” The ASTI had specifically been calling for this for a number of years, See ASTI/C.E.C. Minutes/ 8 Dec. 1933.

increase in importance of the Land League of the mid-to-late nineteenth century, with five questions also being asked on this topic during the period. The next most prevalent topics were the Plantations, the 1641 Rebellion and the Confederation, and the United Irishmen and the 1798 Rebellion, each being asked four times in the eight year period.⁵

The most prominent topic for examination in the 1950s and 1960s were the Norman Invasion (asked 18 times in 20 years), the 1641 Rebellion and the Confederation (13 questions), the Williamite Wars (11 questions)⁶ and the United Irishmen and the 1798 Rebellion (also 11). At first glance, the recurring question topics across the period, as well as the earlier table would suggest a predominant focus on the Early Norman and medieval period, followed by a relatively equal importance being placed on the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries respectively, with a lesser emphasis on the seventeenth century and the Land confiscations, whilst the later nineteenth and early twentieth century (Period #6) received scant attention, in comparison to the other areas.

It should be noted however that the *structure* of the examination itself helped to create this distribution, and offers a further mechanism through which official ideology, as represented by the dominant chosen topics, could emerge. This was particularly the case from 1941 onwards, when the exam was restructured into four specific topics (with alternative questions), with at least two questions to be completed from these four periods. This new structure meant that specific events and periods were returned to annually. Question 1 (and Q.1 alternative) dealt predominantly with the arrival of the Normans until the early Tudor period. Question 2 (and alternative) dealt with the Tudor period from the Geraldines and Henry VIII up to the flight of the Earls in 1607. Q. 3 (and alternative) dealt with the Stuart reigns of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth century, with a predominant, though not exclusive, focus on the Confederation of Kilkenny and the Williamite Wars, and occasionally with regards to the Penal Laws. Question 4 (and alternative) focussed on the long nineteenth century from ‘Grattan’s Parliament, 1798, and

⁵ Department of Education, *Examination Papers*, (Dublin, 1941-49): The individual topics and the reasons for their rise (or fall) in popularity shall be discussed in more detail later.

⁶ This could be seen as twelve as in 1952 there was a question directly on the Treaty of Limerick, which ended the Wars. However it was not included in the above tally as a central element of the questions was on how the Treaty was violated by the Penal Laws, and so dealt more with the eighteenth century rather than the fighting itself.

the Act of Union up until “the resurgence of 1916”. There was therefore a relatively even distribution of questions according to periods in the Intermediate examination (as demonstrated in Appendix 1).

This necessitated that students learn (and teachers teach) Irish history across the board, rather than concentrate on one or two specific periods (usually the medieval to early modern period) to the exclusion of the later periods. This had been possible pre-1940, when no guidelines were outlined. As the layout also suggested, questions on the earlier period tended to be more uniform. More modern history (especially from the eighteenth century on) was more differentiated in terms of topics for discussion, as those who set the papers generally had a wider choice of options to choose from. Specific topics or events were therefore not as dominant. This helps explain why the Norman Invasion was almost ubiquitous, whereas questions on Parnell for example, were more rarely seen. That the latter was three times less likely to appear than the former therefore had as much to do with basic examination structures at Intermediate level as any political or ideological preferences for certain events or personalities which Departmental officials may have held.

Influence of context on exam topic popularity:

While the structure of the exam played a definite part in the questions being asked according to their periodisation, this does not wholly explain why certain topics were asked and when. As established, different contexts favoured different topics, with particular subject-matter becoming more likely to be examined at different times (as the examples of 1641, and the Williamite Wars demonstrate.) An investigation into individual topics, when they appear on the examination papers, and the meaning behind which questions were asked and when is therefore necessary. This study considers four prime examples to demonstrate this; The Bruce Invasion, Plantations, Emigration, and the Irish Confederate Wars.

As stated, a particularly useful example is the Bruce invasion, 1315-1318. In the fifteen years between 1926 and 1940, this topic was broached only three times. From 1941-48 (during the Second World War and in its immediate aftermath) it is asked three times again within this

eight year period, or statistically, from being asked on average once every five years, to almost one in two. It featured a further eight times between 1948 and 1968. This suggests that the topic was seen as more popular during this more recent period.

In the same vein, the Battle of Down (Druim Dearg) of 1260, which appears especially in the earlier years, is another of the secondary topics worth highlighting. A relatively obscure example in contemporary terms, the Battle of Down was intermittently emphasised (twice between 1926 and 1940, and three times more under the new syllabus) as a failed attempt by the Gaelic Irish to oust the Anglo-Normans from Ireland. Whilst a minor topic, this event consistently appeared in the Intermediate examination between 1926 and 1968, unlike other minor topics which failed to reappear after the restructuring of the syllabus in 1940, and would fit into a consistent narrative of continued struggle by the Irish against the ‘foreign’ oppressor.

This narrative was also accentuated by the wording of questions. Questions asked on the Bruce Campaigns, whilst in the same question structure as the Norman Invasion (Question 1/1 alternative), were couched in very different terms, through the use of descriptive language. Both events entailed a foreign army coming to Ireland, as part of internal campaigns to muster outside military power to achieve local ends. However the portrayals are noticeably different. The Norman campaign was categorically stated as an ‘Invasion.’ With Edward Bruce, the language was more gentle: “Why did Edward Bruce come to Ireland, 1315”⁷; or else being portrayed as a force coming from abroad to free Ireland from the *real* foreign oppressor, the English. This added layer demonstrates how the framing of the topics engaged with was equally important, when it came to how Irish history was being portrayed, establishing the viewpoint of a continuous nation pre-dating English invasion.

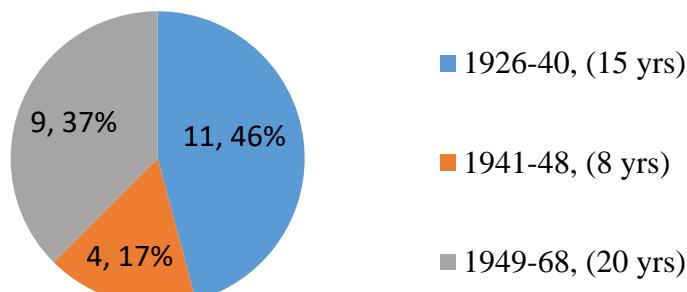
A further example of how topic popularity varied according to context are the Plantations. As Fig 1.10 demonstrates, in the twelve years between 1926 and 1937 questions on the Plantations came up 10 times, (and once more before 1940 and the change in syllabus) making it the most

⁷ Department of Education, *Examination Papers*, ‘Intermediate Certificate- History’, 1968, Q. 1 (alternative),

prevalent topic at Intermediate level for that period. In the next eight years between the new syllabus' introduction in 1940-41 and 1948 specific question regarding Plantations in Ireland occurred 4 times (or once every two years).⁸ Over the next twenty years until the syllabus was changed again, questions on the Plantations were asked nine times. To put this in comparison, eighteen questions were asked about the Norman Invasion during this period, fifteen questions on the Nine Years War⁹, with eleven questions each on the Williamite Wars and the 1798 Rebellion.

Overall, while the Plantations are therefore the second most popular topic across the period, with 24 questions asked over the 42 years for which examination papers were available, a considerable difference is noticeable in terms of when questions were being asked. As Fig 1.10 demonstrates the great majority of questions were asked in the first decade and a half of the new course, before the syllabus and its formal Examination became more structured and defined. Though remaining a popular topic, it was no longer the central aspect of Irish history being stressed.

Fig 1.10. Questions on Plantations, 1926-68



⁸ Between 1940 and 1948, four other topics were asked on more often, with questions on the Norman Invasion, the Irish Confederate Wars, 1798, and the Land League each being asked 5 times over the same period.

⁹ Of this fifteen, 10 questions were asked on the actual fighting and five on the leaders of the Gaelic Army: three questions specifically asked on Hugh O'Neill and two on Red Hugh O'Donnell. Note: It was not until 1937 that the Nine Years War was specifically mentioned in questions.

This acknowledgment is supported when one considers the issue of Emigration. As Appendix 2 demonstrates, between 1926 and 1940, the topic of Emigration, the Irish Diaspora, and foreign (European) aid to Ireland (if seen under the umbrella term of Ireland and Abroad) was jointly the second most popular topic at examination time, (along with the Norman Invasion) with nine questions asked on this in the space of 15 years.¹⁰ However from 1941 until 1968 (28 years of examinations) only one further question on this topic emerged (a question in 1947 concerning French aid to the United Irishmen). This radical shift in terms of questions asked point to two phenomena: first, that in the early years of the Free State, the historical connection of Ireland with Europe and the trope of Irish emigration overseas was both an accepted and feted part of Irish identity. Second, from the 1940s onwards, the topic of Ireland and the Irish overseas considerably declined in terms of popularity.¹¹

The connection between Ireland and Continental Europe was also being emphasised over the Anglo-Irish connection. For example in 1937, the first time that the Nine Years' War was specifically cited¹² the connection between Ireland and Spain was explicitly stressed. “Explain why Spain was an ally of Hugh O'Neill in the Nine Years War...”¹³ The connection between ‘Catholic Ireland’ and ‘Catholic Europe’ was emphasised. In light of the recently established Department of Education, as well as the arguments of influential figures involved in creating the new curriculum, this is even more important.¹⁴ The structuring of the history course, being divided between Irish and European history would tend to bolster such arguments, while the

¹⁰ A certain proviso needs to be mentioned in relation to the figures compiled here. There were a certain amount of questions which, like the themes in the topics, covered more than one area (for example, questions re foreign aid and the Desmond Rebellion in 1937, or on the Flight of the Earls and the Ulster Plantation in 1931 ('Emigration/Plantation') and have thus been included twice in the calculations. However, examples like these were infrequent and as such are not considered to have altered the overall results and conclusions being made.

¹¹ For a brief overview of the period see Terence Brown, *Ireland: a social and cultural history, 1922-2002* (Rev. ed, London, 2004).

¹² O'Neill and O Dómhnaill had featured in the ‘important men’ section before, however.

¹³ Department of Education, *Examination Papers*, ‘Intermediate Certificate- History’, 1937, Q. 7; The second part of the question asked the student to “Write a note on the career of Donal O’Sullivan Beare.” This was an anomaly, being the only time that O’Sullivan Beare was mentioned in the Intermediate Examination,

¹⁴ This alignment between “Ireland ‘proper’” and the Continent was repeatedly stressed in Corcoran, ‘New Programme: Classics’, pp 563–4.

emphasis laid on this continental link was seen as crucial to the purpose of Irish history in secondary schools, as noted by Corcoran in 1923.

In the post-World War Two years, the topic of Irish emigration would have been seen as a national sore spot, particularly in the 1950s, when the increasing rates of emigration was a critical concern for the government,¹⁵ and where emigration levels reached their highest sustained levels since the Great Hunger.¹⁶ It seems logical, with the newly independent nation (and its national ‘identity’) no longer in its developmental stage and relying on overseas support for validation,¹⁷ and also when emigration was seen as particularly negative for the Irish economy and society at large, that such a topic would not be emphasised by those in positions of official power.

This may also have been influenced by the increased structure which came on the Intermediate Certificate syllabus, and concurrently in the examination from 1941 onwards. From 1940 onwards, there was little room for discussion outside of the specific topics set for study. This in turn meant that the examination questions were to be derived from this list, as opposed to any general themes (such as ‘emigration’ or ‘Gaelic culture’).

Perhaps the best example of how context influenced popularity are the Irish Confederate Wars. Whilst among the four most cited topics for examination question (alongside the Norman Invasion, the Plantations and the 1798 Rebellion), it was not uniformly popular across the period. From 1926 to 1937, when the Intermediate syllabus was only broadly defined, between specifically cited individuals and the military events, it featured in only three questions; during a period when eight individual questions would be asked each year, or in other words, three mentions out of a possible 96 questions. With the tighter examination structure from 1937 on, there was now a far greater chance that it could be broached in the exam (in question three

¹⁵ ‘Commission on Emigration and other population problems’, Reports: 1948-1954, (Dublin, 1955)

¹⁶ For an overview of emigration during this period see Enda Delany, ‘The Vanishing Irish? The exodus from Ireland in the 1950s’ in Dermot Keogh, Finbarr O’Shea and Carmel Quinlan (eds), *The Lost Decade: Ireland in the 1950s* (Cork, 2004), pp 77–89. See also Mary E. Daly, *The Slow Failure: population decline and independent Ireland, 1922-1973* (London, 2006).

¹⁷ As an example of the shifting position of the Irish Free State/Éire/Republic towards Europe and abroad, consider the repeated attempts by the Free State to gain entry into the League of Nations, finally granted in 1930, before developing to the increased stance of Irish neutrality, and thus independence from Europe during World War II; For a comprehensive study on this see Michael Kennedy, *Ireland and the League of Nations, 1919-1946: international relations, diplomacy and politics* (Dublin, 1996).

usually). There was a very noticeable rise however in the discussion of the Confederation from the beginning of World War Two onwards. Between 1940 and 1948, questions on the period appear once every two years on average. From 1949 onwards however, this number increased, with questions being asked 13 out of 20 years.

If analysed by year, in the first two decades of the Intermediate Examination, the Irish Confederate Wars was quantitatively seen as a minor topic, behind the Tudor Plantations, the Geraldines, the 1798 Rebellion, and the Norman Invasion. However, from 1940 onwards, this period saw a considerable rise in popularity at Intermediate level, being the second most examined topic after the Norman Invasion between 1949 and 1969. This was not simply about examination structure. Nor should it be seen as purely coincidental either, that at a time when Ireland was increasingly stressing its political autonomy from Britain, declaring itself neutral in the Second World War (despite still being a member of the Commonwealth) and especially after 1948 when it declared itself as a separate Republic, that the Confederation of Kilkenny -the only post-Norman invasion period in Irish history when the Irish operated as a self-governing unit with a national reach- was being stressed as historically important.

Contextual concerns can be seen as having a bearing on what aspects of the past were being stressed. As noted earlier, through the exams a sense can be gotten not only of what was being taught in the classroom, but also of what elements of Irish history were officially being pointed to as significant (notwithstanding the issue of varying the questions asked in order to avoid rote memorisation of set answers).¹⁸ As French historian Marc Ferro argues, the history that is taught in schools “pinpoints the problems of its own times more fully even than those of the era about which it is supposed to be concerned.”¹⁹ The newfound significance placed on the Confederation after 1948 could therefore be seen as an attempt to instil in the minds of the young the historical

¹⁸ This case can similarly be made for the Land League, which in the fifteen years from 1926 to 1940 was only mentioned three times, but which was then broached five times in eight years between 1941 and 1948, coinciding with a period in which Ireland’s claims to its own territory were being disputed, with the Treaty ports, as well as an increased period of concern over the rights and importance of land in general in Ireland. For further discussion of the importance of land at this time See Terence Dooley, ‘Land and politics in independent Ireland, 1923-48: the case for a re-appraisal’ in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxxiv, pp 175–197.

¹⁹ Ferro, *The use and abuse of history, or, How the past is taught to children*.

precedence of such an action, promoting an episode of Irish history which resonated with the present. Furthermore, the nature of the questions would tend to support this line of argumentation, as questions were not so much based around the overall war, nor the Rising of 1641 (as the topic was outlined in the syllabus), or even on Cromwell, but the operation of the Confederation, and the reasons for its initial success, and ultimate downfall.²⁰

When dealing with the Irish Confederate Wars, while the overall figure for the amount of specific questions asked on the topic between 1926 and 1968 was 21, this could be increased to 29, as in 1958 and in 1964 an entire question (3a) revolved around describing in detail two of four influential figures, all of whom were connected with Ireland in 1640s, including Thomas Wentworth Earl of Strafford, James Butler and Eoghan Rua O'Neill each time.²¹ Furthermore, in 1968, the final year which this survey examines, two specific events were called for description, both dating from this period, -the Battle of Benburb (1646) and the Siege of Clonmel (1650), while the final two events dealt with the Williamite wars (Battle of the Boyne and the Treaty of Limerick.) The higher figure is more realistic in considering the emphasis on this period.²²

Finally, in the opening decade of the Intermediate exam, certain questions which seemed to be geared towards ‘establishing the nation’ appeared, which did not recur in later years. Stand-alone questions were asked in 1927 and 1929 about Ulster being ‘the least Irish’ province, after the turn of the seventeenth century.²³ These questions on Ulster, especially the phrasing of the questions, would seem like an attempt to minimise the grievance of partition. Alternatively, such questions could be used, without direct reference to the present, in connection with why the Ulster Unionists rejected Home Rule, being portrayed as ‘not Irish’. It is important to note that questions with such direct reference to Ulster and its Gaelic identity (or lack thereof), as opposed to

²⁰ See Department of Education, *Examination Papers* 1945, 1952, 1956, 1962 for examples of the wording of the questions; That is not to say that the ‘Insurrection of 1641’ was not broached, but on those occasions that it was specifically mentioned (1960 for example), it was usually asked for its initial causes, and then how it led to the Confederation.

²¹ The final figure was Thomas Preston in 1958, and Papal Nuncio Rincuccini in 1964.

²² This is especially so, considering the individual inclusions of late 19th and early twentieth century figures who featured in ‘important men’ type questions in Appendix 2.

²³ It ought also to be remembered that the Ulster Plantations were the only plantation specifically cited as part of the outlined syllabus from 1941 onwards (though the Munster plantation was asked about on occasion in connection with the Elizabethan wars and James Fitzmaurice Fitzgerald).

questions on the Ulster Plantation, were not subsequently repeated after the initial decade following the Treaty and partition

Themes:

It is important to analyse events not only in terms of contextual popularity, but also in terms of which themes they represent. Certain historical events or personnel may be in and out of vogue according to different decades and different historical contexts, (for example the rise in questions on the Land League between 1941 and 1948, but relative decline in topicality afterwards). If however the same themes are seen throughout, though perhaps represented at exam time by different topics, then this would transcend a study of individual topics, and stress a wider narrative which can be engaged with.

It ought to be remembered that the official syllabus in 1924 outlined that “questions will be of the most general type” and test, a student’s knowledge of “(i) the evolution of successive civilisations, powers, nationalities, and phases of development in Europe, and (ii) *the general causes and effects of the greater movements in Irish history.*”²⁴ This would grant further credence to the argument that what was of paramount importance, was not just the specific events, but the spirit and national sentiment behind it; or in other words, the general story and the wider themes, not just the details.

Among the most prominent themes which emerged were the themes of land, occupation, and oppression. These were evident from the earliest years of the examination. In 1931 for example, one particularly memorable question stated “The English policy in Ireland from the Tudors to William III was a policy that aimed at depriving the Irish people of their lands.” Explain and illustrate this statement.”²⁵ Statements of this sort directly connected being Irish with the deprived Catholics in the wake of plantation, and rebellion, and as such are inherently political. Furthermore, the phrasing is telling, with the issue not being up for debate, but instead the student being asked to show how this was true. The language used, like the example of the Bruce

²⁴ *Rules and Programmes for Secondary Schools 1924*, (Dublin, 1925), pp 13-15.; my emphasis.

²⁵ Department of Education, 'Na Paipéirí Scrúdúcháin a Ceapadh do sna Scrúdúcháin Teistimeireachta', 1931, Intermediate Certificate-History, Q. 6.

campaigns earlier, promoted a certain mentality; a definite narrative of English forces continuously engaging in land grabbing for over a hundred and fifty years.²⁶

Questions of this sort were not exclusively dominant. As Appendix 2 demonstrates, the most asked questions between 1926 and 1937 was not about Tudor policy, or about occupation, but about Pre-Norman Christianity, and about later emigration and the diaspora. The position of Ireland within Europe, (often in connection with a shared religious heritage) was being stressed, both during the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period. The spiritualism of the Irish was being emphasised ahead of the narrative of conquest and resistance.

There is some evidence in the exams of a deepening in the commitment to Gaelicisation during the early to mid-1930s. There was a noticeable increase in questions specifically framed from a Gaelic nationalist perspective in the Intermediate Certificate exam. The 1934 exam was perhaps the most telling example of this turn, with the great majority of the questions asked stressing Ireland as an explicitly and historically ‘Celtic’ and Christian nation. Questions ranged from the invasion of the Celts and the creation of a Celtic state, to Na Fianna (q.2), Pre-Anglo Norman Art, (q.3) to the Gaelicising of the Normans (q.4), and Art MacMurrough Cavanagh and the ‘Irish recovery circa 1400’ (q.5). Notably for this ‘Celtic’ turn, among the figures of ‘importance in Irish history’ -a regular feature of the Intermediate exam, Section A- to choose from were Conchubhair Mac Neasa (High King of Ireland, from the Ulster Cycle of Mythology), Finian of Clonard (the ‘father of Irish monasticism’), Tighearnán Ó Ruairc, (King of Breifne involved in the ousting of Diarmaid MacMurrough as King of Leinster, which led to the Norman Invasion) James Fitzmaurice Fitzgerald, James Fintan Lalor (Young Ireland), and (perhaps most tellingly in terms of the Gaelic turn), Douglas Hyde, founder of the Gaelic League.²⁷ This

²⁶ A similar example arose in 1937 with regards to a question (q.7) on the Act of Settlement, where after being asked to describe the position of Ireland under the Act, the student was asked to “show how that Settlement contained the germs of a new war.” Again, the language is telling.

²⁷ Department of Education, *Examination Papers*, ‘Intermediate Certificate – History’ 1934 (Dublin, 1935); the majority of these figures were not asked again after the syllabus became more structured in 1937 (Dean Swift for example was asked in the short questions in 1934 and 1936, but never again after this.) Question 8 in 1936 also saw Robert Emmet being mentioned for the first time at examination level, though as he was not part of the official syllabus outlined topics, he was mentioned just three times in the 43 year period. It is also worth mentioning that European conditions were called for in relation to the

stressing of a Gaelic Christian Ireland was further stressed in 1936 when the ‘Gaelic race’ was unequivocally connected to Irish Catholicism through the phrasing of one of the questions. Question 7 that year called for a discussion of the Penal Laws (without specific citing), by asking the student to “Describe the political, economic and social conditions of the Gaelic race in Ireland during the first half of the eighteenth century.”

While a change in textbook was not wholly evident, and while teachers were not wont to change too rapidly, the very noticeable change in question type and content suggests that the official view on Irish history in secondary schools did change with the shift in political parties. This is surprising considering how those setting the exam, in terms of inspectors and external consultants were not contingent upon a shift in political party. However, the increased focus on Gaelic Ireland as a legitimate entity, as well as on figures that represented a resurgent Gaelic civilisation would tie into the wider political and educational context in which the schools were operating at this time. The Irish Free State from 1932 was engaged in an ‘Economic War’ with Britain. Questions in line with a legitimisation of Ireland as a Celtic Gaelic nation would then tie into the general objectives of Fianna Fáil as a party, and as echoed, at primary level, with the publication of the overtly nationalist ‘Notes for Teachers- History’ in 1934.²⁸ Moreover it would also connect with the atmosphere of anti-English rhetoric, prevalent in popular culture at the time. The famous mantra ‘Burn everything British but their coal’²⁹ is but one example of this.

It is important to remember however, that by its very nature, the examination is bound to change from year to year, in order to avoid repeat questions and thus completely prepared answers. Furthermore, there is no evidence to suggest that these changes were directly called for by the new governing political party. They should then be seen as tying into the general atmosphere, but in no way being mandated. This is an important distinction as it cannot be stated

question on Emmet as well. (The examiners were not then looking for a blinkered view on Ireland.) This is the same with the discussion of the Jacobite war that year as well, asking why it was called ‘the War of the Three Kingdoms’ elsewhere as part of the question.

²⁸ Department of Education, *Notes for Teachers- History* (Dublin, 1934). These guidelines continues in operation, unchanged, until 1972.

²⁹ For a short overview of this period see Kevin O'Rourke, ‘Burn Everything British but Their Coal: The Anglo-Irish Economic War of the 1930s’ in *The Journal of Economic History*, li, no. 2 (1991), pp 357–366.

that a change in government led to a change in examination programme; the evidence in fact would point to the contrary, with any changes being corollary, but not causal; reflecting the deepening of Gaelicisation, but not directly caused by a change of government.

When this understanding of Irish history as a Gaelic Celtic history is connected with the earlier stressing on Pre-Norman Christianity along with the importance of land, a trend can be seen to emerge. This reflected the ethos of the fledgling state, which is generally accepted to have positioned itself as Gaelic, Catholic, and agrarian. When broken down by period, certain themes become more evident than others. Up to 1937 the two central themes come examination time were religion and land, with the two most popular questions being on St Patrick and Pre-Norman Christianity, and on the Plantations (predominantly that of Ulster). This would partially support Gabriel Doherty's claim as to the dominant theme of history teaching in Ireland, as cited in the introduction to this chapter. When connected to the context of 1920s and 1930s Ireland, Doherty argued that this was to be used as "a device by which the Irish people could reconcile themselves to their contemporary failures in the fields of economic and social progress; secondly, it represented a standard by which the measure of political separation from Britain could be justified."³⁰ However, the early analysis of the examination papers between 1926 and 1937 also highlight the centrality of land to this identity, which Doherty did not explicitly mention.

This also highlights a divergence between the set curriculum and the examinations, in that the above examples differed from the most prevalent themes outlined in the syllabus topics set for learning. (Fig 1.11.) These were as follows: Irish military endeavours against the English, followed by events stressing Ireland as its own (Gaelic) nation and culture. After this, the predominant themes are land, religion, and finally politics. This was especially the case after the re-structuring of the examination papers in 1937.

The spread of topics when exam questions are analysed by these themes also highlight a number of additional salient points. To begin with, even allowing for the fact that individual figures were often asked according to 'great men' type multiple choice questions as opposed to

³⁰ Doherty, 'National Identity and the Study of Irish History', p. 342.

stand alone questions, the physical force tradition by far trumps the constitutional nationalist tradition by a margin of roughly 3 to 1 in terms of question topic. Out of 46 question topics featured throughout the period (see Appendix 2), the issue of Ireland fighting against England in one form or another appears 21 times, while topics on politics, law, and non-violent action by individuals or groups appear only eight times.

It is worth noting that many of the episodes being stressed involved more than one specific theme; with the interconnection between a focus on war with England and Irish identity, and between land and religion.³¹ However, this admission does not negate the above findings. Even the issue of a separate Irish identity (linked to a Gaelic nationalist tradition) so often seen as the cornerstone of Irish history education,³² was less prominently featured than the actual military endeavours in the syllabus. Militarism, and the ‘continual’ struggle between an ‘indigenous’ people and a foreign power was more important than what this ‘indigenous’ identity actually entailed. Fig.1.11. provides a detailed breakdown of the question topics between 1926 and 1937, arranged and quantified by theme.³³

Fig 1.11: 1937 Intermediate Certificate Syllabus, arranged by theme³⁴

³¹ In terms of the categorisation of topics, the Williamite Wars for example was not considered as ‘political’, in the understanding used in this chapter but more to do with religion and fighting a foreign oppressor (in this case William III). However, one question asked in 1932 directly referenced constitutional politics, and implied a narrative of an Irish parliamentary tradition, “State what you know of the Dublin Parliament of James II (1689) Show how its proceedings were connected with previous Irish history.”

³² Consider for example Daniel Murphy, Education and the Arts: The Educational autobiographies of Contemporary Irish Poets, Novelists, Dramatists, Musicians, Painters, and Sculptors, A Research Report (TCD; School of Education, Dublin, 1987), p.104 where it was stated, (in summation to an interview with writer John Broderick) that "In the 1940s, when Broderick was at school the Irish self-image was still unequivocally Catholic, separatist and (theoretically, at least), Gaelic.... In the 1960s, a revisionist view of Irish history began to be voiced, This new perspective on the past, combined with the other forces for change that characterised the period, shook the secure Irish self-image and blurred the old certainties about national identity."

³³ *Questions directly on Irish land and maps were discontinued after 1929.

³⁴ Rules and Programmes for Secondary Schools 1936-7, (Dublin, 1936), pp 13-15.

The Norman invasions	
The Assimilation of Normans and the Tudor Attack	
The rise and Fall of the House of Kildare	
The Elizabethan Wars in Ireland	
The Plantation of Ulster	
The Rising of 1641	
The Cromwellian Plantation	
The Williamite Wars	
Penal Laws	
Grattan's Parliament	
United Irishmen	
O'Connell	
The Young Ireland Movement	
The Famine	
The Fenian Movement	
Parnell	
The Sinn Féin Movement and the Resurgence of 1916	

N=18

Ireland as its own (Gaelic) nation/culture	9
Fighting the English forces in Ireland	10
Land	3* (including Famine)
Religion	7
Politics (constitutional nationalism)	3

This thematic hierarchy was continued in the later periods, though with some minor variations.

Between 1941 and 1948, between all topics asked, military history was broached a total of 37 times, while Ireland as its own nation and culture was broached a total of 20 times. With the reduction of the examination course, with Pre-Norman Christianity now examined by inspection, the theme of religion was only engaged with nine times, while land was engaged with ten times. Finally, the theme of (constitutional) politics, seen through the important political figures and non-military engagements was discussed only five times.

Fig.1.12: Question topics, arranged and quantified by theme, 1926-1937,

Fighting the English (foreign) forces in Ireland	Brian Boru/Vikings Normans Battle of Down Gallóglagh Bruce Invasion Art Mac Mur.Kav/Richard II Geraldines Desmond/Fitzgerald Reb. 9 Y.W. Hugh O’N./O’Donnell 1641 Reb/Confed. Williamite Wars 1798, United Irishmen Emmet Young Ireland Fenians Pearse 1916 Rising Casement	7 7 1 1 2 1 4 2 2 3 5 6 1 3 1 1 2 1	Total= 52
Ireland as its own (Gaelic) nation/culture	Mythology High Kings Celts Statutes of Kilkenny Art MacMur.Kav/Richard II ('Irish Recovery') Geraldines ("Leaders of the Gael") Irish identity abroad/emigration 1641/Confed. Sarsfield Patriot Party/ 1782 United Irishmen Act of Union Young Ireland Late 19 th c. revival Hyde	3 3 2 1 1 4 8 3 1 3 6 1 3 1 1	Total= 41
Religion	St. Patrick/Pre-Norman Christianity Plantations Williamite War Penal Laws Grattan's Parliament O'Connell	8 10 5 3 3 3	Total= 32
Land	Questions on Land directly Pale Act of Settlement Plantations Great Famine (aftermath) Land League/Davitt	7 4 1 10 2 3	Total= 27
Politics (Constitutional Nationalism)	Act of Union Parnell O'Connell	1 2 3	Total= 6

This general trend continued between 1949 and 1968, though with some notable distinctions. Irish military engagements against the English was still by far the most prevalent theme with a total of 121 questions on the issue. This was again followed by the theme of Ireland as its own (Gaelic) nation, broached 59 times, while religion was the third most prevalent theme, with 39 mentions.

However, what is particularly interesting about the early post-Emergency period is the considerable rise in questions which dealt with constitutional politics. This theme, between individual figures and stand-alone questions was considered a total of 24 times, while the theme of Land was only broached 19 times.³⁵ This was a considerable change from 1926-40, where this aspect of Irish history was virtually ignored in comparison. The example of Daniel O'Connell serves to highlight the differentiated topic popularity by period. As Appendix 2 shows, between 1926 and 1940, questions on O'Connell were not widely popular, with eight other topics being more prevalent. By 1968 however as the final graph shows, O'Connell was jointly the sixth most popular topic for questions over the period. This shows that from the 1940s to the late 1960s, questions on O'Connell became more commonplace. The contexts in which he was included in examination questions was as important as how the questions were asked. Though a distinct and specifically cited aspect of the syllabus, the contrasting periods of inclusion and exclusion in the exam speaks to the official perception of him and his politics. Furthermore, the style of questions changed. Whereas during the 1930s, the relatively few question on O'Connell would ask almost exclusively on his failures of repeal rather than on the granting of Catholic Emancipation, by the late 1950s the questions appeared more value neutral. Examples of these initial questions emerged in 1937, 1939, and 1942.

This rise in questions regarding constitutional nationalism can be explained first, in line with Jan G. Janmaat's relational theory concerning nationalistic bias and the age of a nation;³⁶

³⁵ Figures compiled from Department of Education, *Examination Papers* (1949-68) (Dublin, 1950-69)

³⁶ This theory argued for an inverse relationship between the age of a nation and the nationalistic bias in the teaching of history where, as the nation become older (and connected with the social transformation which occurs when the old revolutionary generation is gradually replaced by the new, such as the 1960s in the Irish context), that the nationalistic bias lessens See Jan Germen Janmaat, 'History and National

that as the revolutionary period became less recent in the development of the Irish nation, the stress laid at examination time moved away from an overt declaration of national and cultural identity and more towards an indirect demonstration. Alternatively, it can be explained by the growing interest in the more recent aspects of Irish history, from the late nineteenth century onwards, which increasingly involved constitutional politics. It should not be forgotten that the physical force element of Irish history still trumped constitutional nationalism by a ratio of four to one, and so such a move towards the latter viewpoint was gradual and low key.

This focus on the physical force element of Irish history must also be seen in the educational context of the time, and the understanding of what history (and especially school history) entailed. The Great men approach coupled with political and military history and the memorisation by students of these facts about Great men and political events constituted a dominant tradition of how history was taught up until the 1960s, and was specifically cited in contrast to the (gradual) emergence of the ‘New tradition’ from the late 1960s onwards, both in Ireland and abroad.³⁷ History was not, to any great degree, understood as being oriented towards culture and social issues. Moreover, a predominant focus on a military struggle against a foreign oppressor was considered as central to the creation of national identity, right across Europe. As a report by the European *Council for Cultural Co-operation*, conducted in 1973 declared:

Nations are the accidents of history but, after they are born, it is in their historical memory that they find their emotional sustenance, their patriotism. It is a memory, most often of a time of struggle, a time when they were united by a common hatred of some alien oppressor, a time to which they later looked back as their heroic age, and the memory of which they keep alive in their history books.³⁸

Identity Construction: The Great Famine in Irish and Ukrainian History Textbooks’ in Christian Noack, Lindsay Janssen and Vincent Comerford (eds), *Holodomor and Gorta Mór: histories, memories and representations of famine in Ukraine and Ireland*. (London, 2012), pp 77–102.

³⁷ Sylvester, ‘Change and Continuity in History Teaching, 1900-1993’.; From the late 1960s onwards, courses, courses in history and geography began to become more varied, with a greater social and economic input being given and allowing some scope for individual project work by students. See Coolahan, *Irish Education*, p. 197. For further international examples, see Cannadine et al., *The right kind of history*. For a Scandinavian example see Thomas Nygren, ‘International Reformation of Swedish History Education 1927–1961, pp 343–6.

³⁸ E. E. Y. Hales, ‘European Curriculum Studies. Number 8: History.’ (1973), pp 37–8.

This council considered it not only understandable, but necessary that “...any national system of education must therefore, in its approach to history, be expected to give some prominence to these episodes. If it did not the sense of national solidarity which gives self-confidence to a people would be weakened.”³⁹ A proviso to this declaration was added however, in what would seem to be a safeguard against the uncritical glorification of violence.⁴⁰

This viewpoint is validated in the Irish context when one inspects the questions set for the Intermediate Certificate examination. These maintained a predominant focus on the ‘struggle with the English’, and which generally framed this struggle as continuous from the time of the Normans to “the Resurgence of 1916”, through the wording of the questions,⁴¹ and by way of the recurring themes which the question topics represented.

Conclusion:

Ultimately, while certain topics did dominate, as has been noted by others, only a select few events or personalities were universally seen as important across the period, with various aspects of Irish history being of more or of less importance depending on the context. This adds a layer of nuance to an otherwise oversimplified view that Irish history was being portrayed simply as a story of bad Englishmen being resisted by good Irishmen.

Through a comprehensive breakdown of the Intermediate examination questions between 1926 and 1969, and subsequent thematic coding and analysis, it has been possible to demonstrate that the traditional perceptions as to the teaching of Irish history must be further modified. This study provides the first comprehensive study of the Irish history examination papers, and has allowed claims previously made about the teaching of Irish history in secondary schools to be

³⁹ Ibid, p.38; This quote was cited in McMahon, ‘A review of changes in the pattern of history teaching’, p. 65., however the following addendum was not included, thus changing the overall meaning of the quotation.

⁴⁰ Hales, ‘European Curriculum Studies. Number 8’, p. 38.

⁴¹ One memorable example of this was Q. 6 of 1931 examination, which asked the student to “explain and illustrate” the statement that “The English policy in Ireland from the Tudors to William III was a policy that aimed at depriving the Irish people of their lands.” The wording of this question highlighted three issues. One, that such a declaration was not up for debate but was simply to be explained why it was true, secondly, the inter-relation between Catholics and the ‘Irish people’ and thirdly, that a continuous narrative was being stressed.

quantifiably measured. The officially stated aim for Intermediate history was simply for students to have a thorough knowledge of the central movements in Irish and European History.⁴² This could fit into the construction of a distinct national identity.⁴³ As the periodic breakdown of examination question demonstrated however, different and specific concerns were to the fore at different stages of the nascent state. The claim that the “inherent spirituality of the Irish people...constituted the dominant motif in school instruction”⁴⁴ can be accepted in the opening two decades of the course. Following structural changes to the examination paper which occurred in the late 1930s and early 1940s, the importance of this aspect of Irish history was subsequently lessened. The Physical Force tradition as well as the promotion of Ireland as its own Gaelic nation were the most prominently promoted aspects of Irish history in the exam. Overall, while an awareness that certain topics were more prevalent at different times does add greater understanding to the situation, it is also apparent that when the varied topics are analysed by theme, a persistent narrative emerges. This framed Irish history as a continued militaristic and social struggle against a foreign oppressor, though the examples chosen with which to represent this narrative differed according to the changing socio-political context.

⁴² *Report of the Department of Education, 1955-56*, (Dublin, 1957), p. 16 “Múintear Stair ins gach rang de na ranga Meán-Teistiméireachta agus, ara bheith críochnaithe do thréimhse a gcúrsa, bítear ag súil go mbeadh réidheolas ag na daltaí ar ghluaiseachtaí príomhga staire na hÉireann agus na hEorpa.”

⁴³ O’Callaghan, *Teaching Irish independence*, p. 59.

⁴⁴ Doherty, ‘National Identity and the Study of Irish History’, p. 325.

Chapter 6: Leaving Certificate Irish History Examinations, 1926-69:

The Leaving Certificate Irish history examinations followed a similar narrative to that at Intermediate Certificate, though it varied in points of detail, owing to its more specialised and sophisticated nature. Specifically, it maintained a greater emphasis on cultural and religious history than previously. The Leaving Certificate examinations during this period can be divided into two phases, 1926-40, and 1944-69. The shift between the two was represented by changes in the most prominent topics broached and the nature of questions asked. This shift was not solely due to changing syllabus structures, but was also based on demonstrable changes in attitude and emphases regarding the narrative of Irish history.

This chapter features the first comprehensive breakdown of examination questions on Leaving Certificate Irish history from 1926 to 1969. The themes which emerged from the questions were consistent in many areas with those at Intermediate level. A Great Man approach, coupled with political and military history was evident. Irish history at Leaving Certificate however had an increased emphasis on aspects of Irish culture and religion, especially in relation to Pre-Norman Gaelic and Early Christian Ireland. Doherty's contention that the dominant theme of history teaching in Ireland was "the belief in an inner spirituality" and the promotion of "the twin ideals of Catholicism and political freedom"¹ can be partially accepted, though a more detailed exploration of the material demonstrates that this position alters somewhat in Phase 2.

The way that Leaving Certificate questions were framed differed between the earlier period and the later period, being less value-laden in Phase 2, especially into the 1960s. There are also contradictions and internal inconsistencies. At times the Leaving Certificate Honours questions challenged any simplistic narrative of Irish history, by including questions which engage with the perspectives of non-Catholics. On the other hand, questions promoting Ireland as Gaelic and Catholic feature far more prominently at other times. Ultimately, the Leaving

¹ Ibid., p. 342.

Certificate allowed for the inclusion of Protestant perspectives, but generally framed them within a wider Gaelic narrative.

There was an avoidance of contemporary history in the Leaving Certificate examinations, especially in ‘Phase 1’ as reflected by the scant attention which post-1870 topics received. This was despite the Course from 1926 to 1940 ostensibly going as far as ‘the present’, while the post-1944 examination structure (Course 4) went as far as 1916. Such avoidance was evident into the 1950s, when more recent topics began to be discussed. This reflects the discussion in Chapter 3 as to the backtracking of the curriculum in 1940.

Issues of context, and the popularity of certain topics at given times are also considered. The wider implications of these and the overall data, in terms of what narrative(s) was being promoted through the programme are engaged with. The chapter considers the overall themes discussed, while also highlighting specific examples which reveal the ideology and outlook adopted in the Certificate examinations. As well as the two distinct phases outlined above, this chapter features a brief discussion of the interim period, 1941-43, when the course was altered three times in as many years.

In line with Corcoran’s 1923 argument discussed in the previous chapter, this chapter also looks at how Irish history at Leaving Certificate level was often contextualised in relation to Europe, as opposed to being framed as an ‘isolated phenomenon’ throughout. The role of Irish history in European affairs was considered in a number of areas. This provides an alternative interpretation to John O’Callaghan, as discussed later.

As for methodology, the data on every Leaving Certificate question asked on Irish history from 1926 to 1969 was collected and collated (Appendix 4.1-4.2).² This dataset showed that the Leaving Certificate examination allowed for a more nuanced narrative of Irish history than that outlined at Intermediate level, through its choice of topics. While focussing on many of the same foundational episodes in Irish history, the higher level was less predictable, with far more examples of one-off type questions than at the lower level. This would seem to stem from the

² 1938 was excluded as no exam papers were available for this year in the archives.

more specialised nature of the course, which in turn opened up a wider range of possible examination topics. The Intermediate Certificate served more as a whistle-stop tour, with certain events or topics central to an overall narrative of Irish history being promoted. These were not uniformly maintained when more in-depth studies of shorter specific periods were conducted at Leaving Certificate level. For instance, while the Norman Invasion was most prevalent previously, it now occupied a lesser albeit significant, position, as seen in Table 1.1. Moreover, the Pre-Norman period, especially the structure of the Irish Church, received considerable attention not afforded it at Intermediate level. The Williamite War and the Irish Confederate Wars (if all associated events/permuations were considered together) were central aspects at both levels.

There was also a difference in topic popularity according to the different contexts. The History examination (Section A, Ireland up to 1603: 1926-40) repeatedly stressed the structure of Pre- and Post-Norman Gaelic life, between religion and the wider society, followed by discussions of the ‘invaders’ between Norman and Tudor, and the difference in how each were organised. Section B: 1603 to Modern Times, was more diverse in its discussions. Though the military endeavours of 1641 and the Williamite Wars were most prevalent, the next most prevalent topics ranged across the political spectrum, and were related more to culture and constitutional politics than solely national uprisings. Grattan’s Parliament, the Act of Union, Repeal, Gaelic Literature and Culture, the Penal Laws and the Young Irelanders all featured equally, in terms of frequency. The wording of questions demonstrated how the religious aspect of much of this was key to understanding the wider culture. This reflected educational considerations from this period regarding the purpose of Irish history.³ It is also worth noting that beyond a handful of individual questions, Irish history post-1870 was not widely discussed.

By analysing and coding the data, it is possible to identify the most prevalent themes in the Leaving Certificate. These were the Physical Force tradition against England/Britain, Religion, Irish culture and identity, and land, in that order. Overall, these findings cohere with

³ Corcoran, S.J., ‘New Programme: History’.

the international understanding of history at this time, discussed previously, which tended to view history as being predominantly based on political and military history. The more cultural aspects of Irish history such as identity and religion were more important at this Certificate level, and highlighted an additional aspect of the post-independence understanding of what Irish history should entail. Moreover, while the rotating structure of the course after 1943 meant that a syllabus could only ever be taught four out of every six years, this gap would not preclude a relatively consistent attitude from being transmitted to students in general.

The complete figures gathered need to be understood by their limitations as well, in that not every period was engaged with every year. Between 1944 and 1969, with the rotating system in place, no period was engaged with for more than fourteen years out of the total twenty six. As such, while it is possible to get a sense of which elements of Irish history were generally considered to be important, the figures were considerably lower in direct comparison to their Intermediate Certificate counterpart.

While the structure of the Leaving Certificate featured both a general and an intensive course on a given period, this chapter focussed on the latter for its data calculations. There are three reasons for this. First, the overall purpose was to investigate what aspects of Irish history were transmitted to students through the Leaving Certificate examinations. This is best calculated by examining the intensive courses. Second, as acknowledged by the Department of Education, a trend was evident at Leaving Certificate whereby classes focussed predominantly on the intensive course, with several schools criticised for neglecting the general courses set for study. In the 1930 examinations for example “it was noticeable that many candidates scored very few marks on the questions which did not come within their special period. This neglect of general history had a serious effect on the number of students who got honours.”⁴ While important that the General Course be acknowledged, to include it among the intensive course figures would skew the results. Third, this section was withdrawn as a feature of the examination after 1941.

⁴ *Report of the Department of Education, 1929-30*, (Dublin, 1931), pp 73-4.

The data focusses predominantly on the Honours papers, as this comprised the highpoint of questions on Irish history at Post-Primary level.

[**Structure of the Examination:**](#)

Before a detailed analysis of the examination questions can be conducted, it is necessary to outline the structure of the Leaving Certificate history examination. The duration of the examination was three hours. Between 1926 and 1940, students were required to answer two questions in Section A (General History) and four (of six) in the intensive courses selected by them, with all questions being of equal value. Moreover, it was specifically stated that any students not taking either Section B or C (the Irish History intensive courses) had to attempt Question 1 in Section A, or in other words, that one of their two Section A questions answered must be on Irish history. This rule was amended in 1930, to also state that candidates taking either Section B or Section C must *not* answer Question 1 in Section A.⁵ This would stop any risk of repetition of answers between the general and intensive courses, and ensured that at least a third of a student's answers would be on European history.

The mid-Emergency period between 1941 and 1944 was one of major change and reconsideration with regards to Leaving Certificate Irish history. While the content of the examination questions reveal little in terms of a change in official attitude concerning Irish history, the repeated attempts to alter the structure of the examination are telling. In 1941 the examination was changed to consist of two separate papers. Paper I comprised a three hour exam. The General Course was worth 100 marks, with Pass and Honours having the same paper. It featured two sections (Irish/European) with three answers from each (six in total). Paper II comprised a two hour exam. For the Pass course, four questions were to be answered, from any *one* of the four intensive periods chosen for study. The periods were Irish history between (1) 432-1169; (2) 1169-1601; (3) 1601-1800; (4) 1801-1921. For the Honours paper, four questions were to be answered in total; two from Sections I and II; or Sections II and III; or Sections III and

⁵ Na Páipéirí Scrúdúcháin A Ceapadh do sna Scrúdúcháin Teistiméireachta, 1930 (Dublin, 1931), 'Leaving Certificate- History: Honours Paper' p. 34; This year, it was Question 5, not Question 1, as the specific Irish History question in Section A was not always the same number, but the same rule applied with regards to the need for at least some Irish history to be answered on. It was generally Question 1.

IV; or two from any *one* of Sections I, II, III, or IV, and its corresponding sections in European History. Pass and Honours had separate papers, and the overall paper was worth 200 marks. This new organisation corresponded to the periodisation of James Carty's four volume *Class-Book of Irish History* (Dublin, 1929-31). The pass course comprised an exclusive focus on Irish history, while the Honours course maintained a predominant focus for the vast majority of options.

In line with the alterations at curricular level, this examination structure changed within a year. The 1942 paper consisted of a two Section paper – Section A on Irish history, with the period/examination set on a three year rotation system⁶, as outlined in Chapter 3. Section B was on European history. There were separate papers for pass and honours, with six questions to be attempted in total, three from A, three from B. This entailed a more even distribution between both parts of the history course than previously.⁷ It is also worth noting that the Irish version of the paper was published first, (this was the first year this happened) suggesting that it was no longer simply a secondary option (being seen as 'p.44a' for example) but a legitimate alternative. When considered against the amount of Class A schools in operation by the early 1940s, this is quite telling.

This exam structure did not remain, and was changed for a third time in as many years in 1943. The new structure had three specialised periods (up to Normans; Normans to Tudors; 16th to 18th century). There was also less choice in terms of questions to answer, with the student required to complete three questions out of five in their given section.

The examination course was changed for a final time in 1943-44. It followed the three-year rotation system outlined in 1942, but with the dates set for examination differing. (400-1200; 1477-1603; 1603-1760; 1760-1916). This structure remained in place until the course was overhauled in 1969. The final year of this course, 1968, was also the first year that the individual marks per question were expressly stated in the exam papers. This demonstrated which parts of

⁶ In 1942, the period being examined was Ireland from the Earliest times until the middle of the Fifteenth century. This is interesting, as it meant that students would be less likely to be answering questions on the contemporary period during the first iteration of the rotation system.

⁷ It also fitted into the war-time rationing of paper, with the entire examination now fitting onto one page.

questions received marks, and provides an insight into examiners' thinking as well. This continued as part of the new system introduced in 1969-70 and beyond.

The framing of questions was also a point of difference between the different Certificate level examinations. Questions at Leaving Certificate level demanded more of the student than simply factual recall. Many questions called for cross comparisons between different battles, national struggles, or policies relating to land and governance across time. In 1927, students were asked to "Compare, as regards their origins, aims and extent, the insurrection of Shane O'Neill, of the Desmonds, and of Hugh O'Neill."⁸ Similarly, the following year, questions emerged demanding of the student to trace a host of factors, and consider them in relation to one another. Question 16 for instance asked to "Describe the social, economic, and political conditions of the Irish peasantry at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and explain their connection with the Famine of 1848." Thus, the standard of questions were, as expected, more difficult at Leaving Certificate level, and also called for more criticality than at Intermediate level.

Prevalent Topics:

By using the same methodology as when considering the Intermediate examination questions, the twenty most prevalent topics (from over a hundred examined-upon topics) were identified. From this, a consistency in terms of the most prevalent themes discussed in the Certificate examinations can be identified. These were the Physical Force tradition against England/Britain, Religion, Irish culture and identity, and Land.

⁸ 1927, Leaving Certificate History, Honours, Section B, Q. 9.

Table 1.1.: MOST FEATURED QUESTION TOPICS, 1926-69	Themes represented	# of Q.s
Pre-Norman Church/Mission (& Learning)	--	20
Williamite War	--	17
Tudor Reign (Henrician/Elizabethan period.)	--	16
Norman Invasion up to 1200	--	15
1782 (Grattan's) Parliament	--	14
Nine Years War (1594-1603)	--	13
Specifically O'Neill/O'Donnell	--	13
Young Ireland/ 1848	--	13
Bardic/Gaelic Society (Derbfine, Tanist...)	--	12
High Kings with Opposition	--	12
Geraldines (Kildare Supremacy to 1531)	--	12
Catholic Confederation	--	12
Act of Union	--	12
Irish Missionaries Abroad	--	11
Land - Henry VIII/Eliz	--	11
Gaelic Literature/Culture	--	11
Cromwell Settlement	--	11
Penal Laws	--	11
Repeal	--	11
1641 Insurrection	--	10

- Ireland as its own (Gaelic) nation/culture 73
- Fighting the English forces in Ireland 93
- Land 74
- Religion 81
- Politics (constitutional nationalism) 53

The prominence of religion was substantial here, having been of lesser importance in the Intermediate Certificate, owing to its post 1937 examination structure. Throughout the entire period, religion (or more accurately, Catholicism) was a major theme. The word ‘Catholic’ appears across all Leaving Certificate questions, Pass and Honours, a total of 94 times, whereas (for example) the word ‘Emigration’ only appears three times. Furthermore, questions on the reform of the Irish Church in the 5th and 6th centuries and in the 12th century were also prevalent. The more cultural aspects of Irish history such as identity and religion were central to the post-independence understanding of what Irish history should entail; seen as essential to the promotion of a Gaelic and Catholic national identity. Though it differed in points of detail, owing to its more

specialised nature, the Leaving Certificate course followed a reasonably similar narrative to that at Intermediate Certificate, especially when topics were viewed according to themes, and when the perspective from which these topics were portrayed is considered.

Specific period:

Between 1926 and 1940, the most popular examination topics (see Appendix 4.1) were on Bardic/Gaelic Society, the Pre-Norman Church (Learning & Reform), Irish Missionaries Abroad, the Tudor Reign, the 1641 Insurrection and the Norman Invasion. In the following course (1944-69) this list differed somewhat. The most popular topics were the Nine Years War (specifically questions on Hugh O'Neill) as well as discussions of the Williamite war. If the reforms of the twelfth century are considered alongside the topic more generally, however, the most popular overall topic for the period was the Pre-Norman Irish Church. These examples demonstrate the contextual considerations at play. The focus on Early Christian and Gaelic Ireland as a distinct era which was sympathetically emphasised can be read as a direct response to Irish history's function in the policy of Gaelicisation. At a time when the Irish government was involved in consolidating and legitimising the new State, this period was held up for positive consideration and emphasised as essential to understanding Irish history. Likewise, the extended emphasis placed on the twelfth century reforms of the Irish Church, in line with the importance of religion to accounts of Irish history and identity, was particularly important towards legitimising the new State, its ethos, and the general narrative seen in the textbooks. By highlighting these reforms which occurred prior to the release of the Papal Bull *Laudabiliter* in 1155, the exams were promoting an understanding of Irish history which positively promoted Pre-Norman Ireland, and undercut the legitimacy of Henry II's justification for coming to Ireland, and by proxy, any English right of conquest. Such a view would resonate with a newly independent nation and help to demonstrate the ideology being adopted in secondary schools.

Questions arose during the first few years not only as to Gaelic Society, but as to the very concept of nationality itself. Section B, question 6, in 1930 specifically called for a definition of 'nationality' and from this, to "examine how far Ireland at the pre-Norman period may be

regarded as a nation.” Similarly, questions emerged in 1947 on the extent to which Early Christian Ireland operated as a democracy.⁹ These fits in with the conceptualisation of this period as the ‘Golden Age’ of Irish history, discussed by MacNeill and Stopford Green, and in line with the focus on Irish unity seen in the textbooks. This was supported by examples such as Section B question 4 in 1932, quoting W.E.H. Lecky, which again called on the student to show how the negative effects of the Normans were true, and by inference, why the Gaelic system was superior. As cited “Lecky has compared the Norman rule in Ireland to “a spear-point embedded in a living body, inflaming all around it and paralysing every vital function.” Illustrate this by describing the effects of that rule on the political and cultural development of Ireland...”¹⁰ It also demonstrates how the Leaving Certificate examination aligned with the history curricula in the universities, where Lecky featured prominently.¹¹

The use of school history to legitimise the new State was evident in a number of Leaving Certificate questions. In 1927, one notable example called on the student to “Discuss and compare the constitutional powers and status of the Irish Parliament of 1782 with those of the Oireachtas.”¹² Such a question was directly political, tying past to present. When considered in the post-Civil War context, such a framing can be seen to promote the Free State, by directly comparing it to the limitations of this older lauded parliament and showing the current benefits. The Pass course in 1929 also featured questions on the degree of independence gained by Grattan’s Parliament.¹³ This can be interpreted as a further attempt to promote, through the exam papers, the benefits of the newly established Free State, by way of comparison. Such direct comparisons continued to be made as late as 1957, when the position of Catholics in twentieth century Ireland was asked to be considered against the parliament of 1613-15.¹⁴

⁹ 1947, Leaving Certificate History, (Hons.), Course I (400-1200), Q. 3.

¹⁰ 1932, Leaving Certificate History, (Hons.), Section B, Q. 4.

¹¹ This is considered in Chapter 9.

¹² 1927, Leaving Certificate History (Hons), Section C, Q. 15.

¹³ 1929, Leaving Certificate History (Pass), Section C, Q. 15, The second part of the question asks “What degree of independence did Ireland obtain under the Parliament of 1782?”

¹⁴ 1957, Leaving Certificate History (Hons), Course 1, Q. 1.

The dataset demonstrates how the Leaving Certificate examination allowed for a more nuanced narrative than that outlined at Intermediate level, through its choice of topic. One prominent example was the United Irishmen/1798 Rebellion. As seen in Appendix 3, this was a minor topic in the Leaving Certificate examination, 1926-69, despite its importance to a number of key textbooks and being the third most asked-upon topic at Intermediate level. The more in-depth study for Leaving Certificate enabled a more complex narrative of Irish history to emerge, beyond simply a glorification of the Physical Force or Republican tradition, as was the case, to a certain extent, in the lower level. That is not to say that the general perspective through which Irish history was framed at Intermediate level was discontinued, but merely that it was less straightforward than before.

Attempts were made to show linkages between specific periods of Irish history in an attempt to create a continuous narrative. In 1935, for example Section C question 5 made a specific connection between 1798, 1848, and 1867, with the student being asked to note how they led from one to the other.¹⁵ Likewise, in 1940, the student was asked to “Describe the circumstances under which the Sinn Féin movement came into being, and discuss to what extent the teaching of Sinn Féin was indebted to (a) the Young Irelanders, and (b) the Fenians.” Such wording encouraged the student to consider the connections between these groups and suggests the promotion of a continuous narrative being taught.

From 1944 to 1969, the most prevalent themes for Course #4 (1760-1916) were politics, Land, and Irish identity. The figures specifically cited were overall, more in line with the constitutional nationalist tradition. Grattan’s parliament, and the Land Question of the late nineteenth century each featured in 8 questions, while the Young Irelanders/ 1848 Rising was specifically cited in seven.

As for the abrupt syllabus changes after 1942, it is worth noting that questions on 1916 to 1921 featured only twice, in 1939, and in 1941, the year in which the course was rapidly altered

¹⁵ 1935, Leaving Certificate History (Hons), Section C, Q. 5. “Show the connection between the Rising of 1798 and that of 1848 and also the connection between the Rising of 1848 and that of 1867.”

to move back to 1916. This minimal discussion of the revolutionary period highlights two points: First, that the Department was not crudely nationalistic, in the sense of extolling the heroes of 1916 through the examination questions; Second, the issue of avoidance of conflicts with contemporary resonance. Very few questions were asked on aspects of Irish history from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards, especially during Phase 1. This changed during Phase 2. Six topics featured in the examination six times between 1944 and 1969, including the Sinn Féin Movement until 1916, and the Gaelic League and Douglas Hyde. Questions on early twentieth century Irish history did not become (relatively) common until the late 1950s however. The extent to which school history programmes encroached on recent violent events, forcing a consideration of sensitive political issues was an area of considerable concern. Such an understanding of Post-Civil War Ireland corresponded with the work of Alan McCully on History education in Northern Ireland in the post-Troubles context¹⁶, as highlighted in chapter 3.

The contextualisation of different topics in terms of when they featured most prominently can be explored further with a particular example: ‘The Land Question’ of the mid-to-late nineteenth century. Similar to Intermediate level, questions on Gladstone, and the Land League, whilst very popular after 1944, featured only once under the previous course, in the initial examination of 1926. Likewise, questions on the Tudor policy of Surrender and Regrant, gained an importance which it formerly lacked, being asked upon eight times after 1941, whereas previously it did not feature. The consistency of questions about land during this later period mirrors its increasing importance in the wider society, when agrarian issues were to the forefront of national politics as well as public discourse, with the formation of the political party *Clann na Talmhan* being proof of this. A striking individual example of how context influenced examination content was how the first standalone question at Honours level on Pádraig Mac Piarais was asked in 1966, on the fiftieth anniversary of the Rising.¹⁷ This consideration of the

¹⁶ McCully, ‘History Teaching, Conflict and the Legacy of the Past’, p. 146.

¹⁷ 1966, Leaving Certificate History (Hons) Course I, Section A, Q. 5. “Treat of the career and achievements of Pádraig Mac Piarais (Patrick Pearse) as a writer, an educationist, and a revolutionary.”

wider context helps shed light on why certain topics were more popular at different times, beyond the basic narrative of Irish history being propounded.

Ideology:

While the dataset provides a quantitative analysis of examination questions, it is also necessary to examine the specific wording of questions to analyse whether an overall ideology or official perspective was being promoted, or how. The Irish Confederate Wars serve as an illustrative example. While questions on 1641-53 were popular, their wording betrayed a negative perspective on any who opposed the Catholic Confederation. In 1930, it was remarked that “duplicity was the most marked feature of Charles I’s conduct of Irish affairs” with students being asked to comment on this statement, giving necessary details.¹⁸ Thus, even while a considerable section of Irish Catholics were fighting for the English King, the monarch was being portrayed in exclusively negative terms. Similarly, the Earl of Ormond was described in 1927 and 1945 as “the evil genius of the Catholic Confederation” for his conduct.¹⁹ In the 1932 Pass papers, the state of Ireland after the 1660 Restoration was described as “unnatural and certain to lead to future evil”, with the pupil being asked to consider Ormond’s role in this.²⁰ This would again cast Ormond as an ‘enemy of Ireland’, and furthers the argument made in Chapter 4 on the ideological implications of narrative descriptions of Irish history.

Such value-laden questions were less common as the decades progressed, to the extent that by 1964, on the same topic, students were simply asked to “Write of the part played by James Butler, Earl of Ormond in Irish affairs, 1641-1650.”²¹ This would not necessarily alter the perspective from which questions were answered, especially considering how the textbooks used were the same as in the 1930s. It would however testify to how the examiners were framing certain topics in a less overtly biased manner. It can reasonably be speculated that the increased

¹⁸ 1930, Leaving Certificate History (Hons), Section C, Q. 12.

¹⁹ 1928, Leaving Certificate History (Hons), Section C, Q. 13; 1945, Leaving Certificate History (Hons), Course I, Section A, Q. 2.

²⁰ 1932, Leaving Certificate History (Pass), Section C, Q. 3.

²¹ 1964, Leaving Certificate History (Hons), Course II, Section A, Q. 2.

inclusion of University professors in devising examination questions from the 1940s onwards had a bearing on this.

Narratives and inconsistencies:

Doherty's contention, discussed in the previous chapter, that "the dominant theme of history teaching in Ireland was the belief in an inner spirituality of the Irish people, demonstrated by their abiding fidelity to the twin ideals of Catholicism and political freedom"²² is partially supported by the Leaving Certificate data from the 1920s and 1930s. This can be seen in the specific interpretation of the Irish people as Catholic, on the focus on the Pre-Norman Church, and the framing of specific questions from later periods in relation to Catholicism. In the first Leaving Certificate examination, in 1926, a particularly striking question called on the student to consider, *inter alia*, "How far would you call Hugh O'Neill a champion of (a) Catholicism; (b) Gaelicism."²³ That these were the yardsticks through which O'Neill was being considered highlights their importance as historical motifs.

At times, inconsistencies were evident. While offering a more nuanced understanding of Irish history, the Leaving Certificate exam frequently maintained a similar perspective as that at Intermediate Certificate level. The 'Irish whig' narrative was evidenced in 1941, which featured specific questions, as done previously, about the English government in Ireland in the fourteenth century. What is of note is how the descriptions asked either why the English could not hold on to power, or why they were weak.²⁴ There were few (if any) questions which discussed periods in which the English were in power. The narrative focus was on the Gaelic people. This mentality was such that the final question on Section II this year asked the student to "Give an account of the principal events of the Nine Years War up to the battle of the Yellow Ford"²⁵ and to discuss the importance of this battle. The narrative ends with the Irish as victorious, and does not continue to discuss the great failures of the succeeding years.

²² Doherty, 'National Identity and the Study of Irish History', p. 342.

²³ 1926, Leaving Certificate History (Hons), Section B, Q. 10.

²⁴ 1941, Leaving Certificate History (Hons), Paper II, Section II, Q. 3.

²⁵ 1941, Leaving Certificate History (Hons), Paper II, Section II, Q. 6.

Such a teleological view was not exclusive however. The Leaving Certificate Honours questions at times challenged any simplistic narrative of Irish history, by including questions which engaged with the perspectives of non-Catholics as well. In 1957 for instance, students were asked to “Give reasons for the rise of Protestant dissatisfaction with English domination in Ireland and trace its growth from 1698 to 1760.”²⁶ This consideration of the Protestant Ascendancy in its own right challenges the view that Irish history was being taught purely from a Catholic perspective. Numerous questions emerged as to the attitude of Protestants in relation to key eighteenth and nineteenth century events such as the 1798 Rebellion, the Act of Union and Repeal.²⁷ But while the role of non-Catholics were often emphasised, they were usually discussed within the wider Gaelic framework. One notable exception to this was in 1936, when a fascinating question emerged which required the student to consider different perspectives on the Ulster Plantations, and which promoted the equal right of Ulster Protestants to claims of land and Irish identity. As cited “‘It was inevitable that the English and the Irish should look on the Plantation of Ulster in very different ways.’ Write short notes on the points of view of the English and the Irish in regard to this Plantation: Why may it be said of a proportion of the Planters that they were returning to the land of the forefathers?’”²⁸ This question proved the exception to the rule.

Overall Themes:

While the rotating system ensured that there was a wider spread in terms of topic broached, a cross comparison was still possible. The different periods and the amount of years they featured were as follows:

Period of Study between 1944 and 1969	# of Years it featured on L.C. Exam
‘400 A.D. -1200’	12
‘1477-1603’	13

²⁶ 1957, Leaving Certificate History (Hons), Course I, Q. 5.

²⁷ See for example 1945 Leaving Certificate History (Hons), Course II, Section A, Q. 2: “Comment on the attitudes of the Irish Catholics and the Irish Protestants generally towards (a) the proposal for a Legislative Union between Ireland and Great Britain (b) the proposal for the Repeal of the Act of Union.”; 1957, Leaving Certificate History (Pass), Course II, Q. 2: “Treat briefly of the part played by the Protestants of North-east Ulster. (a) in the rise of the United Irishmen and (b) in the 1798 Rebellion.

²⁸ 1936, Leaving Certificate History (Hons), Section C, Q. 1.

'1603-1760'	14
'1760-1916'	13

Overall, the most popular examination topics between 1944 and 1969 were: (Fig 1.13)

Specifically O'Neill/O'Donnell	10	Geraldines (Kildare Supremacy to 1531)	7
Williamite War	10	Surrender and Regrant	7
Pre-Norman Church/Mission (&Learning)	8	Young Ireland/ 1848	7
Norman Invasion up to 1200	8	Ormond Family, 16 th & 17 th century.	6
Tudor Reign (Henry, Eliz.)	8	Restoration 1660	6
Counter-Reformation/Ireland as a nation	8	Penal Laws	6
9 Years War	8	Act of Union	6
Catholic Confederation	8	Repeal	6
Cromwell Settlement	8	Home Rule Movement	6
1782 (Grattan's) Parliament	8	Parnell	6
Land Question (19 th c.)	8	Sinn Féin Movement up to 1916	6
12th c. Irish Church/Reform	7	Gaelic League / Douglas Hyde/ Gaeilge	6
Pre-Norman Irish Art/Architecture	7		

When compared with the Intermediate Certificate, the results are telling. A number of issues remained equally important across History at secondary school. Additionally, certain episodes or events in Irish history, while crucial to the study of the special periods in question, were not as important to the wider narrative espoused at intermediate level. This is especially so considering the study of pre-Norman Ireland, which did not feature as part of the Intermediate examination whatsoever after 1937. Moreover, whereas the Norman invasion was by far the most featured question at Intermediate level, its importance is somewhat diminished for Leaving Certificate Honours. Ten questions were asked between 1944 and 1968 on either O'Neill or O'Donnell. There were also eight specifically on the Nine Years War (four of which overlapped with the above).²⁹ Regardless, the centrality of O'Neill and the Nine Year War to how this 'special period', 1477-1603 was examined is clear.

²⁹ This overlap stemmed from questions being less straightforward in terms of the topics they covered as during the Intermediate level.

Great Man approach

The Great Man approach to history was still dominant, with frequent questions highlighting specific individuals, and asking to compare them to their contemporaries, or to view their role in major events. In 1931, one question on Daniel O'Connell's career and its achievements and goals asked to "compare him with other Irish leaders of his own and the succeeding time."³⁰ In 1953, O'Connell's "achievements as a leader of the Irish people" was to be outlined.³¹ A further question in 1939 asked for a consideration of Thomas Davis and his inclusion in the "rank of a great Irishman."³² This approach was perhaps best exemplified in a question in 1955 on the Nine Years War, which described it as "the rebellion of Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone."³³

Despite the occasional deviation, a relatively consistent narrative was maintained throughout testifying to the overall ethos and purpose of Irish history in secondary schools. The centrality of Hugh O'Neill and the Nine Years War, the Williamite War and the Catholic Confederation serve as examples of this. As for a thematic analysis, the understanding of land as central to Irish Tudor history was encapsulated in 1931 when one question contended that "the wars of Elizabethan Ireland were not wars of nationality; they were not wars of races; they were not, in the main wars of religion. They were wars for the possession of the land." -Comment with adequate historical reference."³⁴

Many of these issues were interconnected. This was often highlighted in the way questions were worded. Tellingly, the Honours exam of 1940 stressed how "The following were the principal causes of rebellion in the reign of Elizabeth: (a) the insecurity of land titles among the old English of Leinster and Munster (b) the attack upon feudal and chiefly lordships, and (c) the religious grievance." -Show the truth of this statement and show also that all three causes

³⁰ 1931, Leaving Certification History Examination, Hons. Section C, Q. 7.

³¹ 1955, Leaving Certification History Examination, Hons. Course II, Q. 3.

³² 1939, Leaving Certification History Examination, Hons. Section C, Q. 5.

³³ 1955, Leaving Certification History Examination, Hons. Course I, Q. 5.

³⁴ 1931, Leaving Certification History Examination, Hons. Section B, Q. 6.

were combined in the war of Hugh O'Neill.”³⁵ Thus the interconnection between land, religion and power were demonstrated. Examples of this kind were repeated in subsequent years, and in relation to different aspects of Irish history.³⁶

Religion:

The centrality of religion is also evident. Between 1926 and 1940 the Early Christian Church (in terms of its mission, learning and reform) was the joint most featured topic, alongside discussions of Pre-Norman Gaelic society. This did not include discussion of Irish missionaries abroad. After 1944 this was further differentiated, in that discussion of the 12th century reforms arose as a significant topic in its own right, separate from discussion of the wider Church from St Patrick until the coming of the Normans. Moreover, the positive inferences regarding the coming of Christianity to Ireland was highlighted in 1951, when Course I, Question 1 called on the student to “Account for the rapid and facile success of the mission of St. Patrick in Ireland and treat of the cultural advances made in Ireland as a direct result of the coming of Christianity.”³⁷ The benefits of Christianity to Ireland in that time was being promoted, and reinforced in the 1950s through the exam questions.

Irish History in European Context:

O’Callaghan has asserted that “The examination system served to legitimise and reinforce over-reliance on textbooks and rationalise exclusive emphasis on Irish history.”³⁸ This *exclusive* emphasis cannot be said to be true, considering how the exam, for most of the period, comprised both European and Irish history to some degree. Irish history was not completely separate from European history. There were a number of instances where the Leaving Certificate posed questions on areas where Irish history impinged upon wider European affairs, in the European history section of the exams, and vice versa. In the first Leaving Certificate

³⁵ 1940, Leaving Certification History Examination, Hons. Section B, Q. 6.

³⁶ See 1944, Leaving Certificate (Hons.) Section A, Q. 3: These three issues were to guide a consideration of “a) the plantation of Leix-Offaly; b) the wars of Shane O’Neill; c) the Desmond Rebellion.”

³⁷ 1940, Leaving Certification History Examination, (Hons.) Course I, Q. 1.

³⁸ O’Callaghan, *Teaching Irish independence*, p. 46.

examination, in 1926, a specific question emerged in the Irish History section on the “influence of Ireland upon progressive legislation in England in the 19th century.”³⁹ In the 1930s, a select few questions called on the student to consider the 1641 Rebellion, as well as the Williamite war in relation to its English/European context. This was most noticeable in 1937, Section C, Q. 1: “Show how events in England influenced the course of the rising in 1641.”⁴⁰ In 1933 one question considering the 1793 Relief Act and Catholic Emancipation in 1829, demanded as the second part of its question, to “Show in the case of *either* Act of 1793 or Act of 1829 how the European political situation was such to influence its passing.”⁴¹ A further question in the following year’s exam called on the student to “show broadly how the influence of events in England directed English policy in Ireland between 1603 and 1641” In 1935, similar considerations applied, namely on the importance of Ireland to European affairs during the sixteenth century.⁴²

Similarly, in 1928, a number of questions were asked on the effects of England/Europe on Irish history, between both Irish and European sections. One question featured in the pass and honours papers on the European History examination asked for “an account of the Home Rule Party under Butt, Parnell and Redmond, showing the nature and extent of their achievement for Ireland.”⁴³ Parnell featured again on the European History papers in 1935, as part of an ‘important men’ type question.⁴⁴ Later, students were asked to consider the ‘Irish Question’ as part of the European History examination in two successive years, 1939 and 1940. In 1928 the inspectorate reports specifically decried exam candidates’ answers for treating Irish history “as an isolated phenomenon”, and failing to explain “the connection between events in Ireland and the contemporaneous events in Great Britain and Europe.”⁴⁵

³⁹ 1926, Leaving Certificate History (Hons), Section C, Q. 15.

⁴⁰ 1937, Leaving Certificate History (Hons), Section C, Q. 1.

⁴¹ 1933, Leaving Certificate History (Hons), Section C, Q. 5.

⁴² 1935, Leaving Certificate History (Hons), Section B, Q. 6.

⁴³ 1928, Leaving Certificate History (Hons), European History, Section D, Q. 28a.

⁴⁴ 1935, Leaving Certificate History (Hons), European History, Section G ‘Europe 1870-1920’, Q. 4; “describe the career in the period after 1870 of *one* of flowing: Thiers, Gladstone, Parnell, Wilhelm II, Von Tirpitz, Clemenceau, Trotsky”.

⁴⁵ *Rules and Programmes...1927-8*, (Dublin, 1929), p. 58.

These examples would counter the claim that the Department was rationalising a blinkered approach in students when it came to English/European involvement in Irish history. Moreover, even if such a view were being promoted in secondary schools, the fact that questions asking for knowledge on the wider context repeatedly appear demonstrates that the examinations themselves cannot be held directly responsible. The inspectorate's calls for Irish and European history to be more integrated⁴⁶ was also in line with the earlier recommendations of Corcoran.⁴⁷ As the years progressed, questions on Ireland's involvement with European history, and European involvement in Irish history continued to emerge. While Irish history took pride of place, that is not the same as maintaining an exclusive emphasis.

Conclusion:

The nature of the Leaving Certificate examination during this period, notably in terms of how it was structured, meant that there was less of a consistent narrative than at Intermediate Certificate, if judged according to the topics broached. The intensive courses resulted in more context-specific subjects emerging, and allowed for a more nuanced understanding than the general narrative outlined at Intermediate level. Furthermore, a considerable difference can be detected between the 1920s-40s, and the 1940s-60s, in terms of what topics were popular within the specific periods set for study. These differences reflected contextual considerations.

Thematically, there was a continuation of many of the historiographical approaches of the Intermediate Certificate with a continued emphasis on the Great Man approach, and military and political history. The Leaving Certificate however maintained a greater overall emphasis on cultural and religious history than previously, especially in relation to Pre-Norman Gaelic and Early Christian Ireland. While Irish history remained the dominant strand taught in schools, European history was also included, and integrated into the wider narrative. As Rev. Corcoran explained in 1923, such an understanding ensured that Irish history teaching would be appropriately contextualised, and avoid the 'narrow nationalism' he rejected, as previously

⁴⁶ See for example *Report of the Department of Education, 1949-50* (Dublin, 1951), p. 17.

⁴⁷ Corcoran, S.J., 'New Programme: History'.

discussed.⁴⁸ This furthered the argument that overall, the Leaving Certificate Irish history examination offered a more nuanced understanding of Irish history than at Intermediate level. Contrary to O'Callaghan, the Leaving Certificate did not promote a crude form of Catholic nationalism. But it continued to maintain a traditionalist Great Man approach dominated by a nationalist world view, which focussed predominantly on Gaelic Ireland and the importance of religion.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 255.

Chapter 7: ‘A crazy system at all times’: Teachers and the Irish History Certificate

Examinations

“Mr. Higgins said the Programmes were all right, but the examination papers were not” calling for the committee to draw up specimen exam papers. President agreed, but said that this was not primary function of the Committee.¹

-ASTI, C.E.C. Report, 10 Oct. 1926,

The aspects of Irish history set in the Certificate examination and how teachers engaged with this material differed greatly. A purely content-based inquiry into the examinations, while beneficial, fails to take into account how this content was actually seen by key actors, particularly those outside the realm of official policy-making. Using the archival records of the ASTI it is possible to assess the particular views of teachers and their representative bodies, with respect to the exam material, and the syllabi. A number of key issues emerged from this, such as the separation of curriculum construction from the process of devising the examination, the perceived inappropriateness of examination towards assessing historical knowledge, the low success rates for pupils passing history, the issue of University professors setting the exam, and how closely the exam cohered with the syllabus to be taught in secondary schools.

It is not possible to ascertain the views of a sample of individual teachers working during this period. This study allows for the closest possible alternative, by looking at the official views of teachers as expressed by their representative body, and views specifically expressed by history teachers as noted in the ASTI conventions minutes, and through their elected delegates on the History sub-committee. Through these minutes and sub-committee reports we can get a sense of the major problems and the opinions that teachers held as regards the Certificate examinations, and specifically in relation to History.

¹ ASTI/96/06/48 b, ‘Annual Convention Minute Books, 1923-41’, 1927 convention: Held 10 Oct. 1926, C.E.C. Report, Prop 19, Par IV; Following this declaration, specific subject committees were established by the ASTI. The President’s comments then demonstrate both a general consensus on the issue, but also, the workings of the ASTI as an organisation, and the roles of the various committees.

Teachers had a number of criticisms. First, that many of the questions were unsuitable, either because of their undue emphasis on rote learning, or because the questions were not derived from the curriculum. The latter was a particular issue which emerged as a result of the increased involvement of University professors in setting the examinations from the 1940s onwards. Such involvement was seen by the teachers as an undue intrusion into secondary education.

This issue of suitability applied not only to history, but to the Certificate examinations in general. As a prime example, despite being the Minister in charge of altering the examination structure in 1924, Eoin MacNeill was against their integral position within the education system. As noted “the vices of that system went further than...indicated; for one thing bringing the children of a certain standard and class over the country into one competition annually I think was a crazy system at all times.”²

The examination was increasingly affecting the course to be taught, through a ‘backwash’ effect on the curriculum. This was compounded by teachers not being given any marking schemes or sample papers for the examinations. So, while the examination dominated history teaching, teachers themselves were increasingly left in the dark so to speak, in terms of knowing what these exams would consist of.

Sources:

Central to the research for this chapter were the internal files of the ASTI, between their private Convention programmes, the minutes of their central executive council and Standing committees, and their institutional archival material, which featured the records of the History Sub-Committee meetings. These have not been used in any previous study of the teaching of Irish history.³ These sub-committee meetings were held every year after the Certificate examination, in order to assess the suitability and appropriateness of the exams, and in light of this review, for examiners to mark the papers accordingly if pertinent issues were identified.

² *Dáil Debate*, Vol. 8, No.5, 4 July 1924, col.525.

³ For example O’Callaghan (2009) on History Education in schools did not use them, nor did the work of Fischer (2000) or Doherty (1996). This was perhaps because these are located only at Winetavern Street, and not part of a major national repository. The material is only accessible in the ASTI archives, and is not available online.

Besides assessing the examination, these sub-committee reports demonstrate a number of important issues. These included which aspects of the syllabus teachers considered more important than others, and from this, teachers' understanding of the official programme. This helps identify the attitude regarding Irish history which was being propounded in schools, especially when considered in conjunction with official documents, state examinations and approved textbooks considered in the previous chapters. Generally, teachers considered the examination questions as satisfactory. However, by complaining that certain questions were unfit for students, these reports also demonstrate the standard which teachers assumed their students to be at. It also shows the standard of questions which teachers believed the Department should be setting for the students, according to their understanding of the syllabus.

These sources highlighted a disconnection between the curriculum and its implementation, and those who set the examinations. While secondary teachers could submit their opinion on the examinations afterwards, they were not in a position to devise the examinations, and had very little control over the assessment procedure, controlled by the inspectorate. This exclusion of teachers was central to the above disconnect. There were some exceptions, when the recommendations of the teachers' unions led to change in the style of future papers. These were infrequent. Moreover, the degree of teacher involvement with the examination process, while minimal in the 1920s and 1930s, declined further during the 1940s with the emergence of a trend in which University professors were setting the Certificate examinations in history. This shift meant that Irish history at secondary school became increasingly influenced by universities, in terms of examination content, granting additional importance to Irish history in academia. This shift resulted in a number of questions being asked in the Certificate examinations which secondary teachers considered inappropriate, in terms of style, standard, and for failing to cohere to the curriculum.

To begin with, an explanation of what the History Subject Sub-committee was and how it related to the Department of Education is required. There was an awareness within the ASTI

that not enough attention was being paid to academic matters in education by an association exclusively comprised of secondary school teachers.⁴ To this end, a resolution passed in 1929 “That immediately after the Certificate Examinations a meeting of the Education Sub-Committee be held to examine and criticise the papers set, and that to such meeting the representatives on the Standardising Committee be summoned, and the Standardising Committee’s representatives be guided by the advice and criticism of the joint Committee.”⁵ That same year the government specifically called upon the ASTI, alongside other representative unions such as the C.H.A., and the Conference of Convent Secondary Schools (C.C.S.S.) to send representatives to a Departmental Standardising Committee in History (as well as in Irish, English, Maths and Geography). They were to evaluate the annual Certificate examinations and make general recommendations to the Department of Education.⁶ It should be noted that there was a difference between the ASTI Education Sub-Committee for History, and the Standardising Committee called for by the Department, in that the former was internal, and from the 1930s ran annually, whereas the ASTI were specifically invited to send representatives to the latter, which occurred only at the request of the Department of Education, and as such was external to the ASTI itself.

These standardising and subject sub-committees highlighted that much of the Certificate exam content was deemed inappropriate by teachers. One complaint which intermittently appeared was that certain question topics being stressed were of lesser significance than other areas and their inclusion was therefore problematic. This was notably the case in 1943 and in 1948. In 1943, question 1 of the Intermediate Certificate history exam called for a description of two out of three historical characters.⁷ The ASTI Standardising committee, while considering the

⁴ ASTI/96/06/48 b., ‘Annual Convention Minute Books, 1923-41’, Sixth Annual Convention, 10 , 11 April 1928, pp 196-99; Consider also, ASTI/97/48 – ‘Annual Convention Minute Books, 1942-74’, Speech delivered by Minister for Education Thomas Derrig at opening of the 21st ASTI Annual Convention, 27 April 1943. This awareness was specifically discussed by Derrig in his speech.

⁵ ASTI/96/06/48 b., ‘Annual Convention Minute Books, 1923-41’, Seventh Annual Convention, Private Session, 3 April 1929, Paragraph VIII.

⁶ See for example *Irish Times*, 11 Nov. 1929 – Address to the Schoolmasters’ Association., where the decision of the Department of Education in “convening advisory committees representative of educational associations to discuss the examination papers and marks of the 1929 examinations” was openly supported by Rev. C.B. Armstrong.

⁷ The choice that year was between Saint Laurence O’Toole, Hugh de Lacy, and Cathal Crobhdherg.

questions set for the exam to be “satisfactory on the whole” declared that “Two out of three is not a wide enough choice. This could demand too much detail” while also calling for specifications as to how much was required in an answer. More telling was question 4 (alternative), which called for a character study on late nineteenth century land activist and republican Michael Davitt. At first glance this would seem to reflect the newfound importance of the Land League in the examinations during the Emergency and afterwards. The standardising committee however were wholly against its inclusion, being “too detailed” and calling for those compiling the exam instead to give choices for “second-rank characters”, e.g. Davitt.⁸ These recommendations were brought to the attention of the head examiner, and the general absence of similar questions after this date, demonstrated how change could be affected by the teachers’ unions. Davitt featured as part of the Leaving Certificate examination on only one occasion between 1926 and 1969, in 1945.

While the Standardising Committee was convened at the behest of the Department, the ASTI also held an annual subject sub-committee, the report from which was sent to the Department of Education. While the recommendations were usually adhered to, the government were not bound by these recommendations. This was evidenced in 1948. Complaints were again voiced by the ASTI History subject sub-committee with regards to the standard of questions being asked, the general distribution of questions by period (which were claimed to overly favour modern history), and then specifically with regards to an exclusive question on a secondary historical character. As noted:

Question 2 – Unfair to single out Red Hugh O’Donnell- a secondary character- most histories do not treat fully of his part in Nine Years’ War, apart from what concerns the Battle of Kinsale...⁹

While the rest of the questions in Section A were considered satisfactory, the sub-committee complained that they were “too unevenly distributed over the period...-main stress on latter half

⁸ ASTI/OP/ 1944 – C.E.C. Report, pp 28-31 ‘Standardising Committee For History, 1943: Summary of Recommendations and Department’s Decisions’. This Committee also recommended altering the structure of the exam to 5 questions with alternatives, in order to further widen the choice of exam questions. This suggestion was outright rejected by the Department of Education.

⁹ ASTI/OP/ 1949, - C.E.C. Report, pp 22-24, ‘Report of A.S.T.I. History Sub-Committee, June 1948’.

of course.”¹⁰ This declaration is hard to reconcile with the actual topic breakdown (in Chapter 5), which demonstrated a clear preponderance towards Medieval Ireland.

These committee reports show how, post-1943, if wide choices were given as to events or individuals in an examination question, rather than specific case studies, that the examiners and/or the standardising committee believed these characters to be of lesser significance. Thus, the very fact of being involved in an ‘important figure’ type question shows the value choices of those setting the exams; being important enough to remember, but not central enough to warrant any substantial further attention.¹¹

Additionally, these committee reports show not only the difference between official programmes and examinations, and the practical reality of history in the classroom, but also issues with a purely content-based enquiry on these topics- a methodology which does not differentiate in terms of value of each question, but simply categorises by quantity. For example, with the discussion of the Gaelic turn evident from 1932 and most prominent in 1934 and 1936, the ASTI History Sub-Committee described the later exam as wholly unsuitable. As stated,

The majority of the Questions called for far too detailed a knowledge of unimportant sections of the Course. The Paper gave very little opportunity to the student who understood the scope and importance of the major movements of Irish and European History to show that he (or she) understood the significance of these events.¹²

This report also highlighted two other major issues. First that “little encouragement was given to teachers who devoted considerable time and energy towards developing in their students a knowledge sufficient for an appreciation of History in its wider sense.” This points to the wider culture as to history teaching, where examination answers were expected to provide detail, rather than consider a broader breadth of knowledge. A second further issue which the ASTI criticised was their view that the exam favoured one way of answering based on a particular textbook, and

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ This is an important awareness when one considers the historical figures cited earlier, in order to counter-balance any potential issues with calculating importance by how often someone was mentioned.

¹² ASTI/OP/1936, p. 51.

thus a particular perspective. They criticised this, contending that ‘As no text-book is prescribed it is considered that the Questions should be chosen in such a way as to suit equally students using any one of the better-known text-books in Irish History’.¹³

A notable and recurring issue was that certain aspects of Irish history were being stressed despite these events or individuals not only being deemed as insufficiently important, but being outside the remit of the syllabus. In 1948, the ASTI criticised an Intermediate Certificate question on the Pale as it was “not a reasonable question for Inter. Cert.- too vague- too much to expect young students to reason it out. Difficult to select extent of Pale at any one period of time – detailed knowledge of History of Pale required”¹⁴ which was not an officially outlined part of the syllabus, and was deemed too difficult a question for students at this level. The most scathing critique of inappropriate questions being set came in 1946 relating to Oliver Cromwell’s campaign in Ireland.¹⁵ As discussed,

The Examiner should see that questions are set on the course as prescribed in the official Programme. Section A, Question 2 (On Cromwell’s campaign in Ireland) is not in accordance with the syllabus. It is considered that it is merely begging the question to reply “‘The Cromwellian Plantation’ is on the syllabus and that heading implies the necessity for studying Cromwell’s campaign”. In strict truth, it does not imply any such thing and it is easy to study the plantation in full detail with a cursory preliminary reference to the fact that Cromwell conquered most of the country prior to the ‘planting’ of it. We strongly protest against setting questions which are not on the syllabus, if it is required that Cromwell’s campaign be studied.¹⁶

This led to a call for “a full and detailed syllabus [to] be published in the official programme” as opposed to the simple general headings given which were not considered to have

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ ASTI/OP/1949, - C.E.C. Report, pp 22-24, ‘Report of A.S.T.I. History Sub-Committee, June 1948’.

¹⁵ ASTI/OP/1947, pp 20-21.

¹⁶ Ibid., This issue was not exclusive to Irish history either. As the report continued “We have the same objection to the alternative to Question 1 in Section B. A ‘general account’ of Saint Louis’ career is required, but according to the syllabus St. Louis would be studied in connection with the Crusades. We consider it unfair then to expect a general account. There is no syllabus-heading which would indicate that a study of St. Louis’ career was requisite.”

adequately outlined the topics to be studied.¹⁷ Notably, this detailed syllabus was not immediately forthcoming.

The phrasing of questions also demonstrated how an expectation of the Intermediate examinations was for rote answering without analysis. Questions at exam time regularly featured statements (especially, though not exclusively, in the opening two and a half decades) such as ‘Describe all you know about X.’ In 1938, Question 10 (alternative) asked: “Give an account of Parnell’s Achievements for Ireland. Write what you know of ‘The Invincibles’”, or the following year where Question four called upon the student to “Tell what you know of the career of Garret Mór Fitzgerald, Earl of Kildare.”¹⁸ This was a recurring trend in the examination questions. It demonstrates an issue in practical pedagogy, and of how history, especially at Intermediate level, was being taught. In the inspectorate report for 1934-35, it was noted that while “History and Geography are taught well in most schools” that “[o]ftentimes...it is found out in the exams that answers have been memorised by students in history, and it is often that they themselves add small phrases which show that they do not understand at all, what has been learned off by heart.”¹⁹

Nor should it be assumed that this was an issue only in the early years of the State examinations. Complaints as to teachers setting lessons entirely comprised of rote memorisation were specifically cited fourteen times between 1942 and 1960.²⁰ By 1963-64, this issue had seemingly come full circle with the nature of inspectorate complaints being almost identical in wording to those made in the early 1930s.²¹ That similar complaints were seen almost annually over three decades shows that the custom was still being practiced, despite official censure, even if later reports offered additional justification for why this might be the case. While this issue is

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ See Department of Education, *Examination Papers*, (1938-1939).

¹⁹ *Report of the Department of Education, 1934-35* (Dublin, 1936), p. 53, personally translated from “múintear an Stair agus an Tíreolaidheacht go maith I bhfurmhór mó� na scoltach. Is minic, amhthach, a gheibhtear amach ins na sgrúduigthe go mbíonn freagraí de ghlain-mheabhair ag na daltaí sa stair, agus is minic a chuirid féin giotaí beaga isteach a theasbáineas nach dtuigeann said ar chor ar bith an stiuf a bhíos de ghlain-mheabhair aca.”

²⁰ See the annual *Report of the Department of Education*, for 1942-49, 1952-53, 1954-55 1957-58, 1958-59, and 1959-60.

²¹ *Report of the Department of Education, 1963-64*, (Dublin, 1965), p. 58; “Some junior classes are still taught...by teachers who lack special qualifications in History, with the result that in such classes there is excessive reliance on the textbook and too much memorization of factual material.”

further developed in Chapter 8, it is important to note the seemingly incongruous situation whereby the official examination promoted an answering technique of recall and description without analysis, which the Departmental inspectorate then condemned as a teaching method.

An analysis of how examination questions were worded is also fruitful in that, though factual recall was being sought after, that does not mean that value judgements were not being inferred. By applying definite values onto the characters or events being asked upon, the wording of questions demonstrated official attitudes. In line with the increased awareness at Intermediate level of Physical Force republicans in the early 1930s, one particular question in 1933 asked the student to “State which you prefer, Tone or Mitchel, giving reasons for your preference.”²² This implicitly positions both as positive figures and again required little or no critical analysis.

Perhaps the most significant reason for why problematic questions, both in terms of style and content, were being set, was the separation of curriculum construction from the process of devising the examination. This tension between programme and exam was evident throughout the period, and especially towards the late 1960s when teachers were having an increasing role in the structural organisation of Post-primary education. Like the British example and the operation of the various school district boards,²³ (and even worse perhaps, as the Irish system was more centrally organised), the Department of Education would set a syllabus for study (in a general manner), and had the power of inspection to ostensibly see that it was being followed. The examination however did not necessarily cohere with the course, in terms of how the programme and its aims and objectives were being assessed.

There had been issues with the idea of one centralised examination since before the establishment of the Free State. Pádraig Mac Piarais, in his 1916 castigation of the British Board of Education pleaded for “freedom for each school to shape its own programme in conformity with the circumstances of the school as to place, size, personnel, and so on...” and to be able to

²² See *Exam Papers*, Intermediate Certificate- History 1933; that this came about only one year after ‘Notes for Teachers’-history’ was published by the Fianna Fáil administration to primary school teachers, in their first year in charge is telling.

²³ Cannadine et al., *The right kind of history*, pp 28–29, 177.

“award prizes on its own tests based on its own programme” free from an outside uniform body.²⁴

While his tract was laden with problems, both stylistically and factually, being more an ideological treatise than a genuine review of the education system in place,²⁵ it was still seen as a seminal text, especially in the wake of Independence, being repeatedly referenced by writers and in parliament, when discussing Irish education.²⁶

These complaints continued into the 1920s, as noted by MacNeill’s earlier comments, as well as others. The Rev C.B. Armstrong, Warden at St. Columba’s College and President of the Irish Schoolmasters’ Association, rebuked the examination system in 1929 when he declared that “It is *prima facie* absurd for an entirely extern body to have the sole right of determining the success or failure of a pupil’s secondary course, without any weight being attached to the judgement of those who have educated him.”²⁷ Armstrong demonstrated a lack of awareness for the function of non-elite schools, when he later called for the Intermediate Certificate to be abolished despite the great majority of secondary students ending their schooling at this level before entering the work force. However, his critique of a system which rejected internal assessment, and made use of a single external State examination to decide the outcome of a student’s many years in education must be seen as legitimate. Under the Payment-by-results system in operation pre-Independence, exams tended to dominate the school life of the pupil and colour the outlook of school-managers and teachers,²⁸ especially as the school finances were directly tied to the students’ results. While the changes of 1924 were intended to remedy this, the system which emerged continued to stress the external exam as the marker for success, and operated as the driving force in education.

²⁴ P.H. Pearse, *The murder machine* (Dublin, 1916), pp 36, 49.

²⁵ For an informal analysis of Pearse’s *Murder Machine* by a current secondary School teacher see ASTIR: Journal of the Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland’, Volume 34: Number 5: November/December 2016, p. 22; “Half lecture, half article, it’s unlikely that Pádraig Pearse could have defended his essay The Murder Machine as a thesis, but it would definitely have enlivened a school debate...”

²⁶ See *Dáil Éireann debates*, Vol. 152, No. 3, 07 July 1955, col. 406 as an example of this referencing of Pearse and education.

²⁷ *Irish Times*, 11 Nov. 1929 – Address to the Schoolmasters’ Association; The rev. C.B. Armstrong, Warden at St. Columba’s College, President of the ISA.

²⁸ *Report of Council of Education*, p. 216.

The predicament of history being both a subject of interest, but also an ‘examination’ subject was readily clear to Departmental officials. In 1944 for example, the annual inspectorate report openly accepted that there were very few subjects which students and teachers both found as interesting as history when taught correctly. They acknowledged however that teachers found it exceptionally difficult to teach it as they would like, while at the same time preparing students for the examination.²⁹ This reflected an earlier critique in 1929 by one schoolmaster about the undue effects of an overburdened curriculum, which noted that “[e]xaminations had been instituted to be the servant of education, but they had become its master.”³⁰ There was much truth to this criticism during the period under investigation.

This issue in which teachers were supposedly free to teach to their own programme, once the general syllabus content was covered, but which was dominated by an external examination set outside of their control, by individuals and groups removed from the experience of classroom learning was not restricted to intermediate level, nor was it an exclusively Irish problem either. The issues of an exam-orientated system was perhaps most worrying when it came to History, being a complex, detailed and argument-intensive subject, ill-suited to a pressurised examination. As one commentator noted when discussing Second-level history in 1940s England, “history is one of the worst taught subjects...Teachers whose annual task is to prepare pupils for public examination might well conclude from their painful experience that history is not a suitable subject”³¹ due to its complexity and the difficult nature of analysing sources from the past. Children, he argued, were unable to understand what happened except in impossibly simplified versions.³² Furthermore, due to syllabus overload, as during the Inter-war period when the course

²⁹ *Report of the Department of Education, 1943-44* (Dublin, 1945), p. 24; “Is beag ádhbar ar an gelár is suimeamhla ag na daltaí ná ag an múinteoir ná an stair, ach í mhúineadh i gceart, ach is misde a admháil gur minic nach furas do’n mhúinteoir an Stair a mhúineadh mar ba mhian leis agus san am chéadhma na daltaí a ullmhú mar is cuibhe do’n sgrúdúchán.” Similar sentiments were expressly stated in 1945-6 as well.

³⁰ *Irish Times*, 11 Nov. 1929 – Address to the Schoolmasters’ Association. J. Bennet (The High School).

³¹ M.V.C. Jeffreys, *History in Schools: The Study of Development* (London, 1940) quoted in Cannadine et al., *The right kind of history*, p. 99.

³² Ibid. Compare this with the 1924 Inspectors’ reports in Ireland, which complained of ‘pemmican’ texts that over-simplified history rather than making the complex clearer.

was extended to include more modern times, it was conceded that “at least when history syllabuses complacently followed the lines of *1066 and All That* we knew where we were.”³³

This conviction about the unsuitability of history for summative examination was demonstrated in detail in the Irish context. Consider for example the pass and honours rates of History and Geography against the respective figures for Irish, English and Mathematics.

Figs. 1.14-1.17³⁴

1929–Intermediate Cert. H & G	Boys	Girls
Total examined:	2,017	1,466
% passed with Honours:	9.5	10.4
% passed in total	62.8	61.5

1929–Intermediate Cert. Irish	Boys	Girls
Total examined:	2,116	1,517
% passed with Honours:	44.0	49.1
& passed in total	85.0	85.3

1929–Intermediate Cert. English	Boys	Girls
Total examined:	2,148	1,522
% passed with Honours:	9.8	19.4
& passed in total	71.8	81.8

1929–Intermediate Cert. Maths	Boys	Girls
Total examined:	2,149	1,296
% passed with Honours:	37.9	16.1
& passed in total	76.8	49.8

³³ W.C. Sellar and R.J. Yeatman, *1066 and All That* (London, 1930) was a textbook which prescribed very stringently to the history of England as a study of monarchs and their respective reigns above all else; It stressed dates, monarchs, the national narrative, and examination questions. By the 1940s, this method was being challenged by educationalists in England, in favour of a more inclusive and child-centred history syllabus.

³⁴ *Report of the Department of Education, 1928-29* (Dublin, 1930); Appendix III: Secondary Education Statistics’, p. 167.

History maintained the lowest pass rates for any of the mandatory subjects for the Intermediate Certificate (except for girls in maths). Furthermore, as noted in a statistical examination of the 1928 Intermediate Certificate conducted by John Hooper, Director of Statistics with the Department of Industry and Commerce, History was found to be the most difficult subject for examination. Commenting on the data outlined for 1928, Hooper described history as being “obviously a wretched subject for obtaining a pass, honours or very high marks; only 7.4 % of the boys got honours in it, as compared with 59.5% in Drawing, 53.2 % in Irish and 52.7% in Greek.” Complaints abounded that History and Geography were being marked harshly in relation to other subjects. “It does not seem right to fail 36.0% of the boys in History and Geography, but only 7.8% in Drawing; to give 7.4% honours in the first subject as against 59% in the second, and so on.”³⁵ This last point also demonstrates how the difficulty of history as an examination subject was not simply a problem for teachers, but more importantly was an issue for the students themselves.

The constraints of a system which prioritised the examination, whereby “students will note the prison of a narrow schooling rather than a liberating education”³⁶ was compounded by this apparently harsh marking of history in the examination. As one student memorably recalled of his experience of secondary education in 1960s Ireland and the moment when he received his examination results afterwards: “I can remember looking at my results and getting this sinking feeling in my stomach. In my enthusiasm for the subject I had not thought to work out the formula for getting good marks in the examination.”³⁷ The impact of the exams on teaching and learning was prevalent. Teachers faced the considerable difficulty, as outlined by Kenneth Milne, of

³⁵ ‘Statistics Of Examinations Intermediate Certificate Examinations, 1928’; Paper read on 30 May 1929, before the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland, by John Hooper, B.A., Director of Statistics, Department of Industry and Commerce, in *Report of the Department of Education, 1927-28* (Dublin, 1929), p. 193.

³⁶ Michael D. Higgins, ‘The Green Paper – A Lost Opportunity’, in *Irish Education Design Maker*; Issue No.6, Autumn 1992, pp 53-5.

³⁷ Memories of Noel Kelly, Mount Sion CBS, 1960s, in O’Donoghue & Harford, *Secondary School Education in Ireland: History, Memories And Life Stories, 1922-1967*. Chapter 4. Referring here to his enjoyment of English poetry rather than history, but the issue of teaching towards the exam was the same across the board for subjects.

attempting to implement the ‘enlightened views on history teaching’, as expressed repeatedly in the official Reports, while at the same time preparing students for the examination, which was increasingly seen as the qualification standard for employability. As noted, the “hopes so frequently expressed in these [curricular] documents fall disappointingly short of fulfilment” due to, but not limited to “the basic contradiction of attempting a lively, imaginative approach within the confines of a highly conventional syllabus and a rigid examination system.”³⁸

Fig. 1.18: Intermediate Certificate H&G Total Examined, 1926-72³⁹

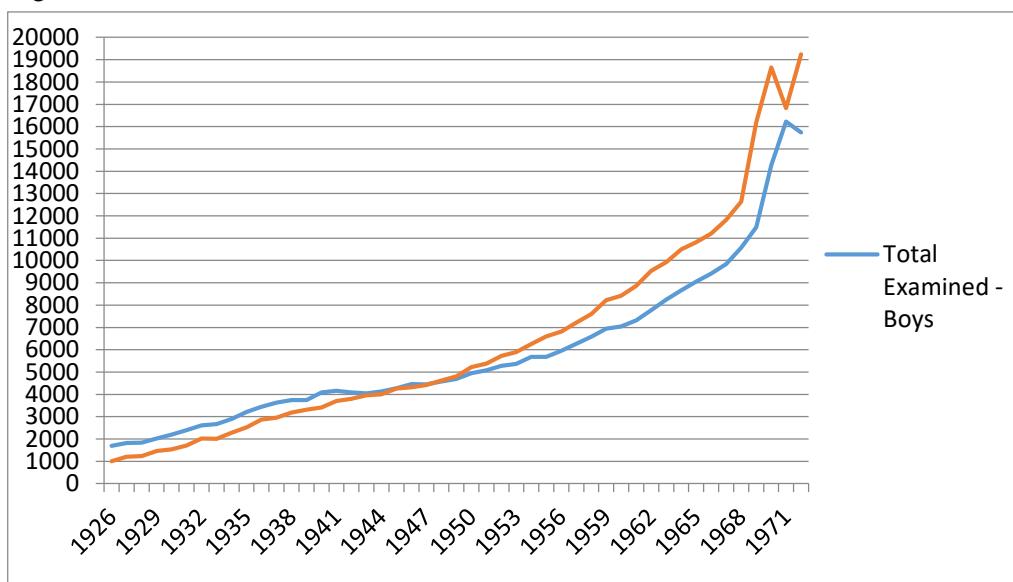
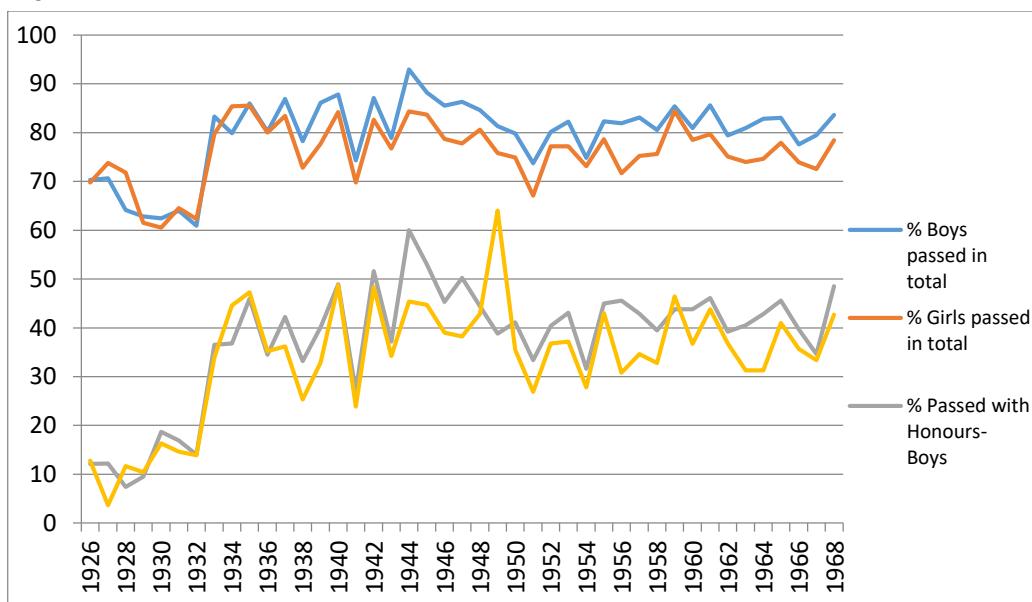


Fig 1.19.: Intermediate H&G Results, 1926-68.⁴⁰



³⁸ Milne, *New approaches to the teaching of Irish history*, p. 27.

³⁹ Figures compiled from the annual statistical Report of the Department of Education (Dublin, 1928-73).

⁴⁰ Figures compiled from the annual statistical Report of the Department of Education, 1926 to 1968 (Dublin, 1928-69).

Figs. 1.18, and 1.19, highlight the figures for those who sat the Intermediate Certificate examination in History and Geography, as well as the pass rates.

The figures reflected the general rise in secondary school attendance across the period, as highlighted in Chapter 2. There was a massive increase in the amount of girls sitting the exam across the period; from 1,009 in 1926, to 12,644 by 1968. This was a twelve-and-a-half-fold increase over four decades. The amount of boys sitting the Intermediate History and Geography exam rose from 1,688 to 10,569 during the same period. These figures exploded in the following years, corresponding with the introduction of free secondary education for all, and the increase in the compulsory age of attendance to 15. This graph also highlights the important Emergency years, in which the amount of girls sitting the exam outnumbered boys for the first time; a trend which continued for the remainder of the period. Fig 1.18., expanded on this, demonstrating that while more girls were sitting the exam, especially from the mid-1940s onwards, that they were not more likely to pass the exam than boys. In fact, from 1935 on, boys were statistically more likely to pass than girls in any given year. Furthermore, apart from a few anomalous years such as 1950, those boys who did pass were also more likely to pass with honours.

It should be remembered that presentation for state examination was not universal and was influenced by retention levels which were sometimes low. Many students (boys moreso than girls) left school before the Intermediate Certificate, upon completing their compulsory education at age 14 and entering the workforce. Furthermore local newspaper reportage of schools' results also provided an incentive for teachers and schools to withhold some students for examination on the basis of their weak academic performance.⁴¹ These reasons partially explain the discrepancies between the amounts of students who sat their exams, over the amounts taking the course in general.

This breakdown of the amount of students who took the Intermediate History exam, in conjunction with the success rates across the board highlights the reality of history as a school subject, being notoriously difficult to do well in, in the late 1920s and early 1930s in particular.

⁴¹ O'Reilly, 'Education Policy in Ireland since the 1940s', p. 249.

In 1932, just over sixty percent of boys and girls passed the subject, while less than fourteen percent received honours. This was altered by the following year, following criticisms that History was too severely marked.

To compound the issue, teachers were not fully aware of what the examination would entail, both in terms of its structure and in terms of what the Department, and the inspectors who set the examination were actually looking for, especially in the first two decades after 1924. As part of a memo sent to deputies in May 1931, in advance of Dáil debate on Estimates 1931-32, it was noted how

Since the advent of the new Secondary Schools' programme a good deal of dissatisfaction has been aroused by the unsuitability of some of the examination papers set and by the difficulty which many teachers experienced in endeavouring to ascertain what type of answer was expected of certain types of question, and what particular kinds of fault they were expecting to remove.⁴²

The solution proposed by the ASTI was for the Department to revert to the policy of the late Intermediate Education Board of publishing the full reports of the examiners in each subject annually. "Such reports would normally contain an amount of information and advice now unavailable to most teachers, and the practice of regular annual publication...would prove helpful to most teachers."⁴³ Despite the ASTI's calls, this recommendation was not taken up by the Department.

While asking for examiners' reports to be published, there was no such call for sample papers to be made available before the exam. The ASTI, from the 1930s in fact refused to ask for model examination papers on behalf of its members.⁴⁴ The Standing Committee's position was based on the policy laid down at Convention "whereby it was deemed to be undignified and unprofessional for the Association to ask for such assistance officially."⁴⁵ That is not to say that

⁴² ASTI/Official Programme, 1932, Examiners' Report, Feb. 1932.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ While the ASTI had stated a reluctance to ask, on the rare occasion that they did, their requests were not typically granted by the Department of Education Note the call for sample Leaving Certificate papers for the revised 1941-42 syllabus, See ASTI/OP/1942, p. 23

⁴⁵ ASTI/C.E.C. Minutes, January 1933; This decision, which became union policy, contravened earlier calls, in 1927 and 1928, which called for the Department to "draw up detailed and specific programmes

individual teachers could not ask inspectors or the Chief Examiner in their own private capacity, but the ASTI as a representative association would not. This awareness, alongside the lack of any published examiners' marking schemes (as demonstrated by a resolution passed in 1967 calling for this, together with all directives relating to it to be made freely available to schools⁴⁶) meant that preparation for the exam was all the more challenging. This did not however reduce the tendency to 'teach towards the test', considering the importance of the examinations to schools, parents and the department. While classroom 'learning' could be geared towards examination preparation, the content of this examination was not readily evident (beyond the general topic trends.) This tended to encourage the rote memorisation of large tracts of information, in order to cover all bases, with comprehension and in-depth understanding suffering as a result.

The debate over the 1967 ASTI motion calling for the marking scheme to be made available is important in itself, demonstrating significant issues regarding the Certificate Examinations and teachers' attitudes towards it. One opposition vote argued that such a motion would ultimately prove deleterious to student learning, noting how "this is a very wrong principle pedagogically. We feel that it is glorifying the exam far too much; As it stands the examination system is unsatisfactory, and leads to cramming; it does not help to develop the thinking powers, but only the powers of memory. We feel this motion tends to do all these wrong things and we entirely oppose it."⁴⁷ A fear existed that 'testing' rather than education was becoming more and more prevalent. But while it was generally agreed that the "examination system as it exists today does nothing else except dovetail two weeks of cramming into the end of the year in which a student is expected to pour out the knowledge of the previous two years..." teachers also had to

in both courses in all subjects, and [to] indicate the examination standard in each course, whether by means of specimen papers or otherwise."; ASTI/Annual Convention/1928, p.20; See also ASTI/96/06/48b, 'Annual Convention Minute Books, 1923-41', C.E.C. report, 10 Oct. 1926, Prop 19.

⁴⁶ ASTI/C.E.C. *Bulletin to Branches*, 1967.

⁴⁷ Ibid.; At the 1967 ASTI Convention, Minister for Education Donogh O'Malley addressed the Public Session, while also in attendance- was H. Rex Cathcart of the Irish Schoolmasters' Association and later Queens University Belfast, whose important 1978 published lecture, 'Teaching Irish History' still remains one of the few (brief) studies that directly addresses my overall topic.

consider practicality. The motion was ultimately carried by 63 to 44 votes. As declared by the C.E.C.:

We have the examination system as it is and we must accept the fact and if we have to accept it, we ought to make it as easy as possible for the student because what is the examination system but trying to find out what the student knows. If the student knows how he is going to be examined he will have a better opportunity of giving out what he knows and that is what we should be doing.⁴⁸

The exam, though not accepted as suitable in its current form, nor a sound marker for evaluating student learning, was accepted as a reality which teachers had to contend with.

A crucial reason for why the examination was deemed inappropriate for Intermediate and (more vigorously) for Leaving Certificate level students was due to exams being increasingly set and marked, from the 1940s on, by University historians. It is important to acknowledge that, prior to the Second World War, the inclusion of third-level historians in the Post-Primary system was not necessarily forced upon teachers, but in many instances was being asked for by certain stakeholders in the Irish secondary education system.⁴⁹ Furthermore, there was a real fear in the early years of the Programme that inspectors would have too much influence over secondary school teachers, due to them both setting and examining the courses. This was seemingly confirmed by one ASTI delegate who in 1924, “gave details of inspectors attempting to instruct teachers and to infringe on the rights of teachers, and held that teachers should make a firm stance against such action.” Written examinations were believed to form the best antidote to inspectors.⁵⁰ However, such a solution failed to form an antidote against the overall inspection system. If anything, it strengthened the hands of the department, by coupling the government-appointed inspectors with the state examinations. As Atkinson has noted:

There would be no little danger of rigidity in a system where such a large proportion of candidates take the examinations of one examining body. Yet the danger is increased by the fact that this

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ ASTI/96/06/48 b, ‘Annual Convention Minute Books, 1923-41’, 1924, Proposal 6, Paragraph 6. University Professors were also consulted in terms of school textbook production and reviewing, as previously noted.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

examining body also happens to be the authority responsible for the inspection of schools in the Republic...The combination of both inspectorial and examining powers has given the state an unusually powerful control over the freedom of the individual teacher to plan his own curriculum.⁵¹

The inclusion of University professors into the examination process can be contended as an effort to increase standards.⁵² This shift however did not emerge in the way that teachers hoped for. At the 1929 ISA conference, Rev. C.B. Armstrong specifically called for a new examiners board to be created, comprised of University professors and secondary school teachers; the first to ensure quality, to second to ensure practicability.⁵³ What later emerged was a balance tipped in favour of the former group, and thus led to repeated complaints of the system in operation by the early 1940s.

From the late 1930s onwards, and especially by the early 1940s, the exams were increasingly set by University professors of History. The ASTI expressed concerns at the world view of academics who were outside the secondary school and whose actual awareness of classroom pedagogy and Second-level student cognitive development was considered to be limited at best. Teachers vehemently protested that this resulted, in many cases, in questions being asked on topics outside the course syllabus. Additionally they contended that the standard of question was often deemed to be too high for the age group being tested.⁵⁴ The involvement of

⁵¹ Norman Atkinson, *Irish Education: A History of Educational Institutions*, (Dublin, 1969) p.197; Quoted in McMahon, ‘A review of changes in the pattern of history teaching’, p. 49.

⁵² This issue of standards is important to bear in mind. Consider for example, ASTI/97/48 – ‘Annual Convention Minute Books, 1942-74’, Speech delivered by Minister for Education Thomas Derrig at opening of the 21st ASTI Annual Convention, 27 April 1943’, and the complaints that “standards for the award of honours in particular subjects of the Certificate Examinations and at the examinations generally have been too low. I am satisfied that there is good ground for this criticism and I propose to make some alterations in the regulations governing these awards in the coming school-year. At the Intermediate Certificate the Honours Certificate will be awarded only to those candidates who secure honours in at least three subjects or honours in two subjects and at least 50% in each of two others. For the Leaving Certificate the standard for honours will be raised from 50% to 60% and for a pass on an honours paper from 30% to 40%.” That said, this must be considered against the marking of history which was seen as incredibly harsh, in relation to other subjects. Thus Derrig’s decision would appear to be a ‘one size fits all’ solution.

⁵³ *Irish Times*, 11 Nov. 1929 – Address to the Schoolmasters’ Association.

⁵⁴ ASTI, 19 June 1947; The word tested was chosen for a specific reason here, as the style of questions in the Intermediate Certificate examination at that time was not so much an assessment of a student’s ability and historical knowledge, but a test to see how much about certain topics they could remember, as the examples given demonstrate.

university professors in the Secondary School system was occurring in Northern Ireland as well at the time, though the degree to which control was being handed over to the universities was unique to the Irish context. As noted in 1942 at an ASTI deputation with Minister Thomas Derrig:

[T]hough University Professors had formerly corrected Secondary examination papers in Northern Ireland, the work was now being done by Secondary Teachers...The inability on the part of a University Professor to keep in touch with the growing mind of an undeveloped and very juvenile pupil was stressed by our representatives with a view to exposing the unsuitability of allowing the direction to pass from the Department.⁵⁵

While the issue here was over the marking of the examination, this soon spread to setting the exam as well. Such was the extent of this, that one influential history teacher and textbook author, could later lament that while committees may have worked hard to come up with good statement of aims and a well-balanced curriculum that was intended to develop the skills of ‘history’ (noticeably in the latter decades)⁵⁶ they then “have no input into how it is examined or whether the examination that emerges will test those aims and skills.”⁵⁷

This issue came to the fore in 1942, the same year that the Leaving Certificate syllabus was dramatically changed within the same school year, and when the standard of the Matriculation exam for those wishing to proceed to university was heavily criticised by teachers and TDs alike. Following an *Irish Independent* article which criticised the Certificate Examinations being set and marked by secondary inspectors, the ASTI Standing Committee decided to strongly and directly oppose the article, as they feared that it “might prove a change in the present marking system” which they favoured.

The secondary inspectorate, composed as it was of a chief inspector, two deputy chief inspectors, four senior inspectors and twelve district inspectors, were central to ensuring the implementation of the official programme. The senior and district inspectors were responsible for

⁵⁵ ASTI/OP/1943 – C.E.C. Report, p. 19.

⁵⁶ On this issue of committees, see ‘Report on the teaching of History in Ireland’. For a brief discussion on this committee see Cathcart, *Teaching Irish history*, p. 9.

⁵⁷ Elma Collins, ‘No history, no future?’ in *History Ireland*, Dec. 2011, p. 11.

the routine inspection of schools, the ‘setting of examinations’ and the supervision of the examinations.⁵⁸ The ASTI however feared that “if the duty of setting papers was taken from the Secondary Inspectors...the number of secondary teachers marking such papers would be considerably lessened.”⁵⁹ This ceding of responsibilities to university professors was alluded to in 1947, when the standard of the Leaving Certificate exam was critiqued by the ASTI History sub-committee. As noted

The Committee...unanimously contend that the Honours standard was on a higher plan than is suitable for schoolboys and schoolgirls. It was generally held that University students who specialise would find the questions a considerable test of their ability. The time factor alone would preclude good answering. The Honours paper was, on the whole, much too difficult.”⁶⁰

Similarly, among arguments submitted by the ASTI Central Executive Committee in 1942 in favour of a continuance of the old system was “that 10% only of Secondary pupils took up University work and that, if University Professors’ names appeared on the examination papers, the style of each paper would vary yearly with each change of professor.”⁶¹ While some members expressed approval towards University professors collaborating with the Department’s inspectors, this was not widely accepted. As one delegate stressed “with the introduction of the new system, Standardising Committees would cease to function,-a regrettable fact since these committees had proved most effective in the past.” To allow University Professors to set Certificate papers was, in his mind, “analogous to asking Secondary teachers to set primary Certificate papers.”⁶² The original *Irish Independent* article was seen by the teachers as a power play by the universities to “justify their presumed intention to assume control or direction of Certificate Examinations”, and thus highlighted a moment of tension between the various levels

⁵⁸ Duffy, *The lay teacher*, p. 30. The Inspectorate ought not to be seen as universally liked however, with Duffy arguing that many viewed them as the “dreaded educational testing service.” However, this instance would appear to be a case of “Better the Devil you know...”

⁵⁹ ASTI/SC/1940-49, 24 April 1942.

⁶⁰ ASTI/OP/19 June 1947; They did however view “with some satisfaction the distinction made between the standards of Pass and Honours Leaving Certificate papers.”

⁶¹ ASTI, *C.E.C. Minutes*, 9 April 1942.

⁶² Ibid.

of the Education system. C.L. Dillon, Vice President of the ASTI, openly expressed the view, on behalf of the Standing Committee, that “such an attempt to change the existing system was educationally unsound”⁶³ before publicly extending the ASTI protest.

The ASTI discussed the new information regarding changing the system with the other educational representative bodies, before raising it in deputation with the Minister for Education. Reports “to the effect that control of the Certificate Examinations was being taken from the Inspectors, Examiners, and Assistant Examiner appointed by the Department of Education” were not confirmed by Minister Derrig. However, when asked if the control would rest with the Universities, his response was telling. “The Department” he noted “might give the examinations (setting and marking) to University men of standing and others”, and that this would entail further expenditure. This was criticised by the ASTI representatives, owing to the example of the Matriculation questions previously set, as well as the fact that the Minister had previously claimed that no money was available to grant ASTI demands regarding a restoration of salary levels which had been cut during the 1930s, a considerable grievance during this period.⁶⁴ The Chairman of the Catholic Headmistresses’ Association and the Honorary Secretary of the Schoolmasters’ Association endorsed the ASTI’s protest.⁶⁵

This issue of university professors and the Certificate examination papers was not unique to history, nor to Intermediate level. In September 1943, numerous protests appeared in the daily press against the style and standard of the Leaving Certificate Papers. As one example, quoted in full in the ASTI convention minutes, demonstrated

This year a drastic change has been made in the system of examining Leaving Certificate candidates. The papers in most instances were set by University professors, out of touch with the work being done in Secondary Schools. The Examiners clearly aimed at raising sharply the whole standard of the examination without warning and regardless of the consequence to the students who failed (in

⁶³ ASTI/SC/1940-49, 16 May 1942.

⁶⁴ ASTI/OP/1943– ‘C.E.C. Report’ p. 19, on Deputation to Minister For Education 22 May 1942.

⁶⁵ ASTI/SC/1940-49, 24 June 1942; An Taoiseach De Valera’s views were also submitted at this meeting in the form of a memorandum, however I have been unable to locate this, beyond the mention of its existence in the Committee minutes.

the examination).⁶⁶ In particular the Irish Papers...were open to serious criticism: firstly because of the unreasonably high standard expected from the students, and, secondly, because of the failure of the examiners to keep to the Department's programme.

It was lamented that many students therefore failed their entire Leaving Certificate due to failing their Irish papers by a few per cent. As noted,

These were students who, nevertheless, had a really good knowledge of the language and who in previous years would most certainly have passed...One must not forget that it is for them the conclusion of their six years' Secondary School career and that the certificate is, for many, an essential qualification if they wish to embark on a business or professional career.⁶⁷

Similar complaints were seen that year, in the immediate aftermath of the examinations. Regarding the setting and marking of exam papers, the ASTI Standing Committee agreed “to protest at once against the standard and unsuitability of the Irish and Mathematics (Leaving Certificate) papers set in the current year, and to emphasise the general satisfaction given by the Latin Papers Leaving Cert, which had not been set by the University Examiners.”⁶⁸ These were considered to be more suitable because they were set by secondary school teachers. They were to be based on the work of the secondary schools, not the requirements or expectations of the universities, and the growing divide between the two was seen as enough of a concern to be broached at the Standing Committee meeting.

The above development highlights the inferior status of lay secondary teachers at that time, as well as the continued veneration of the University and the Primary School levels of Education, both being free from interference from the other Education sectors, and yet allowed have their own bearing on the secondary programme: the former deciding on the standard of Certificate examinations, the latter devising the entrance examination into this sector. It also points to the slow but gradual growth of the ASTI as a respected body in education, through their

⁶⁶ That ‘(in the examination)’, was in brackets would seem to suggest that the writer did not believe the students to have failed, but only according to the new test standards unfairly set against them.

⁶⁷ ASTI/OP/1944 – C.E.C. Report, p. 32.

⁶⁸ ASTI/SC/12 June 1943.

ability to successfully receive deputations with the Minister as well as act as representative for the other educational representative bodies like the CHA and CCSS.

Conclusion:

The history Certificate examinations -the only official appraisal of a student's knowledge on the subject- were subject to substantial criticism by teachers throughout the period. This criticism specifically related to who set the exams, how relevant questions were to the syllabus, how appropriate they were for secondary students, as well as the appropriateness of examinations as a method for assessing historical knowledge. The purpose of school history as outlined in official rhetoric or documentation was often of secondary importance to the practical, real concerns of teachers, pupils, and patrons alike. This chapter highlights how teachers specifically responded to the exam, and how the backwash effect of the exam led to a number of unintended consequences on how history was taught. The Department of Education's refusal to publish its examination papers for teachers' consultation during this period increased the difficulty for exam preparation, and can be considered as a further explanation for the repeatedly criticised rote-memorisation of large tracts of textbook material by students. This was compounded by the exams being set, especially from the early 1940s on, by university professors who had little experience of secondary schools. Having established the official policies in previous chapters, and how they manifested: through the curriculum, textbooks, and examinations, this chapter demonstrates the chaotic results of their implementation in the classroom, in relation to the Certificate examinations. By using the files of the teachers themselves, it has been possible to gauge the criticisms and issues which they had regarding their own profession in relation to teaching history. These examples serve to demonstrate how an understanding of both content and context is required in order to determine the function and purpose of Irish history in secondary education, neither being sufficient on its own.

Chapter 8: Challenges and Conditions facing Secondary School History Teachers:

“Even when due allowance is made for reforming zeal, missionary enthusiasm, prophetic ecstasy and apostolic fervour, it must be granted that things are far from well in the realm of education.”¹

Counteracting the claims by the Department of Education that history teaching was consistently improving during the period,² this chapter highlights the numerous and serious practical issues which hindered teachers. Though positioned in a central role by both the inspectorate and the structure of the classrooms themselves, teachers worked in a tightly prescribed educational space, due to the constraints of the examinations, the curriculum, and the general cultural and political ethos. Often, factors which affected History teachers were the same as affected the teaching of other subjects; be it school wide issues such as inadequate facilities or remuneration, or more practical concerns facing pedagogy such as examination pressure. While the inspectorate presented an idealised version of the teacher, the following constraints impinged dramatically on history teaching in secondary schools: the high number of unqualified teachers working at this time; the insufficient provision of school equipment and teaching aids, the overcrowded class sizes, and issues of time allocation, both in terms of how many periods per week history was given, as well as how many years of study students were completing.

This is not a detailed study of pedagogy nor an empirical analysis of how teachers operated in the classroom. This chapter instead looks at the practical issues which affected history teachers. It firstly considers the structural issues which faced all teachers. It then sets out the theoretical framework through which teaching was being evaluated, namely David Tyack and William Tobin’s concept of the ‘grammar of schooling’, considering how schools and classrooms were structured and how this affected teaching. Teaching was conducted in a didactic ‘chalk-and-talk’ approach, and this was reinforced by how classrooms were structured.

¹ *Belfast Newsletter*, 6 Feb. 1934: Prof. Robert J. Fynne, Professor of Education, TCD.

² *Report of the Department of Education*, 1945–46 (Dublin, 1947) p. 28; “Tá feabhas áiridh ag teacht ar mhúineadh na Staire i gcómhnaí, de bhrí gur mó an méid múinteoirí óga atá ann anois ná mar a bhíodh a bhfuil cáilíocht acu ins an ábhar sin.”

The issues of training and remuneration affected all schools, making context crucial. This chapter discusses the social status of secondary teachers alongside the major issues faced in terms of pay, before discussing the actual rates of qualified to unqualified teachers working at this time, and the practice of lay teachers being dismissed in favour of (untrained) members of the religious communities.

This chapter specifically outlines what ‘good history teaching’ was considered to be during this period. It has been contended by Cannadine that “it is the teacher above all who makes the difference.”³ While this chapter acknowledges the teacher’s importance in the classroom context, there were severe limits to what could be achieved or expected in secondary teaching of history during this period.

The widespread employment of teachers who were unqualified caused considerable difficulties, and resulted, as the inspectorate reports note, in the rote memorisation by students of what was written in the textbooks. History was treated as a reading lesson in many classrooms,⁴ where learning occurred on what would later be considered a very low level on the taxonomic scale.⁵ It is important to acknowledge however that this was the era before specified learning outcomes. The first official reference to critical thinking as part of the history course was not until 1948-49⁶ and was not widely discussed afterwards.

History teaching differed between Intermediate and Leaving Certificate level, as those in charge of the former were more likely to be untrained and unqualified, as well as being under greater constraints in terms of student attendance and the amount of time dedicated to what was ostensibly a four year course. These teachers were heavily criticised by the inspectorate. Those teaching at Leaving Certificate level were more likely to have completed the appropriate university qualifications and were commended by the inspectorate as being of a superior quality,

³ Cannadine et al., *The right kind of history*, p. 233.

⁴ This was especially noted by Victor Armstrong, a student at Mountjoy School Dublin during the mid-1940s. Learning history, as he recalled it, consisted of being made to “fold arms while teacher read.” ‘History in Education Project’ Questionnaire, received 03 Feb. 2016.

⁵ Benjamin S Bloom (ed.), *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* (New York, 1956).

⁶ *Report of the Department of Education, 1948-49*, p. 15.

being for the most part, fully registered. This is important owing to the progression rates during this time, with the great majority of secondary pupils completing their studies at Intermediate level. Despite repeated claims in departmental reports that many unqualified history teachers worked hard to overcome their shortcomings,⁷ the poor status and remuneration for teachers and the overcrowded and under-resourced nature of schools nonetheless affected secondary education.

There was a remarkable consistency in the nature of complaints about history during this period. These issues differed in part, owing to the differing contexts in which they emerged. Ultimately though, their repeated nature highlights how the long-term issues were not adequately dealt with by the Department, which offers a counter-point to their own assessment that secondary education was steadily improving. Improvement was at best, uneven, and reflected the changing contexts, and indeed the resources available to teachers.

Secondary History during this period was teacher-centred. This is important in pedagogical terms, but also ideologically as it flows from the idealised view of the schoolmaster and the assumption that a good teacher could solve almost all problems. Ultimately, by highlighting the considerable issues affecting education, and history in particular during this period, this study seeks to challenge the romanticisation of the teacher that a range of educational organisations and particularly the Department of Education promoted. Such a position was hampered by the constraints under which teachers actually worked. Moreover, this idealised view of teachers allowed the considerable cracks in the system to be overlooked. This enabled the Department to maintain a position that all these other problems could be superseded by an outstanding teacher.

The principal source material for this chapter are the Department of Education Annual Inspectorate reports. It offers an extensive use of reports from the early 1930s until the late 1950s, which have not tended to be utilised in the few previous works in this field, being written

⁷ *Report of the Department of Education, 1958-59*, (Dublin, 1960), p. 15 Similar sentiments were expressed in 1961; See *Report of the Department of Education, 1961-62*, (Dublin, 1963), pp 54-5 (translated from Irish on pp 13-14).

exclusively in Irish, with no English translation, and in the now defunct Gaelic script. These records were supplemented with the internal records of the ASTI, which offered an insight into the individual voices of the various branch delegates, and through them, lay teachers from around the country. The Central Executive Council (C.E.C.) *Bulletins to Branches* provide a breakdown of the Annual Conventions and add greater depth to the information gathered from the Convention minutes, highlighting not just the resolutions, but the debate which preceded it. Such sources allows teacher concerns to be contextualised, and enables this chapter to consider the full development of issues affecting history teachers from the twenties to the mid-nineteen sixties, when the Departmental reports on the ‘Work in the Schools’ stopped being published alongside the statistical reports. From these reports, what we see emerging is that there were four principle constraints affecting history teaching. These were teacher status and remuneration, teacher qualification levels, time allocation, and inadequate facilities, both in terms of buildings and in terms of teaching materials.

Facilities:

A practical concern which would have seriously affected any teacher’s ability to teach efficiently but which has received only minor attention is the issue of adequate facilities. As Cannadine noted with regards to history teaching in twentieth century England,: “Two thirds of all children attended schools built before 1900, and many were gaunt Victorian fortresses, which were old, ill-lit, badly ventilated, and with primitive sanitary arrangements...For many pupils attending such unwelcoming establishments would have been dispiriting and depressing: not due to the subject they were taught in class, but to the antiquated buildings in which they received their education.”⁸ Class sizes for secondary schools were also far above the officially accepted level, especially in the 1930s.⁹ These concerns applied equally to the Irish context, though at a smaller scale. As noted by Deputy Norton, in a Dáil Debate, March 1936:

⁸ Cannadine et al., *The right kind of history*, p. 85.

⁹ Ibid.; In 1934 this was set at 30 in England. Despite this, there were over 52,000 classes with more than 30, and another 60,000 that were above 40.

...there is nothing more calculated to impede the work of the teacher in the school than to compel him or her to endeavour to impart education in a structurally defective building which is dreary and lonely and drab and uninviting, and in which the mind of the child cannot ever reach a high level...We should set about, in a speedy and in a vigorous manner, replacing the defective school buildings which exist...to ensure their proper ventilation and lighting, so as to make them attractive to the children, and to make sure that the children shall have education imparted to them in circumstances much more calculated to enable them to retain that education...¹⁰

In the early years of the new system, complaints as to the poor condition under which teachers worked, and the cramped nature of schools, both at primary and secondary level were voiced in the Dáil, and brought to the attention of then Minister J.M. O’Sullivan.¹¹ While some new schools were being built, these were not enough to satisfy demand. The twin issues of inadequate facilities and time constraints (discussed later) were epitomised in a decision made by the ASTI to forward two circulars to the various Educational organisations in November 1938: “one protesting against the practice of bringing back pupils to school after school hours, the second urging the necessity for separate class rooms in Secondary Schools.”¹² The former highlights how teachers were being forced to teach outside of school hours in order to complete their courses. The second circular touches on the desire to separate classes, to allow different years to be taught separately from one another, as well as provide rooms for individual subjects, corresponding with Tyack and Tobin’s conceptualisation of the ‘Grammar of Schooling’.

These circulars, especially the latter contradicted the official reports for this year which declared that “There is more than enough room in the great majority of them (school buildings) and there is only a very few of them where lack of space [‘narrowness’] is affecting them.”¹³ This reflected a difference between teachers’ and the Department’s understanding of what was

¹⁰ *Dáil Éireann debates*, Vol. 61, No. 2, 25 March 1936, col. 197.

¹¹ *Dáil Éireann debates*, Vol.29, No.2, 11 April 1929; Cols. 289-97.

¹² ASTI/SC/26 November 1938.

¹³ *Report of the Department of Education, 1937-38*, p. 41; translated from

“Tá breis agus dóthain slíge ins an gcuid is mó ar fad aca [na foirgnithe scoile] agus níl ach fir-bheagán aca a bhfuil cumhainge ag cur as dóibh.

required in terms of classroom facilities. They also offer an indication that the official reports were not always impartial in their commentary on the education system.

The repeated nature of official complaints would at first suggest little continued improvement. This evaluation is contentious. In 1935-36, it was noted in the departmental report that while little changed from year to year, that the work done in schools since the previous year had improved. Though the odd occasion was cited in which schools were over-cramped, schools were said to be coping well in general with the extra pressure of increased students.¹⁴

These improvement claims by the inspectorate were challenged however by the records of the ASTI, with the issue of adequate facilities continuing to hold the imagination of members of the teaching organisations. In 1937, the ASTI passed resolutions “(a) That in fairness to both teacher and pupil, the Department of Education should forthwith insist upon a separate classroom being provided for each class [and] (b)...the Department should limit the number of pupils in examination classes to twenty-five.”¹⁵ In response, the Department of Education contended that its “Inspectors endeavour to have the accommodation for Secondary School Classes as suitable as possible” but that it was not in a position to require separate rooms to be provided for each class. Furthermore they rejected the suggestion, implied in the resolution that “provision as regards the numbers should be made for examination classes” though it was agreed that “all classes in Secondary Schools should be restricted to such a reasonable number of pupils as a teacher may be expected to deal with efficiently.”¹⁶

The ‘Emergency’ had an adverse effect on secondary school facilities. Transport issues, namely the lack of bicycles, was highlighted as a hindrance for rural students. As for classrooms, the lack of heating supplies to operate rural schools was bemoaned, affecting children’s ability to study.¹⁷ The growth in attendance figures, coupled with the constraints on the system, meant that

¹⁴ *Report of the Department of Education, 1935-36* (Dublin, 1937), p. 59.

¹⁵ ASTI/OP/1938, pp 27-8.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp 28-9.

¹⁷ *Report of the Department of Education, 1943-44*, p. 22.

schools were under increased pressure to provide adequate space for classes.¹⁸ The position was encapsulated in a 1944 ASTI resolution (res. No. 1), tabled by the Dublin branch, which stated

That in the interest of health and efficiency, certain regulations for Secondary Schools be prescribed by the Department of Education, viz.: not more than one class in a room; a minimum floor space (in a classroom) per pupil; desks of proper size according to the ages of pupils; adequate heating in Winter; suitable accommodation for hanging clothes – and that schools not conforming with these regulations be compelled to do so within a given period of time.¹⁹

Highlighting the difficult conditions faced by many teachers in the capital, that the motion passed unanimously also shows how such considerations were similar across Ireland.

The overcrowding of secondary schools in many towns was specifically cited by Departmental Secretary, Mícheál Breathnach as one reason why Secondary Tops were allowed, despite the ASTI being firmly opposed to their existence.²⁰ This proved a recurring issue. As secondary schools expanded conditions worsened, owing to increased pressure on the existing infrastructure. As defined in 1944-45

Owing to the almost complete suspension of building activities during the Emergency, the Secondary Schools were unable to provide the additional school accommodation which the increase in enrolments demanded, with the result that the majority of the schools, particularly those in the larger centres of population are now full to capacity and some of them are overcrowded.²¹

This issue was expected to be “rapidly overcome” as proposals were put forth by several schools throughout the country “for the provision of new schools or the enlargement of existing ones, involving a total estimated expenditure of over £800,000.”²² Schools were periodically improved, temporarily alleviating the problem, and allowing for further growth, which led to cramping again, and so on.

¹⁸ *Report of the Department of Education, 1941-42*, p. 21.

¹⁹ ASTI/OP/ 1944, p. 9.

²⁰ ASTI/Official Programme...1948, - C.E.C. Report, pp 33-38, Deputation with Minister for Education, 15 December 1947

²¹ *Report of the Department of Education, 1944-45*, pp 28-9; This was examined by a special branch of the Department of Industry and Commerce, who dealt with the post-war building programme.

²² Ibid.

These issues were not common across all providers of secondary education. A very definite divide existed between the more expensive boarding schools, and schools run by the Christian Brothers or the Presentation Sisters for example. By 1951-52, the issue of facilities was specifically divided between boarding and day schools, in terms of suitability. As noted in the annual departmental report, “The boarding schools are fine buildings and the typical school furniture is excellent in them.” Day schools (which comprised the majority of schools in Ireland) were less regarded, being “unable to do the same amount for their students (as the private boarding schools) but a lot is done to provide a sound education for them.”²³

The issue of facilities came to the fore again in 1956, with the unsanitary conditions of schools in Ireland being discussed in the Dáil.²⁴ In November, following a recommendation by the ASTI Standing Committee, teachers in Christian Brothers’ schools in Dublin met to consider “[the] worsening conditions in C.B. schools” in terms of facilities, and specific teaching conditions.²⁵ Cramped conditions (connected with the pressures of exams) had a direct effect on history teaching, as seen in 1951, where it was complained that non-exam years were suffering.

One of the most common circumstances which work against good History teaching in the senior classes is the amount of schools where students from the Fifth and Sixth years have to be put together in one classgroup for history. As a result, teachers often have to give their utmost effort to those in Sixth year, and those in Fifth year suffer because of it.²⁶

Increased spending on facilities meant that by 1956-57, it was possible for more schools to separate the first and second year classes of the Leaving Certificate from one another, which was seen to improve the standard of teaching in both.²⁷ Moreover, it was acknowledged in 1957 that

²³ *Report of the Department of Education, 1951-52*, (Dublin, 1953), p. 13.

²⁴ *Dáil Éireann Debate Vol. 159 No. 9, 19 July 1956*, cols. 1495-8.

²⁵ ASTI/SC/23 Nov. 1956; As for the latter, this deputation discussed “(1) a return to the traditional number of hours (2) lunch break of 1 ¾ hours (3) numbers in classes (4) a recommendation that Christmas holidays being earlier...”

²⁶ *Report of the Department of Education, 1951-52*, p. 16; “Ceann de na cúinsí is minicí a oibríonn in éadann dea-theagaisc na Staire ins na hardranga isea a oiread san scol a bheith ann ina gcaithfear na daltaí as an gCúigiú agus as an tSéú bliain a chur le chéile in aonbhuín chun Staire. Dá thoradh san ní hannamh a bhíonn ar an oide formhór a chuid díchill a thabhairt ar mhaithe le lucht na Séú bliana agus bíonn lucht na Cúigiú bliana thíos mar réiteach.”

²⁷ *Report of the Department of Education, 1956-57*, p. 17.

“school buildings and furniture have improved and many of the new schools, recognised by the Department in the last few years in particular, deserve praise in this regard.”²⁸ The Department, despite such gradual improvements, remained concerned about how a number of secondary schools were getting old, and over-crowded. The new schools were praised, girls’ schools in particular, as “it is rare now that a girls’ school is seen that is not warm, bright, clean and comfortable.”²⁹ 1958-59 was also the first time that a specific connection was made in official reports between school facilities and student experiences of learning. As noted

The bodily comfort and mental happiness that goes with having a nice insulated schoolroom, good chairs, enough space for the students and appropriate pictures on the walls is of great educational benefit.³⁰

That such conditions were not widespread was implied. These long-term institutional and physical problems persisted throughout the period under investigation, although the scale of the problems was not always officially recognised in departmental reports. The Department of Education’s policy which left the responsibility on school managers and the local community to secure the majority of funding for new schools³¹ resulted in increased difficulties concerning class sizes and facilities. This was specifically stated in 1961-62, though it was also mentioned how school managers were supposedly adapting well to the issue.³²

Overall, the issue of adequate facilities differed to varying degrees depending on geography, age of the school and the socio-economic context of the school or area. While

²⁸ *Report of the Department of Education, 1957-58*, p. 11; “Tá bail chun feabhas ar fhoirgintí is ar throscán na scoileanna agus is inmholta go háirithe, ón dtaobh sin de, roinnt mhaith de na scoileanna nua a tháinig faoi aithint na Roinne le cúpla bliain anuas.”

²⁹ *Report of the Department of Education, 1958-59*, p. 10: “is annamh anois a fheictear scoil cailíní nach mbíonn glan teith geal seascair.”

³⁰ Ibid. “Is iontach é an buntáiste don fhoghlaím an compord coírp, agus an tsásacht aigne a théann le scoilsheomra deas cluthar, cathaoireacha maithe ag na daltaí, slí a ndóthain acu agus pictiúirí oiriúnacha ar na fallaí.”

³¹ The official policy in this regard was that while it exercised authority over setting the programmes and through inspection “it neither founds secondary schools, nor finances the building of them, nor appoints teachers, or managers...” See *Report of the Department of Education, 1924-25*, p. 7, See also Coolahan, *Irish Education*, p. 85.

³² *Report of the Department of Education, 1961-62*, p. 12.

those who attended schools run by the more affluent religious orders such as the Vincentians of Castleknock, or the Church of Ireland Alexandra College in Milltown, Dublin could expect to have facilities well capable of meeting their needs, complaints about inadequate facilities emerged repeatedly across the period in the inspectorate reports, as well as in local newspapers around the country. In the general Munster region, the annual reports of 1925-27 commented on the cramped conditions in general and in Cork City in particular, declaring how “there is not enough space for the students in most schools.”³³ *The Western People* newspaper in 1963 wrote of pupils “crammed into accommodation that is completely inadequate and demanding facilities that are utterly out of reach of the private diocesan colleges that carry the main burden of secondary education in this country.”³⁴ An additional class dimension was noticeable when it came to the provision of secondary education, on top of the issue of the private nature of the schools until 1967. Furthermore, despite the growing interest of the Department of Education from the 1960s in financing the building of new schools and the improvement of others, the corresponding growth in student attendance figures meant that issues over facilities remained a pressing matter beyond the period in question in this study.

Class sizes:

Inadequate facilities had as a corollary, impractically large class sizes in terms of pupils. By the mid-1930s the “tendency to enrol an excessive number of pupils in certain classes especially the Junior classes”³⁵ was a matter of considerable concern to the Department of Education. In an effort to somewhat alleviate the issue, school inspections were increased and a new rule introduced into the Regulation for 1934-35 that “staff of a school will not be considered sufficient if, in the opinion of the Department, the number of pupils in any class is too large to permit of efficient instruction.”³⁶ While in theory this was to lead to an increase in teachers being employed, this did not happen to any great extent, owing to the Department’s laissez-faire

³³ *Report of the Department of Education, 1925-26-27*, p.45; “níl slighe I ndóthain do sna scoláirí I bhurmhór na scol.”

³⁴ Beggan, ‘Education in Clare-Connacht in the Nineteen Fifties’, p. 74.

³⁵ *Report of the Department of Education, 1934-35*, pp 51-52.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

approach, and to the cramped facilities discussed earlier, which did not allow for much development within existing schools.

The Department acknowledged the issue of unduly large classes again in 1936.³⁷ But despite the gradual improvement of facilities, the growth in attendance figures as well as the relatively small budget allocated to Education meant that student numbers were typically equal to, if not surpassing what the facilities could provide for. As noted, from 1922 to 1941 inclusive, the number of pupils enrolled in secondary schools almost doubled to just under 40,000; an increase of about 950 pupils a year. In the same period the number of recognised schools increased from 275 to 362. This progressive increase was somewhat inhibited in 1942, 1943 and 1944 by difficulties of transport arising out of the Emergency -the annual increase for these years being around 450. In 1944-45 there were 385 recognised schools in operation and the number of pupils enrolled therein was 41,178. This increased by over 600 pupils in 1945-46 to 41,800 pupils, demonstrating the consistent pressure under which secondary schools were under.

While facilities improved during the 1950s, the massive increase in attendance figures in the 1960s meant that class-sizes were again to the fore in Education discussions. In 1959, while preliminary talks were underway to increase the school-leaving age to 15, the ASTI (Dublin branch) proposed a resolution that “the A.S.T.I. impress strongly upon the Minister for Education that it would be far more beneficial to reduce the size of classes than to raise the school leaving age and that it is consequently more essential to secure this reduction first.”³⁸ A letter to this effect was sent to the Minister and a Deputation discussed the matter with him in January 1960.³⁹ As preface to this, “the tendency in some schools to enlarge the numbers in classes beyond the number which a teacher can effectively teach.- Thirty for Inter. Cert, and twenty-five for Leaving Cert (Res. No.5, 1959)” was discussed. While generally in favour of raising the school leaving age, the ASTI were concerned with the question of priorities, especially owing to the growth in progression from primary to secondary and the large numbers in primary classes at the time. The

³⁷ ASTI/SC/7 Feb. 1936.

³⁸ ASTI C.E.C. *Bulletins to Branches*, 1959-1982, No. 55, July 1959. Res. No 18.

³⁹ ASTI/C.E.C/ 3 April 1959; See also ASTI/Official Programme, 1960, p. 46.

Association considered that before the school-leaving age were raised, a maximum figure could be fixed for classes in primary schools. As stated “It was better to have the present number of years at school in a smaller class than to have an extra year or two in a too large class.” The official Departmental position agreed with the principle of the Association’s resolution, policy being that the school-leaving age should be raised when facilities were available and not before then.⁴⁰

Class sizes, like facilities, had a very prominent regional differentiation. A clear West/East divide could be seen in terms of provision, as demonstrated by the returns from a 1971 ASTI questionnaire on the issue. These showed that the principle of 1 teacher to 20 pupils was far from the truth, with over 35 pupils per class being the norm in over a third of the 194 schools from which returns were received. Sixty-four schools had classes of more than thirty-five pupils. Fifty seven of these had junior classes of more than thirty-five and nineteen had senior classes of more than thirty-five. As noted “If a line were drawn from Drogheda to Cork, excluding Cork and Drogheda but including Tipperary, thirty-eight of the schools with classes of more than thirty-five are west of that line. The survey was pretty representative: the county most badly represented was Donegal but there were returns from every county.”⁴¹ These difficulties continued over the next few years, so that by 1974-5, as seen from a survey conducted on Dublin schools (which might be expected to have larger class sizes than rural Ireland due to the population density), the average class size at intermediate level was 27, and at group certificate level 20.⁴² This was above the Departmental recommended teacher:pupil ratio of 1:20 for comprehensive and secondary schools. As noted though, the teachers accepted their situation, considering for the most part 30 pupils as the class norm, and any amount below that being acceptable.⁴³

⁴⁰ ASTI/*Official Programme*, 1960, pp 45-7.

⁴¹ ASTI C.E.C. Bulletin to Branches, No. 68 , July 1972; These figures referred to full time teachers drawing incremental salaries, and so do not account for part-time teachers, or unrecognised teachers.

⁴² McMahon, ‘A review of changes in the pattern of history teaching’, p. 91.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

The issues of class sizes, facilities, and the difference between specific types of schools in this regard are partially demonstrated by one particular example, seen in Fig 1.20⁴⁴, of a classroom at Newtown School, Waterford. This school, run by the Society of Friends, or Quakers, was a co-educational high fee-paying school.⁴⁵

Fig. 1.20:



This photo, taken 12 October 1944, can be read in a number of ways. Firstly, in terms of classroom layout, it highlights how each student had their own individual desk, and that classes remained relatively small (with only fourteen seats visible). This should be considered in relation to the average class size of around 30 for the country in general. Moreover, a number of maps and atlases⁴⁶ can be seen on the walls, which would point to Newtown being among those schools which the inspectorate commended in this regard.

While its attendance figures and use of maps may have differed from elsewhere, the photo also highlights a common aspect of secondary education in general, namely the structure of classrooms discussed earlier, whereby students were positioned in such a way as to receive

⁴⁴ NLI/ Poole Photographic Collection/POOLEWP 4468.

⁴⁵ While originally founded to educate the Quakers of the South of Ireland, from 1924, Newtown adopted a fully co-educational policy.

⁴⁶ The use of Maps and Atlases are discussed in further detail later in the chapter.

information from a dictating teacher at the head of the class. This leads to the issue of the ‘Grammar of Schooling.’

[Grammar of Schooling:](#)

To analyse the context of teaching it is important to look, not only at the provision of facilities and classrooms, but at the very structure of classrooms themselves. This is done by engaging with the theoretical framework of David Tyack and William Tobin, and their concept of the ‘grammar of schooling’. Briefly, this entailed the shape of classrooms, the organisation of timetables and classes, and the methods in which classes operated. The basic “grammar” of schooling remained remarkably stable over the decades covered by this study. This was understood in terms of “the regular structures and rules that organize the work of instruction...for example, standardized organizational practices in dividing time and space, classifying students and allocating them to classrooms, and splintering knowledge into "subjects."⁴⁷ As Tyack and Tobin explained, “At every level and subject...teachers have been expected to monitor and control students, assign tasks to them, and ensure that they accomplish them. This kind of batch processing has usually been teacher centred and textbook centred” especially in secondary schools.⁴⁸ In Ireland after Independence, these schools operated under the same ‘Grammar’ of schooling as had been the case under the British Board of Education. Classes were defined by year (equivalent to the ‘Standards’ as structured at primary school), and organised into specific ‘subjects’, with a set amount of study periods per subject per week. This organisation cohered for the most part with the American system of the Graded School and the ‘Carnegie Units’⁴⁹, though these terms were not specifically used in the Irish context.⁵⁰

This ‘grammar’ was predicated on the widespread acceptance of what ‘secondary’ education entailed and was so well established that it was typically taken for granted. The

⁴⁷ Tyack & Tobin, ‘The “Grammar” of Schooling’, p. 454.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 455.

⁴⁹ On the Carnegie Unit, see Ibid., pp 460–3.

⁵⁰ There was a slight difference in that while Irish schools did hold annual examinations which could affect a student’s progression from one ‘Year’ to the next, it was the Certificate examinations organised by the State which ultimately evaluated their academic ‘success’.

familiar matrix of schooling, Tyack and Tobin argued, persisted in part because “it enabled teachers to discharge their duties in a predictable fashion and to cope with the everyday tasks that school boards, principals, and parents expected them to perform: controlling student behaviour, instructing heterogeneous populations, or sorting people for future roles in school and later life.”⁵¹

This had ramifications in the Irish context (as elsewhere), in that it ensured a relatively consistent framework in which secondary education was conducted, which transcended any ideological implications of the new nation-state. Despite the change in programme and examinations after 1924 (and subsequent more modest reforms over the next four and a half decades), history education at secondary level remained under the same ‘Grammar’ as had been the case under the pre-Independence Board of Education,⁵² and continued to do so throughout the period under investigation. Despite some regional differences, the method for teaching subjects was relatively similar nationwide, as asserted by Mulcahy.⁵³ The type of curriculum organisation employed tended to “emphasise expository discourse and techniques of explanation...While the subject curriculum does allow for different kinds of teaching...it is also generally associated with a highly didactic and linguistic form of teaching in which the emphasis is upon ‘lectures’, questions and answers, and written exercises.”⁵⁴ This is reinforced by a school’s ‘Grammar’. As noted with regards to the new History programme introduced in the early 1970s: “despite the recommendation in the programme little real change seems to have occurred in the pattern of history teaching in Irish secondary schools – the methodology employed in many instances is still very traditional.”⁵⁵ This can best be described as a “highly didactic narrative-based pedagog[y].”⁵⁶

In terms of general education, this system of standardisation existed to enable the expansion of the system in uniform ways to meet the increase in student population; being easily

⁵¹ Tyack & Tobin, ‘The “Grammar” of Schooling’, p. 476.

⁵² This model had been critiqued in 1916 in Pearse, *The murder machine*.

⁵³ Mulcahy, *Curriculum and Policy*, p. 145.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ McMahon, ‘A review of changes in the pattern of history teaching’, p. 112.

⁵⁶ Arthur Chapman, ‘Make It Strange — History as an Enigma, not a Mirror’ in *Public History Weekly - The International Blogjournal*, 2017 (<https://public-history-weekly.degruyter.com/issues/>) (10 Nov. 2017).

replicable. Furthermore, equality in education was defined as the provision of all the features and procedures of a ‘real school.’ Thus parents could be reassured that their children were receiving a ‘proper education’.⁵⁷ This has been defined as the ‘Cultural Constructionist’ view, which argues that “the coherence of educational institutions results in large part from conformity of organizational forms with general public beliefs.”⁵⁸ Schools were still designed in the same way, classes still operated in the same fashion; a memorisation of facts and details, with teachers sitting at the top of the classroom, with rows of children staring up, transcribing his or her dictations.

Highlighting Lawrence Stenhouse’s differentiation between the intended Curriculum and the implemented curriculum,⁵⁹ the way that the programme was put into practice constrained any official ideological goal which may or may not have been attempted. The failure to change how classes operated, meant that change in programme often had little effect; (for example if history was seen as ‘dull’, ‘lifeless’ and boring,⁶⁰ then it mattered little if it were Irish or English or European history which was to be taught, the end result would be a failure to engage by the student.) This trend continued owing to a number of reasons, such as the large quantity of untrained teachers working, the pressures of an examination system which prioritised rote-learning, as well as the belief in the efficacy of this chalk and talk approach, especially during the 1920s.⁶¹

Teachers:

Throughout the period, because of the private nature of the schools, run by the religious orders, the majority of teachers were either Catholic Brothers, nuns, or teaching religious,⁶² though lay teachers made up a growing proportion of those involved in secondary education as

⁵⁷ Tyack & Tobin, ‘The “Grammar” of Schooling’, p. 477.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 456.

⁵⁹ Lawrence Stenhouse, *An introduction to curriculum research and development* (London, 1975), p. 2.

⁶⁰ *Report of the Department of Education, 1928-29* (Dublin, 1930), p. 91.

⁶¹ N.A.I./GAEL/An Gúm/G0008, ‘Preliminary Correspondence’, Letter 30 July 1924, Eamon Ó Donnchadha (Lecturer in UCC) to Seosamh Ó Néill, (Secretary of Roinn na Gaeilge (soon to be Department of Education); This didactic approach is discussed in greater detail later in the chapter.

⁶² This was a term used by Patrick Duffy for clergy/ members of the religious orders who taught in schools, and was used to differentiate them from lay teachers and from Religion teachers. See Duffy, *The lay teacher*.

the period progressed.⁶³ By 1962, the total number of teachers employed in recognised secondary schools was 5,630. Of this number, 3,129 were clergy, members of religious orders or of teaching communities.⁶⁴ Thus the general proportion of teachers religious to lay teachers can be seen. A number of significant issues remained, namely the fact that many teachers religious were unqualified to teach the subjects under their charge, as well as the issue of lay teachers being dismissed in favour of members of the religious orders. Furthermore, the private nature of secondary schools caused some consternation, especially in relation to debates over the status and salary scales of secondary school teachers. The fact that “every secondary teacher is in private employment” as noted by Professor William Magennis in 1924, was deemed to be “the creator of infinite difficulty.”⁶⁵

An awareness of the position of the teacher in society, and the conditions and status of secondary teachers at the beginning of the period are essential to understanding the constraints under which teaching occurred. The “scandalous position in which secondary teachers find themselves” in terms of remuneration and status was highlighted in the Dáil in 1924 where it was criticised how “they have practically no tenure. We know that they are wretchedly paid. We know that they do not know in a particular year what their income will be. We know they have no right to pension. The Minister knows that, the President has admitted it, and everybody knows it.”⁶⁶ This had been the case since the early twentieth century. The Dale and Stephens Report on Education, 1905,⁶⁷ discussed that due to the paltry salaries and poor working conditions “no Irish graduate, except in exceptional circumstances, will enter the teaching profession if any other career presents itself.”⁶⁸ MacNeill went further in 1911, arguing

In secondary education, reform and improvement are hopeless so long as teachers are the orphans of education. It is waste of time to discuss particular improvements...There is no money spent and

⁶³ See Appendix 6 for a detailed breakdown of employment figures for lay and religious teachers.

⁶⁴ *Dáil Eireann Debate*, 20 June 1962, Vol. 196 No. 4, cols. 643-4.

⁶⁵ *Dáil Debate*, Vol. 8, No.5, 4 July 1924, col. 524.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, cols. 510-12,

⁶⁷ For an overview of the Dale and Stephens Report, see Coolahan, *Irish Education*, pp 67–9.

⁶⁸ Reports of Messers F.H. Dale and T.A. Stephens, (H.M.S.O., 1905), p. 43

no time allowed for the preparation of secondary teachers who have to lay the foundations of university education and to handle the best brains of the country at the most critical period of their development.⁶⁹

While considering the ‘re-organisation of secondary education’, which would result in the founding of the Department of Education in 1924, the ASTI were worried that no specific guarantee was outlined which would “satisfy, by legislative or other means, the just claims of lay secondary teachers to adequate conditions of service embracing salaries, pensions, and security of tenure; that, without such provision, any attempted re-organisation of secondary education must be incomplete and unsatisfactory.”⁷⁰ While a new salary scheme was established in 1924, Coolahan argued that the Intermediate Education Act “did nothing to lay the foundations of a secondary teaching profession.”⁷¹ By 1927, MacNeill acknowledged how few could hope to profit in any considerable way from a career as a secondary teacher. The precarious nature of employment was something which he was acutely aware. Having completed his stint as Minister, and commenting upon the poor remuneration that they received, MacNeill discussed the need to improve the status of secondary teachers. As he noted,

The first and principal thing that I am prepared to do, rather in the *national interest* ...is to endeavour to restore in the mind of the people of Ireland, the national tradition of high honour and appreciation for the profession of teacher... [U]ntil we see a radical change in this regard...the material provision for the teaching profession will be on the most grudging basis.⁷²

MacNeill cannot be said to have been successful in this endeavour.

This ‘grudging basis’ was prevalent across Ireland. Secondary schools, and in the west especially, were “hard pressed to provide an education to meet increasing demands and changing

⁶⁹ UCDA/LA1/Q/347 – Articles by MacNeill on the teaching of history in Irish schools, Oct 1911 (6pp)
⁷⁰ ASTI/SC/6 Oct. 1923

⁷¹ John Coolahan, *The ASTI and post-primary education in Ireland, 1909-1984* (1984), p. 5. For a more recent engagement with the teachers’ union and post-primary education see Cunningham, *Unlikely Radicals*.

⁷² UCDA/LA1/H/132 (19) Eoin Mac Neill papers: Typescript response from MacNeill to a previous letter (not attached) from Thomas De Burc, Árd Rúnaithe , ASTI, 8 June 1927

needs.”⁷³ Unlike vocational schools which were entitled by law to benefit from local rates for funding, secondary education “had no increase in capitation grants for more than a quarter of a century after the State was founded and were severely pressed by the devaluation of money in the aftermath of World War II.”⁷⁴

The material condition of teachers was a major issue, and alongside the issue of security of tenure, constituted the single largest issue repeatedly broached by the ASTI.⁷⁵ In 1930-31, the Department of Education cut the rate of capitation grants by 10 percent, to avoid excessive annual increases. The increase in students attending schools led to an increase in expenditure of £17,000 from the previous year. As noted “Were such a growth to continue, expenditure would increase again in the year 1932-33 by £20,000.” This decision was announced to schools in December 1931.⁷⁶ The various teachers’ and Headmasters’/mistresses’ Associations made repeated demands of the Department over the following years to restore the cut. In 1939 for example, a letter was sent bearing the joint signatures of the A.S.T.I, C.H.A., and the H.A. to this effect.⁷⁷ The Department rejected such demands, citing “the necessity for economy in public expenditure” in the context of the Emergency.⁷⁸ The rate of capitation grants to secondary schools remained unchanged for over two decades, being cut again in 1957,⁷⁹ before being restored on 13 March 1959. This cemented the lowly status of secondary teachers at the time⁸⁰ and helps explain why in 1949 the *Irish Times* was able to run a story on how ‘Few graduates want to become teachers’.⁸¹

⁷³ Beggan, ‘Education in Clare-Connacht in the Nineteen Fifties’, p. 72. For more on the ‘hard-pressed’ nature of the West of Ireland in general at this time, see Úna Newell, *The West must wait: County Galway and the Irish Free State* (Manchester, 2015).

⁷⁴ Beggan, ‘Education in Clare-Connacht in the Nineteen Fifties’, p. 72.

⁷⁵ See ASTI/C.E.C. Reports, 1924-69. For an overview of the ASTI as a union see Cunningham, *Unlikely Radicals*.

⁷⁶ *Report of the Department of Education, 1930-31*, (Dublin, 1932), p. 34.

⁷⁷ ASTI/SC/16 March 1939.; 29 April 1939.

⁷⁸ ASTI/SC/27 Jan. 1940; In response, the ASTI issued a circular “to the C.H.A., the Schoolmaster’s Association, and the Christian Brothers expressing the Association’s regret at this decision.”

⁷⁹ Beggan, ‘Education in Clare-Connacht in the Nineteen Fifties’, p. 72. For more on the ‘hard-pressed’ nature of the West of Ireland in general at this time, see Newell, *The West must wait*.

⁸⁰ This was specifically cited as the reason for complaints by the Cork branch of the ASTI, regarding the reduced capitation grants. See ASTI/SC/31 May 1957.

⁸¹ *Irish Times*, 20 April 1949.

This was the concern of a Joint deputation of the ASTI, CHA, CCSS (represented at deputation by the CHA), ISA, Christian Brothers, Central Association of Schoolmistresses, and Irish Union of Assistant Mistresses, to the Minister for Education, on 26 February 1944. The Very Rev. W.J. Meagher, C.M., chairman noted how “it was imperative that their [teachers’] social status should be raised. From his experience, he never met a boy who would willingly choose Secondary Teaching as a profession... As Secondary Teachers had a great responsibility, the profession should be such as would attract the very best type; their social status should be the same as that of any other professional person in the country.”⁸²

The Emergency affected both Religious and lay teachers. By the end of 1944, conditions were such that the Department and several schools (notably certain Christian Brothers schools)⁸³ accepted the need to alter the rates of remuneration. The Department proposed new salary scales for teachers in December 1944, with a minimum basic salary of £200, with two differing rates of increments: between married men, and single men and women,⁸⁴ as well as two special increments of £25 to teachers possessing an Honours Degree.⁸⁵ These proposals were modest, and understandably so considering the context.

Despite these amendments, debate over salaries continued over the next decade. In November 1953, the ASTI Standing Committee issued a public statement in all three of the main Dublin newspapers⁸⁶ as a counter-response to statements “recently reported in the press...by a Headmaster at an annual prize distribution in a Dublin Secondary School” on this issue. “His first assertion- that Secondary teachers had been well treated in the matter of salary- can be challenged by every secondary teacher in Ireland. The salary of Secondary teacher is less than the salary paid

⁸² ASTI/ Official Programme of Annual Convention 1944, p. 16.

⁸³ ASTI/SC/28 April 1944 – Correspondence: “Acknowledgment from Superior of a C.B.s School, of A.S.T.I.’s request re salary increases, in which the writer points out that...the Superior was prepared to increase his teachers’ salaries at the end of the current school-year.”

⁸⁴ Married Men could receive twenty annual increments of £22.10, while women and single men were eligible for twenty annual increments of £15, (making a possible total of £450, or £300 per annum respectively)

⁸⁵ ASTI/C.E.C. Minutes/19 Dec. 1944.

⁸⁶ Irish Times, Irish Press, and the Irish Independent.

in other comparable professions. This is a fact of which all secondary teachers are only too keenly aware.” Moreover, the ASTI supported the ‘Headmasters of Secondary Schools’

in their just claim to increases in Capitation grants, which today are the same as those paid in 1924, but it condemns the unfair attitude of an Headmaster who would urge acceptance of the principle that the incremental salary of a secondary teacher should be penalised at the expense of increased capitation grants for the schools...A secondary teacher is entitled to an adequate salary because of his academic qualifications and because of the responsible and arduous nature of his work irrespective of the system under which he works.⁸⁷

Nor was the issue of teacher salaries solely an issue for lay teachers either. The vows of teachers religious to remain within their convocations and orders, alongside the vows of poverty taken meant that those sisters and brothers providing education for the majority of Irish girls and boys rarely received remuneration for their work.

Discussions over the need to increase teachers’ salaries in line with the increased cost of living were repeatedly stressed towards the end of the 1950s, through correspondence and deputations with the Department of Education. A further reduction in rates in 1957, added greatly to financial problems. In May 1958, the ASTI demanded an increase of 12.5 percent. This was rejected by the Department, as it would cost them an extra £230,000 per annum. A counter-offer of an increase equal to other members of civil servants (around 10 percent) was proposed as a final deal on their parts. This was in turn rejected by the ASTI who stated that whilst they understood the offer, to accept it as final “would entail the Teachers’ side abandoning for good a legitimate claim to an amount far in excess of that offered” which they were not prepared to do.⁸⁸

Though the capitation grants were restored to their previous position, and increased in 1964-65 under Minister Patrick Hillery,⁸⁹ that is not to say that the precarious position secondary teachers found themselves in was fully remedied. Both Protestant and Catholic schools were

⁸⁷ ASTI/SC/6 Nov. 1953.

⁸⁸ ASTI/SC/5 May 1958: These files were not available to the public, with a disclaimer written in the minute books that “The Information above is strictly confidential to members.”

⁸⁹ ASTI/SC/29 February 1964.

affected. In 1963 for example, an advisory Committee was set up by the Church of Ireland General Synod specifically to assess the “various aspects of the problem of recruitment of secondary teachers and their retention in the schools.”⁹⁰ Inadequate remuneration was central to this. It was not until the mid-1960s that any significant pay increase for secondary teachers was conceded, through an agreement between ASTI and school managers in 1964 for an increase of 12.5% in basic salary.

Teacher qualification:

A critical issue in terms of quality of teaching was teacher qualification. The lack of trained teachers for history was acknowledged as early as March 1926, when the ASTI Standing Committee asked the Department of Education to hold a course on History and Geography (for the Intermediate Certificate), similar to the provision of Science Courses already in place, to enable teachers to complete their qualifications;⁹¹ a request the Department rejected.⁹² Despite such contentions, the Department expressed satisfaction at the general growth and growing professionalization of secondary education. As they noted in 1928-29,

As the number of pupils in attendance at Secondary Schools has been increasing of late from year to year there has, in consequence, been a gradual increase in the number of teachers employed...

Owing to the operation of the Registration Council's Regulations, new entrants to the secondary teaching profession are fully qualified as regards academic and training qualifications, and it is satisfactory to note the large number of Honour graduates who choose this profession. This influx of trained graduates with a knowledge of modern educational methods is a very satisfactory feature of the present system.⁹³

This influx was in no way adequate to requirements however.

While many members of the religious communities did complete their undergraduate and postgraduate studies, those who did were not in the majority, especially in the opening decades

⁹⁰ ASTI/SC/ 26 Oct. 1963: The ASTI minutes discuss how this Advisory committee sought their views on the matter.

⁹¹ ASTI/SC/13 March 1926.

⁹² ASTI/SC/27 March 1926.

⁹³ *Report of the Department of Education, 1928-29*, p. 74.

of the period. For lay teachers however, as discussed by Patrick Duffy “training is the *sine qua non* for appointment...in all but the smallest schools.” Though speaking of primary level, his critique was representative of the overall atmosphere of education (with the caveat that there were differences between the respective levels of education). As he continued

A considerable proportion of the members of religious teaching Orders serving on the recognised staffs of their schools are untrained...The religious Orders find it impossible to staff their primary schools with their own members, as their numbers will not allow this. As a result 28% of the teachers serving in schools controlled by religious Orders are lay men or women. These lay men or women are practically all trained teachers and many of them are in addition University graduates...The best work in these schools is for the most part done by lay people, but the religious Orders get the credit for it.⁹⁴

The 1925-26-27 departmental report noted how some schools had difficulty in complying with the Departmental regulations that each school “employ a certain proportion of registered teachers” owing to a scarcity of teachers possessing the necessary qualifications. This scarcity applied more to teachers of boys’ schools than girls’ schools. Furthermore, “in both classes of schools the supply of teachers competent to give instruction through the medium of Irish has not been equal to the demand.”⁹⁵

When it came to teaching history, this was a crucial stumbling block. As the Department noted in 1927, “While the History course is an exceedingly interesting one, and should prove to be of great educational benefit to the schools, the difficulty at present is that it requires specialist teachers to do full justice to it, and unfortunately the number of specialists is not large.”⁹⁶ Similar to the status of Irish history in the Universities, the relatively recent development for teacher registration was a significant factor. Many teachers had been employed before such registration was required, while those new teachers who had come through the system were inexperienced. Considering also the difference in the former Intermediate Education Board system, to the new

⁹⁴ Duffy, *The lay teacher*, p. 127. Appendices

⁹⁵ *Report of the Department of Education 1925-26-27*, p. 53.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 64.

system, with its heavy classical and literary focus, teachers if trained at all, would have been trained in these subjects.⁹⁷ As history had not been an important school subject previously, it was unlikely that all history teachers would be particularly accomplished at the beginning of the new system.

The number of employed teachers who did not possess the necessary qualifications was a concern among the ASTI, all of whose members were fully registered. In 1931 they passed a resolution criticising the government for not doing enough in this regard. They insisted that “only a registered teacher should be appointed to a vacancy in the staff of a Secondary School caused by the resignation or transfer of a Registered teacher.”⁹⁸ This was rejected by the Department. By 1934-35, a total of 2,861 teachers were employed in Irish secondary schools, of whom, 1,513 were registered teachers. The proportion of registered to unregistered decreased for male teachers from the previous year, but increased in female teachers.

Registered (in %)	1933-34	1934-35
Men	56.5	54.8
Women	49.7	51.1
Total	52.8	52.9 ⁹⁹

In the Dáil debates on the Education estimates, 1931-32, Deputy Patrick J. Little voiced his disapproval of how secondary teachers were underpaid; unregistered teachers were encouraged and were “scabbing on the honourable people in the profession.”¹⁰⁰ While calls were made to frame regulation to prevent the employment of unregistered teachers, such efforts initially proved fruitless. As a 1937 official response noted

The Department agrees that it is undesirable for persons who do not possess the academic qualifications necessary for registration to take up secondary teaching as a profession and this view

⁹⁷ O'Donoghue, 'Dáil Commission', pp 68–9.

⁹⁸ ASTI/SC/1931.

⁹⁹ *Report of the Department of Education, 1934-35*, (Dublin, 1936).

¹⁰⁰ *Dáil Debate*, Vol. 38 No. 16, 27 May 1931, Cols. 1846-7.

has been expressed more than once recently in the Department's Annual Reports¹⁰¹ but it is not possible...to make a definite regulation on the matter.¹⁰²

The union's concerns were underlined in their approval of a 1937 letter from Dr. J.C. Flood (on behalf of the N.U.I. Appointments Committee) to the Minister for Education, which stressed the need for the Minister to legislate so "that in the future every person entering secondary teaching should at least possess a University degree."¹⁰³ That it was necessary to stress even this minimum requirement testifies to the amount of secondary teachers who were without appropriate qualifications.

The demand that only qualified teachers be allowed teach the department's programme was reiterated (repeatedly) by the ASTI in 1938.¹⁰⁴ The recurring nature of this complaint in the Convention resolutions and their framing in such categorical terms demonstrates how little progress was being made. Moreover, no regulation existed which banned non-trained persons from teaching. The failure to develop such regulations was seen to lower the status of the profession.¹⁰⁵

The above principle was re-affirmed annually by the ASTI throughout the 1930s. One resolution in 1938 called for a letter (signed by the ASTI President and General Secretary) to be sent to the major Irish newspapers, in an effort to publicise "the injustice to teachers and pupils involved by permitting unqualified persons to teach."¹⁰⁶ This issue was addressed at a deputation between the ASTI executive council and Eamon De Valera, Seosamh Ó Néill, Mr McGwynn (Higher Executive Officer), and the Minister's Secretary, held on 18 January 1940. Included in their discussion, alongside salary issues, and a cost of living bonus during the war, was "(8) Minimum qualifications for Secondary Teachers". "Such employment" it was argued "was prompted by the desire for cheap labour – a procedure not allowed in other professions." The

¹⁰¹ See Report 1932-33, p. 61, and Report, 1933-34, p. 55.

¹⁰² ASTI/OP/1937, pp 16-17: CEC report – dealing with 1936 resolutions

¹⁰³ ASTI/SC/9 Oct. 1937.

¹⁰⁴ ASTI/OP/1938, p. 13 – Resolutions No.21, 31, 32,33,34, - almost exactly the same, with only slight variation of wording or scope.

¹⁰⁵ ASTI/OP/1939, p. 41.

¹⁰⁶ ASTI/SC/29 Oct. 1938.

ASTI expressed their aspirations that such practices could be eliminated in five to ten years. In response, de Valera adverted to the fact that “State interest in secondary schools is slight and that such grievances would best be set right by negotiations between headmasters and Teachers” though he continued that “if a crying grievance did exist he would look into it.”¹⁰⁷

While De Valera initially viewed the role of the Minister in this regard as minimal, a considerable change occurred within two years. Minister Derrig (as reported by Ó Néill on his behalf) expressed concern that concurrent with the growth of secondary education, “there has been a substantial increase in the number of new teachers who apparently do not possess the requisite qualifications for admission to the Register of Secondary teachers and that there has been no appreciable improvement in the proportion of registered to unregistered teachers in these schools.”¹⁰⁸ This concern reflected the statistics.

Fig 1.21. Number of Teachers Employed/Percentage of registered & Unregistered Teachers:¹⁰⁹

Year		Registered	Unregistered
1930/31	Men	730 (59.0%)	507
	Women	761 (49.7%)	645
	Total	1,491 (56.4%)	1,152
1933/34	Men	739 (56.5%)	570
	Women	741 (49.7%)	751
	Total	1,480 (52.8%)	1,321
1936/37	Men	806 (56.9%)	611
	Women	786 (51.3%)	745
	Total	1,592 (54 %)	1,356
1939/40	Men	910 (59.9%)	610
	Women	832 (51.2%)	792
	Total	1,742 (55.4%)	1,402

¹⁰⁷ ASTI/OP/1940 – C.E.C. Report, p. 26

¹⁰⁸ ASTI/OP/1942 – C.E.C. Report, pp 23-5.

¹⁰⁹ Statistics compiled from *Ibid.*, pp 24-5.

In light of these, the Minister deemed it desirable “in the educational interest of the pupils that certain conditions in the matter of basic educational attainments would be laid down for Secondary Teachers.” Minimum academic qualifications (both ‘general’ and ‘particular’) were officially prescribed “for future entrants to the profession of Secondary teachers”, to apply to all lay teachers appointed in Secondary Schools “on or after 1 August 1942, and in the case of members of Communities...to those appointed for the first time on or after 1 August 1945”. All teachers¹¹⁰ were to hold as a minimum qualification, a Pass Degree of a recognised University. Furthermore, every teacher was to have passed in the particular subject or subjects at their Degree examination, or failing this, to hold a certificate or diploma in the particular subject or subjects and obtain a pass at a later examination prescribed by the Department.¹¹¹ The new conditions were to apply only to new teachers. As such those teachers already in employment would be exempt. Extra time was to be given to teachers religious to reach the requirements, though not a total exemption.

The amount of unqualified teachers continued to increase despite official reports that “the number of teachers without appropriate academic qualifications appointed to secondary schools during the past few years is relatively very small.”¹¹² This rise was among the chief points raised by the ASTI with Minister Derrig on 6 November 1944. Their representatives

deplored a system which could tolerate employment of so many unqualified teachers –usurping the position of registered and registrable graduates- and urged the Minister to put into force the proposed regulations governing the qualifications of Secondary Teachers, which had been issued by the Department some two or three years previously.

Their representatives “expressed disapproval of the Department’s attitude in shelving the whole question, through deference to representations made by other associations.” The

¹¹⁰ That was, all who taught for more than four hours per week, and all bar teachers of science Group, Drawing, Manual Instruction, Domestic Economy and Music.

¹¹¹ ASTI/Official Programme...1942 – C.E.C. Report, p 26; Members of Religious Communities were to be granted to Special exemption to (3) “where insistence on its requirements would cause undue hardship. There was also a condition that Irish teachers were required to spend a month at least in the Gaeltacht, to improve their language skills.

¹¹² Report of the Department of Education, 1943-44 (Dublin, 1945), p. 28.

Department was complicit in allowing the situation to carry on, because other groups were in favour of it, for instance, Catholic Headmistresses and Headmasters who would save money by hiring unqualified members of the religious orders. The official response considered the issue in the following ways. First, the inspectorate were to carefully scrutinise the qualifications of new entrants to secondary teaching, while some unqualified teachers were removed from their positions. They noted however, that others, who were unqualified but who had long teaching service “could not be roughly dealt with”. The employment of scholastics was seen as a serious cause for concern.¹¹³ Finally, the Department stated that it was unwilling to impose rigid restrictions without giving due notice, though their proposals “for the raising and maintenance of the academic qualifications of Secondary teachers was not being lost sight of.”¹¹⁴

Despite apprehensions over politicising the issue, the ASTI decided in March 1942 that “by exposing the fact that a large number of secondary teachers not only did not possess the minimum qualifications for registration, that 870 out of 3144 held no degrees, pressure might be brought to bear on the Minister for Education to make him realise that a reform was overdue.”¹¹⁵ This was broached again at the Annual Convention in 1944.¹¹⁶ By 1944-45, there were 3,497 teachers employed in secondary schools, an increase of 111 since the previous year.¹¹⁷ Of these 2,400 were in full-time employment, “about 77% are registered, a further 8% hold the necessary academic qualifications for registration...and [an] additional 5% hold a University Degree but not a teaching diploma.”¹¹⁸ This increasing professionalization of secondary school teaching supports official claims in 1945-46, that history teaching was gradually improving due to the increase in young teachers working who had subject-specific qualifications.¹¹⁹

¹¹³ Scholastics were members of a religious order (especially Jesuits) who were between the novitiate and the priesthood.

¹¹⁴ ASTI/ Official Programme... 1945 – C.E.C. Report, p. 22.

¹¹⁵ ASTI/SC/21 March 1942.

¹¹⁶ ASTI/Official Programme... 25 May 1944: Discussing the Annual Convention resolutions.

¹¹⁷ *Report of the Department of Education, 1943-44* (Dublin, 1945), p. 27; in 1943-44, there were 3,386 teachers in total, of whom 1,966 registered.

¹¹⁸ *Report of the Department of Education, 1944-45* (Dublin, 1946) p. 30.

¹¹⁹ *Report of the Department of Education, 1945-46* (Dublin, 1947) p. 28; “Tá feabhas áiridh ag teacht ar

By 1946, the C.E.C. were asking “for a definite date to be fixed in which, after that, none but those with the minimum qualifications should be allowed to teach in secondary schools...the regulation to apply to lay and religious teachers alike.”¹²⁰ Furthermore, the Minister’s attention was directed to the decrease in the supply of lay secondary teachers, due to emigration, as well as “the tendency, for motives of economy on the part of superiors to employ unqualified teachers, which tendency probably would be alarmingly widespread due to the emigration of graduates unless definite regulations were put into force.” This latter issue was rejected by the Minister who contended that “in the matter of employing unqualified teachers, lay heads of schools were the worst offenders, and that the problem was one of special difficulty in the case of religious teachers.”¹²¹

Considerations of this sort aside, these regulations were never strictly enforced. By December 1948, (with a new Inter-Party Government in place) it was noted by an ASTI Deputation to Minister for Education, Richard Mulcahy¹²² that “While expressing satisfaction that the number of unqualified teachers appeared to be on the decline, our representatives urged the Minister to ensure by enforcing special regulations, that no unqualified teachers be allowed to enter the secondary teaching profession.” The A.S.T.I. urged the introduction of a similar scheme to that which had been proposed by a former Minister for Education, but never adopted, whereby “after a specified date qualified teachers only...would be employed in secondary schools.” The Minister summarised the ASTI’s position as follows: “The A.S.T.I. wanted (a) the position of secondary teachers to be defined and definite; (b) teachers in secondary schools to be (1) qualified in a general way (2) specialists. He stated that he would like both principles accepted, but that he could not look into the problem [at present]”.¹²³ Similar to Minister Derrig, Mulcahy believed it “unwise to provoke the opposition by adopting the A.S.T.I. suggestion, and that it would be better to leave matters as they were” especially in view of “the effect of such regulations

mhúineadh na Staire i gcómhnaí, de bhrí gur mó an méid múinteoirí óga atá ann anois ná mar a bhíodh a bhfuil cálíocht acu ins an ábhar sin.”

¹²⁰ ASTI/OP/1946, - C.E.C. Report p. 28.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² ASTI/OP/1949, - C.E.C. Report, p. 45.

¹²³ Ibid, pp 43-8.

on Religious Orders.” Mulcahy was of the opinion that improvement could be brought about, not by enforcing new laws and regulations, but by closer and more efficient inspection. While the overall piece demonstrates the power of the Religious Communities, the latter point furthers the argument that the system was not necessarily static despite no new laws implemented or direct acts being passed.

Dismissals:

A different though connected issue emerged regarding teacher qualifications, namely the issue of employment, and the dismissal of qualified lay teachers for members of the religious communities. This was an issue during the 1920s and 1930s, but was increasingly important as the period progressed. Through the 1940s and 1950s, while more and more teachers were becoming qualified, the churches were dominant, making lay employment difficult.

It was initially stated by the ASTI in 1924, that what was at issue was not the employment of religious over lay staff, but rather the employment of “non bona fide teachers”, that is those without adequate qualifications.¹²⁴ This was only partially true. The fear that “there will be considerable reductions in the lay secondary staff of the Christian Brothers” following their being recognised by the State for the first time was voiced at the annual Convention in 1925.¹²⁵ The lack of tenure security for lay teachers was compounded by the fact that the Department of Education viewed it as beyond its remit to interfere in such instances. As highlighted at a deputation with acting Minister Eamon De Valera in February 1940, “this was a matter solely for Employers and the Teachers themselves, and that the State would not interfere in matters of this nature...this had been the consistent attitude of all Ministers for Education.”¹²⁶ This was especially pertinent during the Emergency, when an unwelcome trend emerged, against which the ASTI lobbied the Bishops, where due to the drop in attendance, a number of teachers (usually lay) were being dismissed.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ ASTI/97/47, ‘Annual Convention Minute Books, 1923-41’, ‘Second Annual Convention, 22 April 1924’- C.E.C. Report Par.s 9-10.

¹²⁵ ASTI/Annual Convention 1925., C.E.C. Report- Par.VII.

¹²⁶ ASTI/C.E.C./17 Feb. 1940.

¹²⁷ ASTI/C.E.C./23 June 1942.

The unfair dismissal of qualified lay teachers for unqualified teachers religious was condemned not only by ASTI but by religious leaders as well. In December 1934, the ASTI C.E.C. passed a motion “that in view of the disapproval by the Provincial Authorities of the action of the local superior of the Christian Brothers School in Limerick in unjustly dismissing a lay teacher, we...are strongly of [the] opinion that in future it be made impossible for such injustice to a lay teacher to occur.”¹²⁸ This matter periodically came to the fore with the teachers’ unions. In 1953, a resolution was passed at the ASTI convention, recording the association’s “concern at the frequent replacement of lay teachers by religious in many Secondary Schools in recent years.”¹²⁹ This was followed soon after by a dismissal case of a History teacher later that year, which was brought to the Association’s attention. As described

A young married teacher appointed to a presumably permanent position in September ’51 as teacher of History and Latin, had been given written notice August ’53 that his services would no longer be required after July ’54, when a Religious not qualifying as History Master would replace him. The Teacher following a last-minute decision, requested the Association to take no action on his behalf.¹³⁰

This example both underlined the power of the religious orders, and supported Duffy’s claims that “the present Catholic educational pattern in Ireland gives a heavy preponderance in teaching opportunities to priests, brothers, and sisters, thus making lay participation in the process of Catholic Education difficult.”¹³¹ Lay teachers who managed to secure positions were often treated as “second-class teachers.”¹³² It also highlights one of the central issues impinging on secondary teaching; that the official process of teacher formation often counted for little in terms of employment, which was in the hands of the Churches, who tended to employ their own first. History teaching positions were, like most subjects, predominantly occupied by members of the religious communities, regardless of their qualifications

¹²⁸ ASTI/C.E.C./7 Dec. 1934.

¹²⁹ ASTI/OP/1953, p. 15.

¹³⁰ ASTI/SC/ 25 Sept. 1953; The words “expressed great dis-satisfaction with the teacher’s inaction but” were crossed out in pen, after the words ‘Standing Committee’ in the final sentence.

¹³¹ Duffy, *The lay teacher*, p. xiii.

¹³² John Cunningham, *St Jarlath’s College Tuam, 1800-2000* (Tuam, Co. Galway, 1999), pp 196–7.

The overall position of secondary teachers was summed up as follows by historian John Cunningham:

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the most widely held grievances among secondary teachers were job security, inadequate pay, lack of pensions, the absence of professional entry standards, low status, unfair competition for positions from religious and from ‘birds of passage’, poor promotion prospects, pay discrimination against female teachers, lack of consultation on educational matters, an over-competitive and grinding public examination system, and the marginal position of secondary education itself... By 1960...there had been improvements under most of these headings...¹³³

But while these may have been the critical issues faced by the profession at large, there were several additional concerns which directly affected the teaching of history.

‘Good’ History teaching:

Having considered the practical issues which effected secondary history teachers in general, it is necessary to discuss both the ideal of what good history teaching entailed, as well as the context in which teachers taught. When it came to ‘good teaching’ certain principles remained consistent throughout the period. In the late 1920s, these were defined as a history teacher’s ability “to draw generalisations and analyse facts, to give the class his judgment on events and on those who played an important part in these events, to explain the connection between causes and results, to stimulate and rouse the interest of the pupils, to add life to what is otherwise dead matter, to supply the illustrative and ornamental detail, without which the subject loses all its interest and value.”¹³⁴

Central to rousing a pupil’s interest in the subject, was the need for teachers to be passionate about the subject, as “unless there is a love of teaching it, it [history] cannot be taught.”¹³⁵ In the early decades of the twentieth century, this was seen as more important even

¹³³ Cunningham, *Unlikely Radicals*, p. 110.

¹³⁴ *Report of the Department of Education, 1925-26-27*, p. 64.

¹³⁵ UCD/LA1/Q/347 – Articles by MacNeill on the teaching of history in Irish schools, Oct. 1911.

than being adequately trained in the subject, while history was connected with the development of nationality. As noted by Eoin MacNeill in 1911,

Proper teaching...has certain essentials. The teacher must love his subject. It is more important for him to love it than to have a great knowledge of it. He must be inspired by a high motive in the teaching of it...He must have the power of imparting not only knowledge but inspiration and love of the knowledge that is acquired. This is precisely what gives it great value to the teaching of the national history. The motive is...to make the learner a better man of his nation and to make the nation better; and by intensifying the national feeling to raise the nation above the level of mere existence, to give it memory and will and intelligence and a moral sense, in other words a soul, So that it may best do what it can for the benefit of mankind.”¹³⁶

This importance of a teacher’s interest was reiterated by MacNeill in 1937, who contended that history cannot “be taught at all by teachers who are not themselves interested in it, for plainly there is nothing gained if the interest of the learner is not awakened and stimulated.”¹³⁷

This understanding altered somewhat in later decades, due to the gradual development of secondary teacher training, and the promotion of Irish history courses at University (discussed in the following chapter). It was believed that through this, the teacher’s interest in their subject would be more evident, which would in turn increasingly benefit the students under their charge. In the early 1960s, greater degree level education was promoted; “if the graduate took in his Degree the subjects in which he was most interested it would be normal to expect him to prefer to teach these subjects...those entering the teaching profession should be masters of their subjects in so far as possible.”¹³⁸

The Department of Education in 1957-58 defined a good history teacher as one who, having sufficient time to teach, has “enough information and a lot of experience” to effectively

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ UCDA/LA1/K/19 (pp.3-4)– (n.d., but from internal records, it would seem to be from March 1937) Draft manuscript from MacNeill to the Chancellor of the National University, on the proposal to create a chair for folklore studies in the university, and the concurrent need to raise the status of Irish history and traditions in the schools.

¹³⁸ All references to the debate were (unless otherwise stated) from *ASTI C.E.C. Bulletins to Branches*, No. 59, July 1963: Res. 16, pp 5-6.

assess the breadth of their learning and guide the development of their students in this regard.¹³⁹

To teach the courses effectively a teacher was expected to be well-read, in order to “supplement the text books used by the student, since a student may know his text book by heart and yet have little real knowledge of the period he is studying.”¹⁴⁰

History teaching was also defined on a more practical level, in accordance with the increasing importance of the Certificate examinations to guiding classroom practice. It was specified by the late 1950s that as well as stoking interest and getting students to consider the developments of history, one purpose was the development of critical faculties and skills, such as the ability to argue in a logical and structured manner. Classroom debate on historical topics was seen as one way to sharpen focus and clarify thought. As the reports of 1961-62 noted “It is a rather onerous task to train and accustom pupils to set forth their knowledge of history in orderly sequence, in speech and in writing, and many teachers discharge this important responsibility very competently indeed.”¹⁴¹ This was discussed again the following year, where “practice in setting out their points logically and succinctly” was acknowledged as being of “great value...to history pupils. Class discussion of historical topics is another road to clearer thinking.”¹⁴² This objective was reinforced in 1963-64 when it was lamented how “Many of the candidates for the Certificate Examinations, although well-informed, seem unable to present their answers clearly and in logical order.”¹⁴³

In terms of power dynamics, and in line with their English counterparts, the history teacher’s role for most of this period was “didactively active; it was to give pupils the facts of historical knowledge and to ensure, through repeated short tests, that they had learned them. The pupil’s role was passive; history was a ‘received subject’. The body of knowledge to be taught

¹³⁹ *Report of the Department of Education, 1957-58*, p. 15; “Toisc a leithne d’ábhar é an Stair, ní mór d’oidí a bhfuil d’am acu chun a theagasc agus a bhfuil de chumas chun a fhoghlama ina gcuid daltaí a bhreithniú rompu go géar ionas go ndéanfaidís dáíliú dá réir. Ní beag d’eolas agus is mór de thaithí na hoibre is gá chun dea-bhreithiúntais chuige sin.”

¹⁴⁰ *Report of the Department of Education, 1925-26-27*, p. 64.

¹⁴¹ *Report of the Department of Education, 1961-62*, pp 54-5 (translated from Irish on pp 13-14).

¹⁴² *Report of the Department of Education, 1962-63*, p. 57, translation of p. 15.

¹⁴³ *Report of the Department of Education, 1963-64*, p. 58.

was also clearly defined.”¹⁴⁴ This appraisal of the position of student and teacher was upheld by the Inspectorate reports. In 1945-46, these stressed the “age old problem that school learning has faced for many a year, that is, the shyness and disheartened nature of the students...”¹⁴⁵ This is important as it shows the prevailing attitude among school children during this and the preceding period; a tendency towards inhibition in an authoritarian system.

This was not overly surprising considering the methods of teaching noted in many subjects, most notably history, in which quiet reading, and memorisation without discussion was rampant (despite repeated criticism by the Department against this practice.) Furthermore, the use of corporal punishment and violence against children,¹⁴⁶ though considerably more devastating at primary and industrial school level, would undoubtedly result in children being more inclined to resist answering rather than being found to be wrong. This demonstrates how the curriculum was not designed to empower the student toward self-actualisation.¹⁴⁷ It leaned instead towards the more didactic, lecture approach, which treated students as receivers of information, rather than the co-creators of historical thought and knowledge. Children, according to Conor Cruise O’Brien were “discouraged from asking questions...discouraged sometimes by the slap...for being too inconveniently bright and asking the wrong questions.”¹⁴⁸ By the mid-1970s, it was still acknowledged, despite official recommendations to the contrary, that the pattern of history

¹⁴⁴ Sylvester, ‘Change and Continuity in History Teaching, 1900-1993’, p. 9.

¹⁴⁵ *Report of the Department of Education, 1946-47* (Dublin, 1948), p. 13; “An seanlocht atá ar oiliúnt scoile sa tir seo le fada an lá, mar atá, beag-uchtach agus cúthailte na ndaltaí scoile agus neamhfhonn bheith orthu. I gcionn foráin, ní miste a rá nach bhfuil ní ar bith is mó a chuir feabhas ar an scéal sin ná teagasc na Gaeilge” ->says nothing improved this more than the emphasis in class on speaking the Irish language.

¹⁴⁶ On discussions of religious orders and issues of child abuse see Sarah-Anne Buckley, *The cruelty man: child welfare, the NSPCC and the State in Ireland, 1889-1956* (Manchester, 2013). See also, Dáil debates about abuse, as well as students accounts in O’Donoghue & Harford, *Secondary School Education in Ireland: History, Memories And Life Stories, 1922-1967*.

¹⁴⁷ As outlined by O’Donoghue “Carl Rogers (1969), a major exponent of this position, argued that teachers should provide a non-threatening environment in the school and the classroom and also engage in activities to help the student to become a fully functioning person. This involves: •creating a climate of trust and openness in which self-direction can occur; • being non-judgemental; and conveying respect for students.” See O’Donoghue, *Understanding contemporary education*, p. 89.

¹⁴⁸ *Dáil Éireann Debates*, Vol. 259 No. 2, 23 Feb. 1972, col. 278- Conor Cruise O’Brien.

teaching in Irish secondary schools remained consistent, where a ‘traditional’ methodology continued to be employed.¹⁴⁹

History teachers are “responsible for implementing the history curriculum and the quality of their teaching will determine the quality of pupils’ learning. Without commitment and enthusiasm from history teachers, the subject can be killed stone dead.”¹⁵⁰ Their understanding of the material is different from that of their students, based on experience and development. As one educationalist acknowledged “The sense they [teachers] have is the sense of someone who has completed a very long journey, which has involved not just school learning but also a wide range of maturational experiences.”¹⁵¹ However, their role in transmitting the lessons of history to the next generation was pivotal. In the Irish context, the importance of the history teacher was articulated in a 1973 study as follows:

There is need for materials and their sequencing into a syllabus. Neither the materials nor the syllabus is as important as the teacher who uses them. ... The teacher [is placed] in a professional role as a person who interprets the materials and uses them to their best advantage with the student he teaches. There should always be enough leeway for the teacher to adapt the course to the particular needs of the students and to be spontaneous and creative in the classroom situation...¹⁵²

This reflected the findings of John Heywood and Seán O’Connor, whose study of Leaving Certificate History in the late 1960s and early 1970s, recognised the importance of teachers in a more progressive fashion; not just as technicians to implement the curriculum, but as having an active role in shaping it, by their authority in the classroom.¹⁵³

Due to the persistent problem whereby students did not avail of the full four years to complete the course, the enthusiasm which students were said to have had for the subject

¹⁴⁹ McMahon, ‘A review of changes in the pattern of history teaching’, p. 112.

¹⁵⁰ Hilary Bourdillon (ed.), *Teaching History* (London, 1993), p. 2.

¹⁵¹ Fines, ‘Making Sense Out of the Content of the History Curriculum’, p. 104.

¹⁵² A. Trant, J.A. Crooks and B.L. Powell, ‘Curriculum Development in Action’ in *Oideas*, no. 11 (1973), p. 38. : This study specifically referred to a pilot project in teaching the Humanities, which included around 1,000 students, 35 teachers, and 4 schools, at second level, which was undertaken in the academic year 1972/73. The core subjects of this scheme were History, Geography, English and Civics.

¹⁵³ Heywood & O’Connor, S.J., *The multiple objective examining of school subjects with special reference to history*, p. 176.

ultimately proved fruitless for many. In 1957-58, it was reported how the course became crammed, texts became over-relied upon, and the understanding and benefit of the subject for the student was diminished. Consequently, students in such a position “are rarely allowed to master the subject that they are memorising from textbooks,” to the extent that the function of the teacher was seen as more “maoirseoireacht ná múinteoiracht”, more supervisory than teaching.¹⁵⁴ This reflected the Northern context as well during this period.¹⁵⁵

Moreover, the difference in quality of History teachers in Ireland reflects international scholarship on the issue. As a 1975 British study entitled *The Teaching of History in Secondary Schools* noted “We often pay attention to differing skills and abilities among pupils; less frequently, among teachers...What is brilliantly successful in one pair of hands can, in otherwise identical circumstances, be a dismal failure in others.”¹⁵⁶ In certain schools history was being made an enjoyable, living and breathing subject for the pupils, whereas elsewhere it was reduced down to a lesson in memorisation.¹⁵⁷ There was an awareness in the 1940s that many teachers were satisfied that having their pupils commit antiquated and out-dated textbooks to memory was adequate to teaching their subject. This was specifically cited, for instance, as occurring at Intermediate level in Mountjoy School Dublin.¹⁵⁸ Teachers, according to the Department were “still too taken with given abstracts and notes on the history to be simply memorised, and this tradition benefits true education very little indeed.”¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁴ *Report of the Department of Education, 1957-58*, p. 15.

¹⁵⁵ *Manchester Guardian*, 1 Sept 1927, ‘History teaching in Ulster: Battle of the Boyne Retold’.

¹⁵⁶ Incorporated Association of Assistant Masters in Secondary Schools (ed.), *The teaching of history in secondary schools* (4th ed, Cambridge, 1975). See also Stanley Kleiman, ‘Review of The Teaching of History in Secondary Schools’ in *The History Teacher*, x, no. 3 (1977), p. 486.

¹⁵⁷ *Report of the Department of Education, 1944-45*, p. 26 ; “Cuid den mhúinteoiracht sé an t-aoibhneas ceart ag na páistí é, ó tharla idir míniú is chómhrá is tuairimí ann, sa tslí go ndéantar rud beo den ábhar. Ní mar sin a bhíos I gcásanna eile, áit a gcleachtann an múinteoir oiread seo a thabhairt do na páistí le n-a foghlaim gach oíche, agus gan ar súil sa rang mórán ach féachaint ar chuir na páistí a gcuid píosaí de għlan-mheabhair.”

¹⁵⁸ ‘Recollections of Victor Armstrong’, Survey submitted 03 Feb 2016. Armstrong specifically cited the text used as being that of James Carty, as well as naming the teacher, a Mr. Charlie Sutton.

¹⁵⁹ *Report of the Department of Education, 1943-44*, p. 25; “Táthar [na múinteoirí] ró-thugħha fós do bheith ag tabhairt ar na daltaí píosaí agus nóta ar an stair a fhogħluim de għlan-mheabhair agus gur beag ar fad an tairbhe an nös sin ó thaobb an fhior-oideachas de.”

This echoes Philip O'Leary's argument with regards to the use of narrative and fiction to make history 'real' (which itself echoes Hayden White and the Literary Turn in historiography).

Quoting a 'United Ireland' article from 1934, O'Leary contended

The bare, cold facts of history are not much help to us to imagine for ourselves the ancient adventures as they looked long ago to the people who took part in them or who saw them or who heard them talked about soon after they happened. The novelist comes and puts flesh to the skeleton. He breathes life into it, and he makes it possible for us to live the whole story as if we were alive as it happened.¹⁶⁰

The same could be argued as to the importance of the teacher. Gerard Hannan's fictionalised account of 1940s Limerick reflected the reality that the facts of history only come to life following a teacher's exposition to their students. As noted

The boys were interested in the story because Maloney told it with great passion and enthusiasm...
As you listened to Maloney speak you believed that he was there for the signing of the Treaty of Limerick, was instrumental in the wording of the 1922 Constitution and was personally responsible for the writing of every great Irish rebel song ever sung.¹⁶¹

However, if history in schools was confined to the memorisation of passages without this step, then it would remain, for many if not most, an arid lifeless pursuit, lacking the vibrancy which it could potentially offer.

In a 1967 investigation into history teaching and textbooks, the Council of Europe more cautiously concluded that,

The teacher must be able to give accurate information and clearly defined terms, to present controversial issues objectively and be careful that the words and phrases he uses in his lecturing do not develop prejudice and misunderstanding in the minds of his pupils.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ 'United Ireland', 29 Sept. 1934, cited in O'Leary, *Gaelic prose*, p. 252. Translated from Irish by O'Leary.

¹⁶¹ Gerard Hannan, *Ashes*, (Limerick, 1997) pp 33-4.

¹⁶² O. Schuddekopf, History Teaching and History Text Book Revision, (Strassbourg, 1967), p.183

Internationally, Cole points out the limitations of reliance on textbooks as “the textbook, revised or not, is only as important as the degree to which it is used by the teacher.”¹⁶³ This sentiment echoed statements made by Minister Hillery in the mid-1960s.¹⁶⁴ It was also in line with the perspective of Auchmuty: “The teacher must always be prepared to supplement or elaborate the material in the textbook, for although the latter is essential, it is the teacher who must clothe the dry bones of fact with the living substance of historical interpretation.”¹⁶⁵

Intermediate vs Leaving Certificate History:

When it came to teaching history at secondary school (with Irish history as a component part of this), there was a notable difference between the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate levels. The varying ability of teachers at Intermediate level was discussed annually in departmental reports during the 1920s.¹⁶⁶ While in some schools “an excellent training is given by teachers who have read widely in the subject and are able to treat it in a broad and comprehensive style;...in other schools the teachers do not deal satisfactorily with the great movements of the period, and do not link them up with one another, but follow the text-book slavishly without setting forth the rational sequence of historical development.”¹⁶⁷ This was specifically connected with their inexperience, and lack of training, as “a course as extensive as that of the Intermediate Certificate cannot be handled except by a specialist.”¹⁶⁸

The Inspectorate reports between the 1920s and late-1960s shed light on a noticeable divide between history teaching at Intermediate and Leaving Certificate level. There were three reasons for this; teacher qualification, course design, and course cramming. First, unregistered and unqualified teachers were more likely to be employed at the lower level. As the 1948 report highlights:

¹⁶³ Elizabeth A. Cole, ‘Reconciliation and History Education’, in Cole (ed.), *Teaching the violent past*, p. 17.

¹⁶⁴ *Dáil Éireann Debate*, Vol. 210 No. 3, 2 June 1964. Dr Hillery., Cols. 362-3; “In the long run, it is the attitude of the teacher that most affects the child's mind and not the actual textbook.”

¹⁶⁵ Auchmuty, *The teaching of history*, p. 10.

¹⁶⁶ *Report of the Department of Education, 1927-28*, (Dublin, 1929), pp 57-8.

¹⁶⁷ *Report of the Department of Education, 1928-29*, p. 91.

¹⁶⁸ *Report of the Department of Education, 1929-30*, (Dublin, 1931), pp 72-3.

The majority of history teaching in the lower classes (*I.C. course) is not up to scratch at all. It is often that teachers who do not themselves possess an abundance of knowledge concerning the subject are in charge of the lower classes and their understanding of teaching history is putting basic textbooks into the students' hands and instructing them to learn sections from them off-by-heart, and to question them on this later on. It is often that the teaching does not go beyond this.¹⁶⁹

As for Leaving Certificate level, the inspectorate considered "the general standard in History attained by candidates... [to be] much more satisfactory than that in the Intermediate Certificate, and the work done in most of the schools in the higher classes is, on the whole, of a praiseworthy type."¹⁷⁰

Second, the nature of the courses themselves led to a disparity in teaching standards, with the Intermediate course being a general overview of Irish history, while Leaving Certificate focussed on 'special periods', and was better received by students. In 1927-28, it was explained how "Students find special periods easier to master, and as their minds are more mature, when they are in the senior classes they are better able to deal with historical problems and to trace the connection between cause and effect."¹⁷¹ This was specifically repeated in 1928-29 and 1929-30. The Department indicated in 1928-29 that, especially in the earlier years, Irish history was not as well taught as the 'Revolutionary Epoch' in France or the Classical World as "the teachers have not as a rule the same thorough acquaintance with the periods, and have not the same opportunity of mastering them"¹⁷² It was specified that "The number of teachers who have a thorough knowledge of Irish history is still comparatively small."¹⁷³ This highlights the newness of Irish history as a component part of the history programme, not being officially prescribed until after independence. Existing teachers (who would have completed their secondary schooling before this) would be at a disadvantage in terms of expertise in a period/course with which they were not academically familiar. It also highlights the inferior position of Irish history in academia, as

¹⁶⁹ *Report of the Department of Education, 1948-49*, (Dublin, 1950), p. 15; See also, 1954-55 where similar phenomenon was noted.

¹⁷⁰ *Report of the Department of Education, 1927-28*, pp 57-8.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.: Almost identical wording the following year, See *Report...1928-29*, p. 91.

¹⁷² *Report of the Department of Education, 1928-29*, p. 91.

¹⁷³ *Report of the Department of Education, 1929-30*, pp 72-4.

discussed in Chapter 9, with teachers, even those fully qualified, being less versed in it than say, modern continental, English, or Classical history.

This difference between the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate courses in terms of basic structure was later seen as a reason why a considerable proportion of students were taking the pass course. The general nature of Intermediate History was viewed as resulting in many students finding it difficult to successfully tackle the specialised course at Leaving Certificate level.¹⁷⁴ This qualifies the views espoused previously which argued without much evidence that the older mind was more adept at dealing with special periods, by factoring in the issue of familiarity.

This differentiation between Intermediate and Leaving Certificate levels was reflected in student success rates at the State examinations.

Fig 1.22: 1930 Certificate examinations statistics for History:

1930–Intermediate Cert. H&G	Boys	Girls
Total examined:	2,196	1,537
% passed with Honours:	18.7	16.3
& passed in total	62.4	60.5

1930–Leaving Certificate History	Boys	Girls
Total examined:	677	412
In Honours	444	295
Total % passed	79.8	81.8
with Honours:	46.2	31.2
Percentage failed on honours paper	14.4	13.9
% passed on pass paper	68.7	70.9 ¹⁷⁵

History at secondary level featured infrequently in official reports in the early 1930s, with no report on the subject in 1930, 1931, or 1933-34. It was noted in 1934-35 that while History and

¹⁷⁴ *Report of the Department of Education, 1953-54*, (Dublin, 1955), pp 14-15.

¹⁷⁵ Figures compiled from *Report of the Department of Education, 1929-30*, pp 149-50.

Geography was taught well in general, how there was also a tendency for students to rote-memorise passages, and to demonstrate in their examinations that they had little understanding of what they were saying.¹⁷⁶ In 1935-36, there was no comment on *how* History was being taught, though discussions were held over reforming the programme. It would appear that after the 1920s, the nature or quality of history teaching was not considered as important by the department as the issues surrounding it, such as the programme itself, and the rates of attendance.

It was not until the post-Emergency period that specific delineations were again noted between history at Intermediate and Leaving Certificate levels. The 1948-49 report is telling in this regard. While reiterating how those most qualified taught at Leaving Certificate level,¹⁷⁷ it went further than previous criticisms which simply listed the deficiencies seen at Intermediate level.¹⁷⁸ Importantly, it also noted what was positive at Leaving Certificate level, especially in how critical thinking abilities were being elevated as a desirable goal for teaching and learning, with students being encouraged towards further private reading as well as come to their own understanding of what they read, rather than blindly accepting the textbook, without reflection.¹⁷⁹ This was the first time that such an admission was evident in the reports, demonstrating a potential shift in attitudes regarding the purpose of history in schools.

Between 1949-50 and 1962-63, the quality of history teaching at Leaving Certificate level was specifically praised in eight of thirteen annual reports.¹⁸⁰ The development of how Intermediate level teachers were being described from the 1950s onwards is interesting in comparison to previously, when such teachers were outright condemned, or at best defined as ‘inconsistent’, with some good and some bad.¹⁸¹ From the early 1950s, a slow but noticeable shift can be seen. In 1953, the Intermediate Certificate was praised (for the first time), with most students being declared to be interested in the subject and “greedy for knowledge.”¹⁸² By the

¹⁷⁶ *Report of the Department of Education, 1934-35*, p. 53.

¹⁷⁷ This was also discussed in 1949-50, See *Report...1949-50*, (Dublin, 1951), p. 17.

¹⁷⁸ *Report of the Department of Education, 1948-49*, p. 15.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ There were no subject specific reports in 1959-60

¹⁸¹ *Report...1949-50*, p. 17

¹⁸² *Report of the Department of Education, 1953-54*, pp 14-15.

following year, the report raised the familiar refrain that there were not enough high quality teachers at Intermediate level, which resulted in these lower classes regularly being made to memorise large tracts of information without being made aware of the wider context due to a teachers' lack of planning. But while the complaints were similar to before, the reports now made an effort to try and explain why this was. They cited the growth in younger teachers of a high quality now teaching at Leaving Certificate level. This corresponded with the continued, albeit slow, growth in the proportion of registered teachers.¹⁸³ By 1955-56, this was specifically being commended in the lower classes, with an admission that 'the more the better...'¹⁸⁴

It was seen as "rare now that this subject is taught in the senior classes by a teacher who does not possess the appropriate qualifications to conduct the work."¹⁸⁵ While the positive effect of the increase in qualified History teachers was most noticeable at the higher level, the Intermediate classes were also seeing an improvement, though at a slower rate.¹⁸⁶ By 1958-59, Leaving Certificate teachers were again commended for being well qualified, experienced and interested in their subject.¹⁸⁷ It was acknowledged that there were teachers of a similar sort working at Intermediate level, but that their numbers were fewer. The general positivity of the report in contrast to previous decades was noticeable. While some familiar criticisms were made, such as when an over-reliance on textbooks meant "that there is not the base of understanding there that there should be" it was also noted how unqualified Intermediate Certificate teachers made up for it, for the most part, with excellent lesson planning, and hard work.¹⁸⁸ This development was summarised in the report of 1960-61, which noted how

¹⁸³ *Report of the Department of Education, 1954-55*, (Dublin, 1956), p. 14.

¹⁸⁴ *Report of the Department of Education, 1955-56*, (Dublin, 1957), p. 16; Dá mhéid amhlaidh ab fhéarr agus ní lú a bhaineann san leis na ranga sóisearacha ná mar a bhaineann leis na ranga sinsearacha

¹⁸⁵ *Report of the Department of Education, 1956-57*, (Dublin, 1958), p. 17; "Is annamh anois a bhíonn oide I mbun an ábhair seo ins na ranga sinsearacha gan cálíochtí fóntha aige chun na hoibre."

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ *Report of the Department of Education, 1958-59*, pp 14-15; See also *Report of the Department of Education, 1962-63*, (Dublin, 1964), p. 15; translation p. 57 for similar descriptions.

¹⁸⁸ *Report of the Department of Education, 1958-59*, p. 15 Similar sentiments were expressed in 1961; See *Report of the Department of Education, 1961-62*, pp 54-55 (translated from Irish on pp 13-14).

Occasionally...the junior classes are placed in charge of young and inexperienced teachers, some of whom adhere too closely to the textbook. Fortunately this practice is not so common as formerly and usually a little experience brings such teachers to a better understanding of more interesting and more efficient methods of arousing the pupils' interest.¹⁸⁹

Similar sentiments were expressed in the first half of the 1960s, where the reports were generally positive, though some Intermediate Certificate teachers were described as 'mechanical' with their classes often characterised by an "excessive reliance on the textbook and too much memorization of factual material."¹⁹⁰

This situation was encapsulated in the report of 1958-59, where this over-reliance was aggravated by the time pressure which covering the Intermediate course in two years caused. Moreover, it was noted how the lack of suitable textbooks was also affecting classroom learning, and that this scarcity was most felt at Leaving Certificate level.¹⁹¹ Ultimately, the Leaving Certificate History had the best teachers but the worst textbooks. This would seem to suggest that the more advanced the learning was becoming, the less reliance there was on the textbooks, and the greater importance the teacher would have. Such an evaluation is consistent with the official departmental accounts of History.¹⁹²

Teaching Other Subjects:

Lack of sufficient qualified teachers was not the only reason why Intermediate Certificate classes were considered to be of a poorer standard. Teachers were often made to teach subjects other than those in which they were trained. An excellent example of this was discussed in March 1966, when the ASTI were asked to intervene in a dispute between a teacher and the headmaster of his school over the subjects he had to teach. "The member had been employed by the school in 1948 to teach Classics and this year was given English, History and Geography classes, and only two periods for Latin and Greek."¹⁹³ Such a situation demonstrates why registration figures

¹⁸⁹ *Report of the Department of Education, 1960-61*, (Dublin, 1962), p. 62 (translated from Irish, p. 18).

¹⁹⁰ *Report of the Department of Education, 1963-64*, (Dublin, 1965), p. 58.

¹⁹¹ *Report of the Department of Education, 1958-59*, p. 15; This scarcity also affected Intermediate Certificate, but those textbooks which were available were deemed suitable for this level.

¹⁹² *Report of the Department of Education, 1960-61*, p. 63.

¹⁹³ ASTI/SC/26 Mar. 1966.

should not be seen as complete proof of teacher ability, and highlights a further issue which affected history in secondary schools.

This was also the focus of a major debate during the ASTI's annual convention of 1963, following the proposal of a resolution "That Secondary Teachers teach only their Degree subjects to post-Intermediate classes and Degree or sub-Degree subjects to pre-Intermediate classes"¹⁹⁴ This debate highlighted not only concerns over teacher training and registration, but also attitudes on the structure of Irish secondary education in general, the move towards Ireland becoming an EEC member state, and the awareness of the difficulties facing students once they left secondary schools. An ASTI questionnaire was issued following worries expressed by Senator Donal O'Connallain,¹⁹⁵ highlighting two concerns for the ASTI; first, the issue of teachers, though qualified, being asked to teach subjects other than their speciality, and also the class sizes, with the Standing Committee repeating the necessity for more information on the issue. This anticipated findings within the *Investment in Education* report of 1965, which acknowledged for example, how 32 percent of graduate history teachers in 1961-62 had not taken the subject during their degree course.¹⁹⁶

This questionnaire led to a heated debate within the Union. The motion was moved by a Miss O'Farrelly (Dublin) as "if implemented would ensure that teachers would not have to teach four or five subjects which they had not studied in their Degree" as "one of the most serious problems facing teachers at senior level was receiving pupils in advanced classes who had been inadequately taught at junior level by teachers who were not qualified in the subjects; this was not the fault of the teachers but of the practice which gave them no option but to teach any subject they were asked."¹⁹⁷ As O'Farrelly continued "The subjects taken in the degree were the ones teachers could usually teach most competently and this would mean that pupils were being taught by those who had a very thorough knowledge of the subject in question."

¹⁹⁴ All references to the debate were (unless otherwise stated) from *ASTI C.E.C. Bulletins to Branches*, No. 59, July 1963: Res. 16, pp 5-6.

¹⁹⁵ ASTI/SC/19 Mar. 1962.

¹⁹⁶ *Investment in Education*, (Dublin, 1966), p. 273.

¹⁹⁷ *ASTI C.E.C. Bulletins to Branches*, No. 59, July 1963: Res. 16, pp 5-6.

The resolution was opposed by certain teachers who believed it would discriminate against smaller two-teacher schools and would provide a block to employment for newly qualified teachers, as they could not apply for subjects which they were not immediately trained in. Fears were also expressed that the motion might negatively impact priests graduating from Maynooth. That said, the same speaker was convinced that “if the teachers were experts in their own subjects this would enhance the entire profession and raise the status considerably.” History was used as the specific example of the dangers of the system in place. As one delegate was cited as saying “he knew cases of teachers taking history, for example, who had no interest in the subject but they obtained good results if you took success in examinations as the criterion, although they taught history very badly and had no feeling whatever for the subject: he considered such people did great harm and even if a little hardship were involved the resolution should be adopted.”¹⁹⁸

A different ground of opposition to the motion related to the practice of religious bodies employing unqualified Religious teachers without any regulation against them, most notably through the apprenticeship of older students teaching younger, which was especially prevalent in convent schools. One particular delegate “strongly opposed the motion saying she thought it was putting the cart before the horse; until religious were prevented from bringing in unqualified Leaving Certificate people to teach junior classes this motion would only damage the teachers if it were enforced.” The motion was seen by others as a reasonable way of dealing with the issue of teacher qualification: “Normally a teacher with four or five subjects in First Year University would have four or five subjects to offer up to Inter- Cert, and with two subjects in his degree would have those to offer up to Leaving Cert” while “the present position brings the profession into contempt.”¹⁹⁹ The system being advocated was already in operation in Northern Ireland. It also cohered with European practice at the time, which in the context of Ireland’s move towards E.E.C. membership was seen as additionally important. Moreover, the C.C.S.S. were reported as being anxious to implement this new policy in appointments, demonstrating how the issue was

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

not exclusively teacher-driven. Ultimately, the resolution was adopted by 52 to 33 votes.²⁰⁰ While it was not taken up by the department until the early 2000s, this debate is telling in understanding secondary teachers' attitudes towards their own profession, and helps explain why certain flaws persisted over such a long period in terms of teacher employment, and more specifically in the quality of teaching in history at the different Certificate levels.

Early school-leaving:

Finally, early school leaving often meant that students did not complete the required four years' of study for the Intermediate course and two years for Leaving Certificate. These accelerated issues of cramming and rote-memorisation which hindered learning in history. This was a major concern throughout the period, first voiced in 1927, and reaching a peak during the 1950s. It was primarily an issue at Intermediate level, though the Leaving Certificate was affected as well, albeit less frequently. In the lower classes, the course covered Irish and European history from earliest times until the present, and was "based on the supposition that students would be able to devote four years to historical study; so that there would be ample time for revision of previous work."²⁰¹ This was not strictly adhered to. As noted in 1927-28,

Four years are necessary to enable an ordinary student to get a satisfactory mastery of the chief events and movements contained in it. Many students, unfortunately, enter a Secondary School too late to devote more than two or three years to the subject. Many who have the full four years do not do enough work in the first two years, and serious work is very often attempted only in the year preceding the examination.

This attempt to cover the whole syllabus in the last year resulted in students fall[ing] into a state of bewildering confusion with regard to centuries, dates, generalisations, events and persons. The answering of many of the candidates in the examination shows how blurred are their ideas of history, and how their generalisations are based on no accurate knowledge of facts.

²⁰⁰ This resolution was to be implemented "by letter, and if necessary, by deputation to Dept of Education." See ASTI/C.E.C. Minutes, 19 April 1963.

²⁰¹ *Report of the Department of Education, 1928-29*, p. 91.

The weakness of the Intermediate Certificate candidates in 1928 was especially apparent in the case of Irish History.²⁰²

Similar concerns were voiced the following year, where the compression of a four years' course into two years, before students sat the examination was condemned as being "necessarily injurious to their knowledge of the subject." Moreover, as the standard of history teaching at primary level was criticised by Departmental inspectors as poor, once it came to secondary schools, teachers were required to cover the course which students were expected to have already learned previously,²⁰³ especially in the 1920s and early 1930s.²⁰⁴ This meant that even those who had more than two years' preparation very often made little progress in their first year, leaving a serious study of the work to the last two years.²⁰⁵ As the 1929 report noted, as it was "only occasionally that first year pupils possess a knowledge of the complete Primary School Programme in History, it is generally true to say that for nearly all first year pupils history is a new subject, as their knowledge is confined to a slight and imperfect acquaintance with a few famous names, battles and sieges in Irish history." Furthermore, the fact that many students were late in attending secondary education -due to its costs, the available alternatives such as Secondary Tops, and the delayed progression through primary standards- meant that "the number of students that do a full four years' course is very small."²⁰⁶ A considerable proportion of children attended secondary schools only so far as the compulsory age of fourteen years, at which point they took their Intermediate examination, before leaving full-time education.

This issue of 'cramming' a four years course into two years, was a serious recurring issue, to the extent that in 1937, the ASTI made specific entreaties to the Department against the "Rapid promotion of Pupils in Secondary Schools" in a truncated memo. They outlined the "Association's arguments against practice – Great strain placed on pupil; teacher working during

²⁰² *Report of the Department of Education, 1927-28*, pp 57-8.

²⁰³ *Report of the Department of Education, 1957-58*, (Dublin, 1959), p. 15 – where it was acknowledged that many students came into first year with very little historical knowledge.

²⁰⁴ *Report of the Department of Education, 1932-33*, (Dublin, 1934), p. 56.

²⁰⁵ *Report of the Department of Education, 1928-29*, p. 91.

²⁰⁶ *Report of the Department of Education, 1929-30*, pp 72-4.

normal hours only put in invidious position: competitive element unduly encouraged. Association asks that Department issue to Educational Bodies a circular decrying the practice.” The Minister agreed “on matter of principle, but cannot see his way to send out circular. Suggests that names of offending schools be supplied, when matter will get further consideration.”²⁰⁷ While the Minister was not prepared to act against the practice, the Departmental report of that year testified to its prevalence, criticising students taking the Intermediate Certificate after only two years, and others sitting for the honours exam at Leaving Certificate without appropriate preparation. It claimed that History teaching was gradually improving as more teachers became qualified, and who had an interest in the subject.²⁰⁸ This could not however counter the issue of limited and truncated student attendance or delayed entry to secondary education.

This continued to be a major issue for teachers and officials alike for most of this period. In 1950, the ASTI Standing Committee discussed the matter, the Annual Convention passed a resolution specifying “the minimum preparation periods for pupils sitting for the Certificate Examinations”²⁰⁹ and a memorandum was drawn up to be sent to the Minister. This declared that “questions of pupils sitting for Intermediate Certificate Examination after two years and Leaving Certificate after one year” should be opposed as “

- a) Educationally unsound – leads to cramming
- b) Course for Intermediate Certificate is a four year one and for Leaving Certificate is a two years one according to the Department’s ‘Rules’”²¹⁰

Moreover, in 1952-53, the Department acknowledged that “it adds greatly to the difficulties of matters for the Intermediate Certificate that students do not all have the same amount of time for the course. Some spend four years on it, others three years, and others again who only spend two

²⁰⁷ ASTI/OP/1939, pp 41-3.

²⁰⁸ *Report of the Department of Education, 1937-38* (Dublin, 1939), p. 47; “Tá cuid mhaith dáltaí a cuirtear faoi scrúdú na Meadhon-Teistiméireachta agus gan ach cursa dhá bhliadhan déanta aca, agus gan aon amhras bionn an scrúdú Staire lán chruaidh ortha sin. Le n-a chois sin, cuirtear daltaí sa sgrúdú onóraí san Árd-Teistiméireach agus gan ullmhúchán ceart déanta aca chuige. Ach san am chéadna tá teagaisc na Staire ag feabhsú I leabaidh a chéile, do réir mar tá breis müinteoirí ag teach tar aghaidh a bhfuil cálidheactha maithe aca agus suim aca ins an ádbhar.”

²⁰⁹ ASTI/SC/‘1950-59’, 15 March 1950. ASTI Convention, 1950, 2 June 1950, Res. 2 -

²¹⁰ ASTI/SC/no date, but late 1950-early 1951 by position in files.

years.”²¹¹ It was acknowledged that it would require an “experienced and very understanding teacher” and that this was often not the case at Intermediate level.²¹² Here, the issues of cramming and uneven attendance were directly connected with the level of teacher qualifications, demonstrating how one issue compounded the other.

Such a situation shaped how history teaching was being conducted. Due to time constraints, History was being geared towards ‘schooling’ rather than ‘education’, regardless of official purpose, in an effort to prepare students for the Certificate examinations. As acknowledged by Agnes McMahon, “theory can often be divorced from practice; the realities of a particular situation can prevent a teacher from fulfilling his [or her] original aim.”²¹³ Here we see the problem between the pressures of practical pedagogy, and the overbearing influence of the state examinations. This was acknowledged in 1953-54 when, despite overall results being generally commended, it was lamented how they would have been better but for the fact that many students were taking their examinations after two, and not four years.²¹⁴ When dealing with such students, it was necessary for the teacher to “move quickly along and it sometimes happens that knowledge gaps are left, and a bias emerges towards using shortcut teaching methods which do not favour teaching or learning.”²¹⁵ The Leaving Certificate was praised in 1954, specifically because the majority of students had the full two years to complete it.²¹⁶

Though denounced as “educationally unsound” by the ASTI in November 1955²¹⁷ and in the inspectorate reports of 1955 and 1956,²¹⁸ the practice of allowing pupils to enter for the Intermediate Certificate Examination after two years only, or for the Leaving Certificate

²¹¹ *Report of the Department of Education, 1952-53*, (Dublin, 1954), p. 17; “Cuireann sé go mór le deacraí an scéil sa Mheán-Teistiméireacht ná caitheann na daltaí go léir an cothrom céanna aimsire i mbun an chúrsa. Caitheann cuid acu ceithre bliana leis, cuid eile trí bliana, agus tá cuid ná caitheann leis ach dhá bhliain.”

²¹² Ibid.; “Níor mhór oide an-thuisceanach, taithíoch chun an freastal is cuí a dhéanamh ar na cúinsí go léir a tharlaíonn dá bharr san. Ní i gcónaí, ámh, a tharlaíonn gurb é sin an sórt oide a cuirtear I mbun na hoibre ins na bunranganna.”

²¹³ McMahon, ‘A review of changes in the pattern of history teaching’, p. 85.

²¹⁴ *Report of the Department of Education, 1953-54*, pp 14-15.

²¹⁵ Ibid.; “I gcás daltaí mar sin bíonn ar an oide brostú go mear ar aghaidh agus tarlaíonn uaireannta, go bhfágair bearnaí san eolas agus tagann claonadh i gceist chun modhanna comhgharacha múinte a chleachta nach fearrdhe an teagasc ná an oiliúnt iad.”

²¹⁶ *Report of the Department of Education, 1954-55*, p. 14.

²¹⁷ ASTI/SC/11 November 1955.

²¹⁸ *Report of the Department of Education, 1955-56*, p. 17; *Report of the Department, 1956-57*, p. 17.

Examination one year after passing the Intermediate Certificate persisted. That this complaint was repeatedly broached shows that the Department, while concerned to alleviate the issue, was ineffective in addressing it. Despite such official censure, the underlying educational and cultural contextual realities continued to shape history teaching. The inability or unwillingness of the department to redress the issue also points to their limited power in relation to secondary education at the time, being subsidiary to the Religious authorities who actually ran the schools.

Throughout the 1950s, there was also a hope among teachers that the Council of Education Report, (published in 1962), would condemn the practice and through such condemnation, force schools to affect real change. This did not occur. The “feebleness” of certain comments of the Report, and its failure to adequately “condemn the common practice of allowing students to sit for the Intermediate Certificate examination, without having completed the full four year course” were seen by the ASTI as matters of “regret and depreciation.”²¹⁹ This reflected some dissonance between official views and those of teachers. By 1964, the practice of sitting for the Intermediate Certificate exam after two years was not accepted by the Department, who “denied that this practice was widespread, and insisted that where it did occur the rights of the parents had to be taken in to account”, in spite of claims made by the ASTI at deputations with Minister Hillery, February 1964.²²⁰ This deficiency, whereby students were not completing the requisite years of study was fiercely and continually condemned by teachers who sometimes felt that even their union was not sufficiently vocal on the matter. As lamented in 1964 by one influential ASTI delegate

by our silence the Association was condoning what has become an examination-ridden country...We should make clear that we were not educating for examinations only but that secondary education was a full six-year course at any rate.²²¹

The shortcomings in how history was taught would at first appear to take on a generational element, in that similar complaints appear throughout the period. A case of teaching

²¹⁹ ASTI/OP/1963, ‘C.E.C. REPORT’, p. 55 – Specifically criticising Paragraph 367 of the Council Report.

²²⁰ ASTI/OP/1964, p. 82.

²²¹ ASTI C.E.C. Bulletins to Branches, No. 60, July 1964.

old dogs new tricks it would seem, those who had been employed before independence, or who continued to work as unregistered teachers, were often criticised for their unfamiliarity with recent historical scholarship,²²² for their over-reliance on textbooks, and for their failure to utilise teaching aids such as maps and atlases to supplement their teaching. This was mostly attributed to history teachers at Intermediate level. This issue would be expected to lessen as the decades progressed, as more teachers completed their official training for registration purposes. Notwithstanding, these complaints persisted. Teacher experience could be proffered as a possible explanation then, with those at Leaving Certificate level being referred to in the official reports as “Skilled and well-qualified educators, with years of experience.”²²³ Overall, the department sought to portray an impression of steady progress in the early decades of the state, which was unfounded or at least overstated in terms of teacher training and the delayed entry of students to secondary education. Long-term problems persisted throughout this period and impinged on history teaching in a number of notable ways.

[Historical teaching aids:](#)

Of significance among the issues worth considering is the specific facilities for history. The need for adequate teaching equipment and supplies was a constant theme in the early reports of the Department of Education. Generally overlooked in studies of Irish education which have tended to focus on politics and structure, these seemingly minor issues, alongside the wider considerations of teacher training and early school leaving, had a profound effect on how Irish history was actually taught during the period. This chapter first looks at the use of school maps and atlases in teaching history.

Over fifteen years after Eoin MacNeill declared the pressing need for a set of historical maps of Ireland for school use,²²⁴ the need for schools to have access to “an historical atlas... [and] be provided with good wall maps...and with time charts” was a widespread concern in

²²² *Report of the Department of Education, 1927-28*, pp 57-8.

²²³ *Report of the Department of Education, 1951-52*, (Dublin, 1953), p. 16; “Oidí oilte, dea-cháilithe a bhfuil cleachtadh na mblian acu.”

²²⁴ This desire for maps is repeatedly stated in the annual inspectors’ reports up until the 1960s, complaining of the lack of historical maps in schools to illustrate and explain the historical events.

1925-26, and was repeated on an almost annual basis over the next decade and a half. This teaching aid was to “enable the teachers to carry out this difficult task [of teaching history]” and enable the students to measure the periods of time and comparative lengths of the different periods studied. In addition to maps and atlases, the Department called for “books of wide scope [to] be purchased and placed in the library for the use of the teachers. Students should get plenty of practice in drawing rough maps to illustrate the various movements in their history period and atlases should be used which are clear and contain only the essential details.”²²⁵ This report outlined both official attitudes as to how history teaching could be improved, and major constraints in the majority of classrooms. The need for “a good library containing larger historical works, historical biographies and monographs” was stressed in 1927-28, to help the teachers “to explain, elucidate, illustrate, and expand the facts given in the text-books, and to supply material or historical essays.”²²⁶ By 1932-33, the insufficient use of maps and charts was cited as further proof of how History teaching could be improved in many schools.²²⁷

Complaints were made by, and about the same schools year in year out. This would suggest that censure from the inspectors was not enough to affect great change in any particular school, or potentially, that in spite of this censure, these schools were unable to affect change. This general area of complaint reflected trends in Northern Ireland at the same time as reported in the *Manchester Guardian* in 1927.²²⁸ In terms of equipment, complaints were most often heard in relation to History, Geography, and Commerce.²²⁹ For history, a major consideration during the 1930s was the provision of school libraries, with attempts being made to facilitate them in

²²⁵ *Report of the Department of Education, 1925-26-27*, p. 64; This issue of drawing maps corresponded with the examination paper at Intermediate level, which repeatedly asked in the first decade of the new system for students to draw maps of Ireland, and locate specific aspects of Irish history on them, namely lands of Gaelic chiefs, or different place-names. This example shows the interconnection between the inspectorate reports and the examinations.

²²⁶ *Report of the Department of Education, 1927-28*, pp 57-8.

²²⁷ *Report of the Department of Education, 1932-33*, p. 56.

²²⁸ *Manchester Guardian*, 1 Sept 1927, ‘History teaching in Ulster: Battle of the Boyne Retold’. Contains inspector report for the year, on history in secondary schools, and featured complaints of the lack of specialised teachers, the use of maps and blackboards as well, and how this led to an overuse of textbooks.

²²⁹ *Report of the Department of Education, 1934-35*, p. 52.

almost all schools inspected in 1937-38 for example.²³⁰ It had previously been reported that in some schools, private reading was not particularly encouraged, with many of these new libraries not being utilised to their potential.²³¹

A host of additional concerns arose during the ‘Emergency’.²³² The general context of wartime rationing left second-level history teaching in a decidedly difficult state. Shortages, not only of suitable history textbooks (itself hindered by the alterations at Curriculum level) but of writing supplies such as notebooks and paper repeatedly emerged, such as in 1941-42.²³³ The rationing of paper made it difficult for students to get copybooks, while a shortage in supplies of pencils even, meant that even when copybooks could be acquired, there was often an issue in being able to write in them.²³⁴ There was also an awareness in the inspectors’ report that history was perhaps the most difficult subject to teach through Irish without the appropriate materials, such as adequate textbooks.²³⁵ But while the ways in which the war negatively impinged on education were cited repeatedly in the early 1940s,²³⁶ school authorities were also commended for “doing their utmost to minimise these impingements.”²³⁷

The war was seen to severely effect the work of the secondary schools, with the department arguing in 1943-44, that if any change had occurred since the previous year, it was for the worse. Though again complimentary of how the staff and managers of schools were

²³⁰ *Report of the Department of Education, 1937-38*, p. 41; “Níl ach fíor-chorr-sgoil anois ann gan leabharlann de leabhraibh a chuidigheann leis na múinteoirí agus leis na daltaí.”

²³¹ Report of the Department of Education, 1934-35, p. 53.

²³² It is interesting to note how the ‘War’ was being referred to in these reports. Though it is mentioned as ‘an cogaidh’ on occasion, more often the Departmental reports from 1939-45 referred to the period as ‘an Teaghmais’, which translates to the ‘incident’ or ‘event’.

²³³ *Report of the Department of Education, 1941-42*, p.20; Translated from “Bionn cuid de na sgoltacha ag gearán go bhfuil an páipéar gann agus gur rí-dheachair cóip-leabhra agus leabhair nótaí agus a leithéad a fhaghail. Ina theannta sin is deachar cuid de na téicsleabhair do sholáthar agus nuair a bhíodh le faghail féin bionn an-mhoill ortha ag teacht. Agus dár ndóigh tá cóip-leabhra agus téicsleabhra agus a leithéid uilig dulta go mór I ndaoine.”

²³⁴ *Report of the Department of Education, 1942-43*, (Dublin, 1944) p. 21.

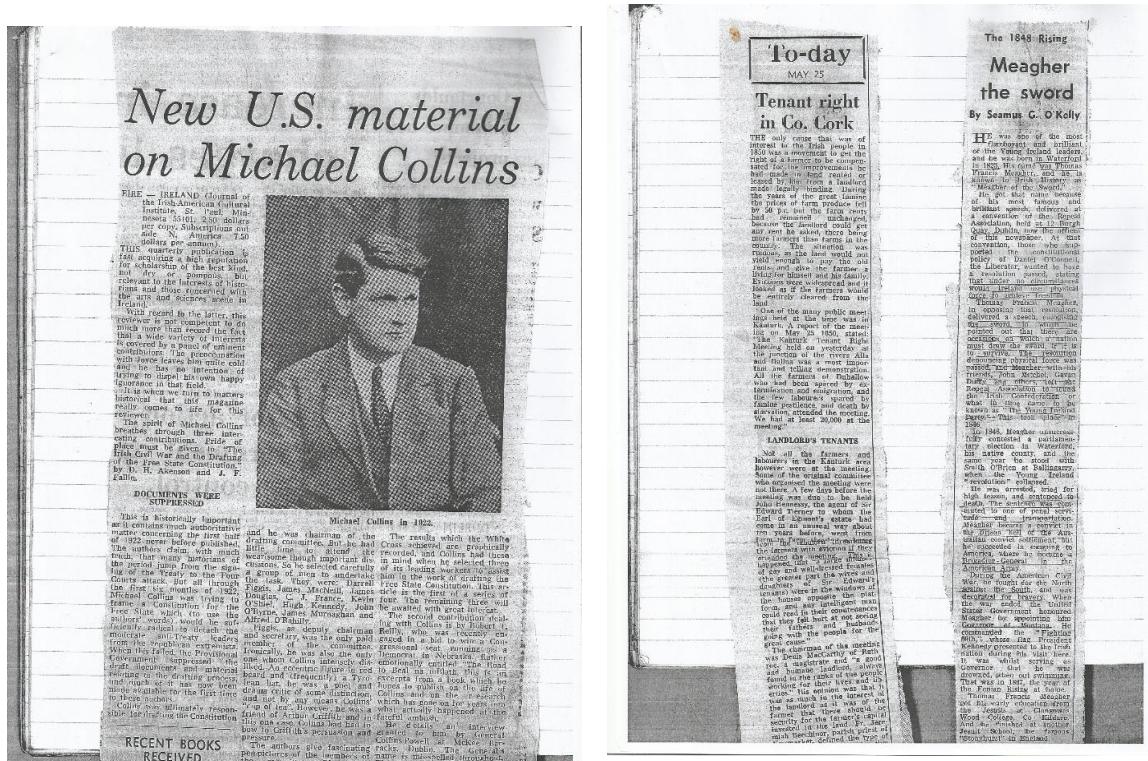
²³⁵ Ibid, p. 23.

²³⁶ Ibid, p. 21; “Is dócha nach bhfuil aon ghné de shaoghal na tíre ag dul slán ó iarrachtaí an chogaidh agus sé a fhearracht sin ag cúrsáí na meadhon sgol é: Tá an cogadh ag brúghadh ortha ar a lán bealach.”

²³⁷ *Report of the Department of Education, 1941-42*, p.20; “Ní feidir a shéanadh go bhfuil an cogadh ag déanamh ceataighe ar na slighte atá áirmhíghthe thusa, ach bíonn lucht cheannais na sgol ar a ndícheall ag iarraidh an cheataighe sin a laghdú agus tá eirigte go maith leo go [dtí] seo.”

dealing with the situation the departmental report still had room for criticism.²³⁸ The calls for more use to be made of maps and charts in teaching history were repeated (and again the following year).²³⁹ Their use in 1943-44 was however framed as an example of positive teaching practice, rather than their absence simply being complained of. This year also saw the first specific call for the teacher to provide students with accounts of historical material discussed in novels and newspapers that they had read, as further examples of positive practice.²⁴⁰

Fig 1.23: Secondary school History copybook featuring newspaper cuttings, 1969-70:²⁴¹



These wartime contextual constraints were beginning to ease by 1947-48, though there

were “a great number of school necessities and equipment of all sorts that are still scarce and that have large costs and long delays concerning their provision.”²⁴² That maps and charts were not

²³⁸ Report of the Department of Education, 1943-44, p. 22.

²³⁹ Report of the Department of Education, 1944-45, p. 26.

²⁴⁰ Report of the Department of Education, 1943-44, p. 25; This practice was affirmed in personally sourced material.

²⁴¹ Copybook of Kieran Groeger, Coláiste Íosagáin, Baile Bhúirne, Co. Cork ‘History in Education Project’ Questionnaire, received 07 Jan. 2016.: Groeger attended secondary school from 1967-73. He discussed how history classes at Leaving Certificate level started with a class discussion of Paddy Madden’s column in the Cork Examiner. This shows how the inspectorate recommendations were being followed in certain schools.

²⁴² Report of the Department of Education, 1947-48, (Dublin, 1949), p. 11; “tá iliomad riachtanaisí agus fearaistí scoile de gach shaghas atá gann go leor fós agus go bhfuil an-chostas, maille le moil fhada, ag

being utilised to the extent that the Department would have liked was again broached in 1945-46, demonstrating the importance of this issue to history teaching during this decade. It is worth noting that while this was a continued cause for concern, it was stated that their use was common practice for ‘every good teacher.’²⁴³ Highlighting their importance, the reports noted how “It is half-wasted work trying to teach the deeds of the Normans in Ireland, or say the Croppies episode, without demonstrating the tales to the students on a wall map, never mind the benefits, from an educational standpoint, of tying History and Geography together in that vein.”²⁴⁴ As far as the Department were concerned, most history teachers in the late 1940s were hard-working and diligent. However, they were critical of some for failing to use maps to awaken student interest and impress information about the great movements of Irish history upon their students. In 1949 it was criticised that not enough maps or atlases were being used, or that they were not being used enough.²⁴⁵ Students instead were being instructed to simply memorise page after page of their textbooks, similar to pieces of poetry.

It was also criticised that Irish and European history were not being connected when necessary.²⁴⁶ Such criticisms were seen as a major factor in defining the divide between teaching at Intermediate and Leaving Certificate levels, with those teachers seen as being of lesser quality being the worst offenders in the areas listed above.²⁴⁷ It was noted that this was not common across all schools, with others being praised for setting out their work in an artistic, understandable and enjoyable manner.²⁴⁸ While not stated, this would appear to point to a class

baint lena soláthar.”

²⁴³ *Report of the Department of Education, 1945-46*, p. 29; “Ba mhór an cabhair fosta i múineadh na Staire léarscáileanna a cur in úsáid, nós a chleachtas gach uile dea-mhúinteoir.”

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁵ *Report of the Department of Education, 1949-50*, p. 17; “Is minic ná bíonn iontu an chothrom ceart léarscáileanna ná léaráidí ná pictiúirí in úsáid mar chúnamh ag na hoidí I dteagasc na Staire.

²⁴⁶ *Report of the Department of Education, 1947-48*, p. 15; “Tá oidí ann, áfach, agus in ionad léarscáileanna, cairteanna staire agus pictiúrí d’úsáid chun spéis san obair do mhúscailt sna daltaí agus eolas ar na gluaiseachta móra do chur I gcionn orthu go luath sé rud a dhéanann siad ná a ligint do na daltaí leathanach I ndiaidh leathanach de théacsleabhar do léamh agus do mheabhrú díreach fé mar déanfaí I gcás giota filíochta. Is minic freisin ná déantar chomcheangal idir Stair na hÉireann agus Stair na hEorpa nuair is gá san.”

²⁴⁷ *Report of the Department of Education, 1950-51*, (Dublin, 1952), p. 16; “...Braitear an t-easnamh san go mór ins na bunranga.”

²⁴⁸ *Report of the Department of Education, 1949-50*, p. 17.

divide, in which certain schools were more likely to feature such equipment, namely due to being able to afford it.

By 1950-51, the use of learning aids at Intermediate level was cited as allowing students to achieve a high standard in terms of learning content. The report criticised their lack of use in relation to the hidden curriculum (though not expressed in these terms), whereby students would not only be learning about history, but also be learning to enjoy history.²⁴⁹ It noted how maps, pictures, debates, special lectures and the likes should be more prominent features in the teaching of history at Intermediate level, so as to ensure that by the end of the course, students would not only have knowledge of history, but more importantly, would have interest in the subject, which would be sustained after the end of their formal education.²⁵⁰ The Department did not, however, provide any additional resources or engage in proactive measures to enable schools to rectify the issue. This was in keeping with the wider context, in line with the conservative consensus in Irish society especially in the first generation after independence that the State intervened little in secondary education.

The report also urged that students be given more experience in voicing their own opinions as regards historical events.²⁵¹ This marked a significant shift in tone from previous years. While many of the same complaints were evident, the Departmental reports were now looking beyond the history course in and of itself, as well as encouraging the development of student voice. Moreover, demonstrating the pedagogical developments since the founding of the state, this report highlighted the development of history teaching between then and the previous decades, which called for little more than for students to quietly read textbooks by themselves.

Students at Leaving Certificate level were more likely to be provided with additional reading from school libraries, to supplement what they learned in class. While serving as an example of how school libraries were growing and increasingly used, by 1952 this had not

²⁴⁹ This concept was discussed in Mulcahy, *Curriculum and Policy*.

²⁵⁰ *Report of the Department of Education, 1950-51*, p. 16.

²⁵¹ *Report of the Department of Education, 1951-52*, p. 16.

reached a level that the Department were satisfied with.²⁵² Rote-memorisation without comprehension was again criticised this year. By 1953-54, schools were commended for how maps and atlases were being increasingly utilised.²⁵³ This was repeated the following year, with the additional qualification that it was important as textbooks could be “too dry on their own for younger students.”²⁵⁴

This development was such that by the mid-1950s, their underuse was no longer the most pressing matter in terms of school equipment. The need to have well stocked school libraries from which to supplement a student’s reading now occupied this position. It was noted in 1953-54 that most schools had a collection of historical books available for Leaving Certificate students to use, but that “They would need to be added to at every possible opportunity as young people like their reading to have a modern feel.”²⁵⁵ This again highlights the new atmosphere in which the student’s preferences and tastes were at least being considered. School libraries were stressed for the belief that they “would greatly strengthen the interest that students place in the subject, and this interest is of great benefit to overcoming difficulties and easing [the] workload.”²⁵⁶

There was very little difference in the issues broached during the first half of the 1960s. In 1961-62, the use at Intermediate level of “such teaching aids as maps, time-and-event charts, pictorial representations and films are very desirable, if the understanding of and interest in the subject is to be properly stimulated.” This was not always possible, primarily due to pupils who took the course in under three years and so had to rely on the textbook, due to time constraints.²⁵⁷ The following year, the inspectorate report argued that “more use could be made of visual aids, which can be of great assistance in the development in the pupils of a good historical sense. A

²⁵² *Report of the Department of Education, 1952-53*, (Dublin, 1954), p. 17.

²⁵³ *Report of the Department of Education, 1953-54*, pp 14-15.

²⁵⁴ *Report of the Department of Education, 1954-55*, p. 14; “Is mó a chabhródh sé le teagasc na Staire dá mbainfi breis feidhme as léarscáileanna, as carteacha, as léaráidí agus as pictiúirí mar d’féadfadh an téacsleabhar staire bheith ró-thur ann féin do dhaltaí óga.

²⁵⁵ *Report of the Department of Education, 1953-54*, pp 14-15; “níor mhiste cur leo gach uair is féidir mar is mó ag daoine óga blas nua-aimseartha a bheith ar a gcuid léitheoireachta.”

²⁵⁶ *Report of the Department of Education, 1955-56*, p. 17: “Is mó mar a threiseodh san leis an spéis a chuirfeadh daltaí san ábhar agus is mó le rá í an spéis chun sáruithe deachrachtaí agus éadromuithe oibre.”

²⁵⁷ *Report of the Department of Education, 1961-62*, pp 54-5 (translated from Irish, pp 13-14).

history library is almost a sine qua non for Honours classes, but too few schools are fully equipped in this regard.”²⁵⁸ By the mid-1960s, this issue was seemingly being dealt with at last, stating that “It is gratifying to observe an increasing awareness of the value of visual aids in Intermediate Certificate classes.”²⁵⁹

Time Allocation:

When considering issues which affected history teaching at secondary school, it is important to remember that teachers would generally teach more than one subject. The H.Dip programme (discussed in Chapter 9) called for at least two subjects to be specialised in, while teachers would take up to five subjects in their First University Examination. The ASTI frequently assigned representatives to serve on more than one of its educational committees. For example, the History sub-committee elected in 1940, (all of whom were History teachers) comprised four teachers (three Catholic and one Protestant): Messrs P.McCann, J.Carey, G.D. Daly, and W. Kirkpatrick, three of whom served on additional subject sub-committees.²⁶⁰ This demonstrates how many factors which affected History teachers were often those which equally affected the teaching of other subjects. Moreover, this also helps account for the time constraints on teachers, especially those also teaching additional subjects that they were not qualified in, as discussed earlier. The issue of time allocation must therefore be viewed from two perspectives; the general, in terms of hours of teaching per week by any one teacher, and the specific, as in how many periods a week history was being taught for, and the effect this would have on learning.

In terms of the former, the belief that teachers were taking too many hours was a constant worry of their representatives throughout the period. In 1924, at the beginning of the new secondary system, the ASTI framed a resolution to set a standard teaching week for lay teachers. The maximum length should consist of 25 hours “being 5 days of 5 hours each, with no teaching on Saturdays.”²⁶¹ Though this was aspired to, it was never enforced. Saturday classes were

²⁵⁸ *Report of the Department of Education, 1962-63*, p. 15; translation p. 57.

²⁵⁹ *Report of the Department of Education, 1963-64*, p. 58.

²⁶⁰ ASTI/SC/6 April 1940; These were Daly- also on Latin and Greek/English, McCann- Also on English, and Carey- Also Latin and Greek. Kirkpatrick was co-opted onto the English Sub-Committee in 1941.

²⁶¹ ASTI/97/47, ‘Annual Convention Minute Books, 1923-41’, ‘Second Annual Convention, 22 April

prominent, well into the 1960s²⁶² and excessive teaching hours continued to be a source of considerable contention. The number of hours allotted to the teaching of the various subjects, and the amount of home-work imposed were among the reasons specifically cited in 1938 when the ASTI again unsuccessfully called on the Department to establish a Committee of Inquiry into Secondary Education.²⁶³ At the ASTI Convention, 1941, one resolution tabled (Res. No.6) asked “That the Department of Education (Secondary Branch) be requested to refuse sanction to any Time Table from any Secondary School which provides for more than 25 hours’ teaching per week for any teacher.” This demonstrates two issues; (1.) how timetables were supposed to be officially approved by government, (2.) the belief that 25 hours should be seen as the maximum weekly teaching time. That the resolution was necessary also shows how this principle was not being adhered to by some schools.

The ASTI Standing Committee files highlight further instances of how teaching hours were an ever-present issue, and (coupled with excessive class sizes) reveal the variances in how Christian Brother Schools operated across the country, between urban and rural settings. The Minutes for 10 December 1966 noted how “In one city school [staff] worked 19 ¼ hours but classes were large (42 in one instance) and in one rural school the member reported he taught a 26 hour week.”²⁶⁴

Subject-specific allocation:

As demonstrated, the grammar of schooling -how classes were divided and organised both physically and in terms of time- saw negligible alterations from the 1920s to the 1970s. It is for this reason that figures from this later period in terms of class time allocation can be argued as being generally representative, accepting a slight reduction in history classes in some schools,

1924'- C.E.C. Report Par. 16.

²⁶² See Niamh Crowley, ‘Fifty years of the History Teachers’ association of Ireland (HTAI)’ in *History Ireland*, xxi, no. 6 (2013) where it was noted that for the inaugural meeting of the HTAI, it took a public holiday (The Feast of the Immaculate Conception) 8 Dec. 1962, to get a Saturday off to gather a meeting of history teachers.

²⁶³ ASTI/OP/1938, pp 39-40.

²⁶⁴ ASTI/SC/10 Dec. 1966; The ASTI’s recommendations were for any teachers working under such inappropriate conditions to report them to the Inspector when he called to the school and register an official protest.

as noted by the mid-1960s.²⁶⁵ While in December 1929, the Department acknowledged that “no minimum weekly time could be laid down for any subject” as “circumstances varied from school to school”²⁶⁶ it was understood by the late 1930s that History and Geography at Intermediate level, should receive about three hours a week, in line with what was generally allocated for any other full subject.²⁶⁷ This proved more an aspiration than a reality. New regulations introduced in 1945 left “the time normally given to History, Latin and English at the Inter. Cert Examination [being] curtailed.”²⁶⁸ Throughout the period it was widely acknowledged that history was “accorded inadequate time” in secondary schools.²⁶⁹ It was also acknowledged that of the two, History generally received more attention than Geography, though both were examined together.²⁷⁰ At Intermediate level, History generally received two to three class periods, with a period typically lasting 40-45 minutes, or 80 to 135 mins a week in total.²⁷¹ As a study of the early 1970s demonstrated, of the 24 schools analysed by McMahon:

History Allocation:

8 schools	2 periods/week
13 “	3 “ “
3 “	2 one week, 3 the next. ²⁷² Alternating w/Geography

Though these figures reflected trends occurring elsewhere in Europe, “nevertheless, at a time when the possible effect of history teaching, both good and bad, are being hotly debated, it is important to remember the scant attention paid to history on the timetable.”²⁷³

²⁶⁵ ASTI Programme, 1966, C.E.C. REPORT, pp 52-4 -History Sub-Committee meeting held 25 May 1965: Critiquing the proposed new course: “With the new additions, the whole history course would be intolerably long, and this when History tends to be allotted less time on the timetable in a number of schools than when the existing programme was drawn up by the Department.”

²⁶⁶ ASTI/SC/3 December 1929.

²⁶⁷ *Report of the Department of Education, 1937-38*, p. 47.

²⁶⁸ ASTI/SC/15 Sept. 1944.

²⁶⁹ ASTI/Official Programme, 1966, C.E.C. Report, pp 52-4.

²⁷⁰ *Report of the Department of Education, 1952-53*, p. 17; Though history is not specifically mentioned, its predominance over Geography is established by proxy, as the scant time received by the latter was specifically being criticised here.

²⁷¹ McMahon, ‘A review of changes in the pattern of history teaching’, p. 67.

²⁷² Ibid. p. 92.

²⁷³ Ibid.

The time provided for history teaching was directly affected by the amount of marks allocated for examination purposes. At Leaving Certificate level, History received only 300 marks; a major source of frustration for teachers. Modern languages in 1961 (for example) received 400 marks and therefore received more class time per week. The low marks received was especially frustrating considering how history was accepted as being very challenging. As noted in 1928 “this is a specially difficult subject for young people, and...requires a teacher of wide and deep historical study, as well as one who is capable of presenting the subject in such a manner as to constantly excite and sustain the interest and curiosity of his pupils, in order to teach history in the most effective manner.”²⁷⁴ Similar sentiments were still being expressed by 1956 in departmental reports, though now being aimed at school managers, setting the timetables. As noted “while it is gradually becoming more understood, it has not been fully impressed upon those in school management that History is a subject that is not as easy to teach as it would appear.”²⁷⁵ At a 1961 deputation between the ASTI and the Department of Education, calls were again heard for History to be increased from 300 to 400 marks at Leaving Cert. “The Department officials said that the tendency was to allot marks on the basis of the time devoted to the subject. When the marks had been increased for modern languages, it was hoped to encourage their study in the schools.”²⁷⁶ This demonstrates why history was under severe pressure in schools, and why teachers were constantly calling for it to be increased in subject value. The course was deemed by teachers to be more intensive than the marks allotted to it would suggest, while the time allocation was inadequate for the challenges of the subject.

The constraint of limited class times per week had a major impact when one considers teachers as implementers of the history curriculum.²⁷⁷ As one recent PhD study acknowledged “Time constrains what content is marginalised and what receives more focus in the

²⁷⁴ *Report of the Department of Education, 1928-29*, p. 45.

²⁷⁵ *Report of the Department of Education, 1955-56*, p. 17; “Cé go bhfuil ag teacht níos mó chun tuisceanna ann de réir a chéile, níl sé [curtha] ina luí ar fad fós ar lucht stiúrtha scol gur ábhar í an Stair nach bhfuil chomh réidh sin a theagasc agus a dhealraíonn a bheith.”

²⁷⁶ ASTI/Official Programme, 1961, pp 55-8.

²⁷⁷ Garrison, ‘Struggles of immigration at the doorstep of Irish education’, pp 149–50.

classroom...[E]ducators are forced to make choices about what is in and what is out...[and] to prioritise what is in based on the values and goals of the educators and the curriculum."²⁷⁸ This was especially so with the teaching of Irish history. As noted by R. Dudley Edwards "teachers could do an immense amount to spread interest for Irish history. As taught now it was largely useless and within the limited amount of time available for the subject in the schools that was inevitably so."²⁷⁹

Conclusion:

Despite the changing contexts, the shifts in political leadership, the Emergency and the later move towards 'modernisation'²⁸⁰, the teaching of History at secondary level changed little during the period, in terms of its basic structures, and the issues which affected it on a daily basis. As noted in 1949-50: "Is beag athrú a thagann ar mhúineadh na Staire ná ar chaighdeán na hoibre sna Meán-Scoileanna ó bhliain go bliain."²⁸¹ Leaving Certificate history was considered to be better taught than Intermediate, as students grew in maturity. By 1958, nearly 70,000 students attended secondary schools, an increase of over 13,000 students in less than five years. More than 66% of children between 14 and 16 years were attending Post-Primary school. This was attributed, not to the increase in the population from 1942 on, but to the growing respect and desire for education by parents.²⁸² Secondary education was not seen as a considerably attractive career prospect for graduates, due to low rates of remuneration, poor job security, and the dominance of church authorities over employment. Teachers were often over-worked and underpaid. Facilities in many schools were often ill-suited, rooms being cramped and classes oversized in terms of the amount of pupils. These issues were compounded by the inadequate time allocation which history received, and can also be linked to the wider constraint of delayed progression and early school leaving.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 150.

²⁷⁹ *Irish Times*, 18 Oct. 1945.

²⁸⁰ Consider Enda Delaney, 28 March 2018 talk, Long Room Hub, on the narrative of modernisation.

²⁸¹ *Report of the Department of Education, 1949-50*, p. 17.

²⁸² *Report of the Department of Education, 1958-59*, p. 10.

This would have affected the ability to satisfactorily teach students and to provide a wide curriculum. While at the beginning of the period, a large proportion of teachers were untrained, by the mid-1950s, the majority of full time staff were registered. This growth grants additional importance to the University courses in History and the Higher Diploma in Education, which had an increasing potential to influence how Irish history was taught at secondary level, through the growing number of teachers completing the course requirements for registration.

As for the provision and use of school equipment, the same issues emerged in the annual reports, across decades. There were differences in the nature of the complaints however, owing to the different contexts. Notwithstanding, that school libraries (for example) were seen as being provided for by the mid-1930s, and yet were a major issue again in the 1950s, demonstrates how the long-term issue was not adequately addressed by the department or school managers, who failed to deal with the growth of secondary education in general, and the changing demands on the system in this regard.

The cyclical nature of complaints suggests that alongside the increasing professionalisation of secondary education, what was occurring was a time-lag in supply and demand. Initially, due to the shortage of teachers who were fully trained and aware of new methods, little use was being made of such things as maps, charts or film-strips. As more registered teachers came into the workplace, so complaints would subside for a while, until such time where the resources of schools were stretched owing to the growth of attendance and the inability of current facilities to adequately provide for students. This resulted in the Intermediate classes regularly being placed under the guidance of unqualified and inexperienced teachers, who tended to rely heavily on textbooks. This cycle would repeat as new schools opened which were better provided for, in terms of available resources and teaching materials. While the nature of complaints proved constant, that is not to say that the situation in the 1920s and the 1960s was the same for example. While highlighting a host of practical impositions on history teaching in 1970, Jack Magee contended that “My general impression is that, despite the dearth of teaching aids –charts, maps, filmstrips- and the undue emphasis which the Department’s examinations

place on factual information, a new and more generous spirit has begun to manifest itself in the history teaching of the south and is being encouraged by the Department's inspectors.”²⁸³

The inspectorate records, especially in the first three decades of the State, repeatedly claimed that history teaching was improving annually. This was despite the structural issues which hindered efficacy, and was more connected with the romanticisation of the teacher by the Department, than with the classroom realities. Stemming from this idealisation of the schoolmaster in the reports, history in secondary schools was inherently teacher-centred for the majority of the period, with students being the passive recipients of information. While discussions towards altering this began towards the late 1940s, with the first calls to develop increased criticality in students, it was not until the 1960s that the wider consensus view was beginning to follow suit. This development was minor even at that, with calls being simply for the teacher to facilitate more debates and introduce student voice to some greater degree.

It was also impressed in the official records that the duty of the teacher went beyond any individual subject.²⁸⁴ More than simply transmitting subject-specific content, teachers were tasked with imbuing in students the qualities of a ‘good person’; to be respectful of his elders and neighbours, to be honest and hardworking. This moulding of students into morally righteous member of society was paramount to what was being taught, and points to the transformative effects that history teaching was expected to have.

²⁸³ Magee, *The teaching of Irish history in Irish schools*, p. 4.

²⁸⁴ *Report of the Department of Education, 1942-43*, p. 17.

Chapter 9: Teacher Training and Irish history in the Universities:

“The principal means of bringing about the proper teaching of history in the schools is to provide for it in the education of the teachers themselves.”¹

Internationally, Cannadine contends that “in history, perhaps more than in most studies, the personality of the teacher and his own reading are of the first importance.”² In Ireland between 1924 and 1969, the highly constrained context in which teaching occurred at second-level, as seen through the departmental influence on the curriculum, and the limited teacher input on the examination system, lessened such autonomy, as outlined in the previous chapter. However, although the teacher and his/her private reading may not have been as decisive as Cannadine suggests, teacher formation was still relevant. As acknowledged in the 1966 *Investment in Education* report, “the inflow of teachers is closely related to the output of university graduates, since the number of non-graduate full-time teachers is small.”³ As part of their necessary qualifications for registration, secondary history teachers were required to have completed a university course in History (as part of the B.A. Degree) as well as a Higher Diploma (H.Dip) in Education.

This chapter provides a detailed discussion of these courses in the four universities in Ireland in this period: Trinity College Dublin, and the three constituent colleges of the National University of Ireland- University College Cork, University College Galway and University College Dublin. It first looks at the History courses before examining the H.Dip Programmes in the various universities. By examining the different courses set -what they entailed, who the lecturers were, and what texts were recommended or prescribed- it is possible to see what future History teachers were learning and from what perspective, and the degree to which Irish history was important to their preparation. It also highlights the wider pedagogical culture in operation. Likewise, what was set on the Higher Diploma in Education courses, and how this was presented

¹ UCDA/LA1/Q/347/MacNeill Papers, Oct. 1911,

² Cannadine et al., *The right kind of history*, p. 71., citing a 1918 report of the Board of Education; Ibid., p. 233. Abundantly supported by the majority of the former teachers, inspectors and pupils interviewed and surveyed by him and his team, Cannadine concluded his work arguing that “it is the teacher above all who makes the difference.”

³ *Investment in Education*, p. 59.

was relevant to how teachers viewed their profession, in preparation for entering the classroom. This learning was contingent on where these future teachers went to University, as each University created their own courses, according to the staff in the History (and Education) departments, in line with the overall ethos and culture of the institution.

What Universities were teaching had an additional bearing on secondary schools through the increasing involvement of University professors in setting the Certificate examinations, from the late 1930s onwards. This is the first study to consider these departments and their programmes in relation to one another and offer a comprehensive overview of Irish history in Irish Universities during this period. It contends that Irish history was not a major component of history teachers' education for those who attended the two largest universities until the 1950s. This would have had a bearing on how they engaged with history in secondary school, (for example, the noted overreliance on textbooks). The importance of promoting a catholic education was seen as essential for all who completed their H.Dip in the NUI, especially considering the importance of Rev. Timothy Corcoran at UCD, and as shown through the reading lists.

It is also useful to contextualise teacher training within the dominant historiographical traditions of the period as well as the wider ideological context. How lecturers approached their own work had an influence on how the students under their charge viewed history. The exact effect of lectures on trainee teachers, and the degree to which they repeated their learning to their pupils later cannot be categorically quantified.⁴ It is however possible to draw a link from the traditional approaches to historiography, which were dominant across all four universities up to the 1940s, to the predominance of the great man and high politics approach in the Certificate exams and textbooks. At TCD, the predominance of Lecky on the works set for reading for example, alongside numerous biographies of 'great men' testified to this. This approach was also seen in UCG under Donovan O'Sullivan. But while many academics did not give a great deal of attention to secondary history teaching, some, such as Hayden and Ryan at UCD had an influence through their work as textbook writers, while James Auchmuty at TCD and especially Rev.

⁴ For a study of the relation between teacher education and History teaching and its purpose in the classroom see Barton & Levstik, *Teaching history for the common good*, pp 244–65.

Corcoran at UCD had influence through their work on the H.Dip programmes, and through how they conceptualised history teaching at secondary schools, as seen through their writings. While the revised approaches to historiography associated with Moody, Dudley Edwards et al took hold from the 1940s onwards, this cannot be said to have shaped secondary school curricula to any great extent, until the end of the period, and the revisions of the late 1960s.

With regards to History, those who attended UCD were shaped by the fact that Irish history was positioned as inferior within the overall programme, with European history being dominant. This was despite two-thirds of the History staff after independence specialising in Irish history. This inferior position was even more pronounced at TCD. This began to change by the 1950s, when Irish history featured more prominently in both of these Universities. In contrast, Irish history occupied a seminal position in the History programmes of UCC and UCG throughout the period. The perspective from which it was taught however, differed between the NUI and the more Anglo-centric and at times unionist approach seen at TCD. Those taught in UCC were presented with an inherently nationalist reading of Irish history, as evident by the choice of texts set for study, and wider debates which revealed the ethos and outlook of the college. This view was shared in the History departments of the other NUI colleges, with examination questions posed in UCG also aligning with this ideology. However, the degree to which accounts of Irish history differed between the NUI and TCD, especially from the 1940s, was not as pronounced as expected. The level of interplay between the Universities, with Trinity historians setting examination papers in NUI colleges, and vice versa, partially explains this, pointing to a (relatively) shared academic sphere within Irish history.

As regards methodology, this chapter examines the University Calendars from the above Universities. It examines five different years (1924-25, 1934-35, 1944-45, 1954-54, and 1964-65)⁵ as representative samples, using one year per decade as a constant. This enables a study not only of the content of the history courses, but also of how it developed as the decades progressed.

⁵ While consistency was sought, it was necessary owing to lack of availability to look at alternative years where records were unavailable for the years cited above: for example, the UCC calendar for 1935-36 was used instead of 1934-35, as the UCC archives no longer held the latter, while similarly, the UCD Calendars for 1955-56 were used instead of the previous year.

Different universities had different standards of practice in terms of how they recorded their faculty members and syllabi. Consequently, it was necessary in certain instances, to consider the examination papers set for History and for the H.Dip in Education to determine what the courses entailed. This was the case for UCG. A close correlation has to exist between the exam papers and the course being taught. Questions have to be difficult enough so as to challenge students but also familiar enough to the material taught and learned so as to be relevant as a mode of evaluation. Examination papers, directly compiled by the lecturers, therefore offer a suitable alternative to the syllabus as a way into seeing what was being taught in these third level institutions.

In order to contextualise the history courses in the different universities, the general ethos of these institutions, the lecturers employed, and the backgrounds (in broad strokes) of students who attended them must be considered. To begin with: Trinity College Dublin.

[Trinity College Dublin:](#)

Irish history was not a major component of the Degree course at TCD for the majority of the period under investigation. This was primarily due to the historiographical traditions and cultural ethos of the university, and reflected the university's history. Originally founded in 1592, the University of Dublin (or Trinity College as it is traditionally known) was established to train Church of Ireland clergy in Ireland. By the late nineteenth century, this Protestant ethos was still very much in place, though lessening by degrees. Catholics were allowed attend the University following the passing of the Catholic Relief Act of 1793. The numbers of Catholic attending the university slowly increased over the coming century, reaching twenty-two percent of the student population by 1927.⁶ This was in spite of Catholic bishops adopting their first condemnation of attending TCD in 1875, with the 'ban' as it became known being enforced more rigorously under the aegis of Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid, between 1944 and 1970.⁷ The majority

⁶ D. A. Webb, 'Religious Controversy and Harmony at Trinity College Dublin over Four Centuries' in *Hermathena* (1992), p. 111.

⁷ Ibid., pp 111–12.: See also *Trinity News*, 2 March 1961, whose front page was titled 'The Ban on Trinity: Archbishop's Lenten Pastoral', and which cited the provisions of the Plenary Council, 1956, whose "principal provisions are:- " We forbid, under pain of mortal sin: (i) Catholic youths to frequent

of staff were members of the various Protestant denominations, with the School of History proving no exception. The History Department from 1914 to 1939 consisted of three lecturers, Edmund Curtis, W.A. Phillips and Contantia Maxwell.⁸

Appointed lecturer in Modern History in 1909, Maxwell has been defined by McDowell and Webb as representative of the ex-Unionist who “remain[ed] physically in Ireland but [who] emigrate[d] mentally, recognizing contemporary Ireland only in so far as was necessary for the purchase of stamps or the payment of income tax...they made it clear that their abiding city was not in the Irish Free State, but rather in Britain or in the Ireland of the past.”⁹ Curtis was seen as a “devoted student of medieval Irish history...who brought to the school –albeit at the cost of a certain dryness- a severe professionalism which it had hitherto lacked”¹⁰ while Philips, the First Lecky Professor of Modern History was described as being “a good complement to Curtis, as his interests lay mainly in recent European history.”¹¹ As R.B. McDowell noted however “he remained the undisguised and unashamed Englishman doing a job in a foreign land, and spending in Dublin only the minimum period needed for his lectures and examinations.”¹² The latter two ran the majority of classes within the History department, aided by Maxwell.¹³

History at TCD from the 1920s until the late 1940s was predominantly British and European, with Irish history being relegated to the freshman years only, not being taught at Sophister level. The ‘Great man tradition’ of historical writing, prominent at this time, can be seen in the choice of recommended texts, where three of the five texts chosen for the 1924-25 ‘Prize Examination’ on the period 1714-1801 were biographies of central political figures,¹⁴ with

that College; (ii) Parents or guardians to send to that College Catholic youth entrusted to their care; (iii) Clerics or Religious to commend in any way to parents or guardians to send Catholic youths to that College, or to give help or lend counsel to such youths to attend that College.”

⁸ Maxwell graduated from Trinity with a gold medal in 1908 and was the first woman on the academic staff at Trinity College.

⁹ R. B. McDowell, D. A. Webb and F. S. L. Lyons, *Trinity College Dublin, 1592-1952: an academic history* (Dublin, 2004), p. 432.

¹⁰ Leon Ó Broin, *Protestant nationalists in revolutionary Ireland: the Stopford connection* (Dublin, 1985), p. 412.

¹¹ McDowell et al., *Trinity College Dublin, 1592-1952*, p. 413.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ J.V. Luce, *Trinity College Dublin: the first 400 years* (Dublin, 1992), p. 143.

¹⁴ The recommended texts were as follows: “Hunt and Poole, *The Political History of England*, vols. IX

the other two being political histories of England and Ireland, respectively. Trinity historian W.E.H. Lecky's *History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century* featured heavily.¹⁵ It is worth noting how Irish history, when given a place of prominence, was consistently framed alongside the History of England, while the chosen authors were almost entirely of a Unionist persuasion, such as Richard Bagwell,¹⁶ and Robert Dunlop.¹⁷

For prospective teachers who graduated from Trinity (mostly Protestant), Irish history would have been portrayed as being of lesser importance. The historical context is crucial to understanding why this was. Irish history was not part of the syllabus at TCD during the nineteenth century, and was not taught at Trinity until 1923, under Curtis.¹⁸ Its recent nature would have affected its status within the University. From the 1950s onwards however, under the stewardship of T.W. Moody, McDowell, and A.J. Otway-Ruthven, followed by the likes of F.S.L. Lyons and James Lydon, Irish history began to occupy a more central position in the History courses at Trinity, and was no longer directly related to the Unionist ethos seen in the early twentieth century. By 1955, Irish history was studied as its own subject, as opposed to being directly tied to English history as before. This move reflected the developments in Irish historiography with the increased professionalization of Irish history, building on the academic work and practices of Curtis at Trinity, and MacNeill at UCD among others, alongside the growth of the *Irish Historical Studies* journal (of which Moody was a prominent member).¹⁹ This historiographical approach was encapsulated by FSL Lyons in 1973 when he declared the

and X.

Morley, Walpole, Morley, Burke, Rosebery, Pitt, Lecky, History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century, chapters 2-5, 7, 8, 12, 13, The Cambridge Modern History, Vol.VI, Chap 14.”

¹⁵ Dublin University Calendar for the year 1924-25 (Dublin, 1925) pp 107-10.

¹⁶ Bagwell notably extended W.E.H. Lecky's defence of the eighteenth century ascendancy backward to the seventeenth and sixteenth centuries, and “lauded the achievement of the English colonial governors and setters of the period in the face of hostility and treachery of the native Irish and the treachery, neglect, and indifference of the English government in Whitehall.” See Brady, ‘Arrested Development’, p. 294.

¹⁷ Dunlop's unionist perspectives on Ireland was specifically referenced in Steven Ellis, ‘Nationalist Historiography and the English and Gaelic Worlds in the Late Middle Ages’ in Ciaran Brady (ed.), *Interpreting Irish history: the debate on historical revisionism 1938-1994* (Dublin, 1994), p. 162.

¹⁸ Brady, ‘Arrested Development’, p. 288.; While some previous figures, such as John P Mahaffy were said to have made individual contributions to Irish historical research, Brady acknowledges that ultimately, the field of enquiry was ‘actively discouraged’ in TCD.

¹⁹ For a definitive discussion of the IHS and the general debates around Historical revisionism in Ireland see Brady, “Constructive and Instructive”: The Dilemma of Ireland’s First “New Historians””.

principal business of the historian to be “to elicit the facts of which we are at present woefully ignorant, and to set out those facts in the clearest and least sensational prose we can achieve.”²⁰ As noted in Chapter 2, this approach was not universally accepted as being beneficial, nor as representing positive progress.²¹ It was seen by some, not as a clinical establishing of the ‘true’ facts of Irish history, but as an iconoclastic attack on Irish nationalism, hidden behind its ostensibly ‘value-free’ style of writing.²² Nevertheless, it did represent the dominant style within Irish historiography into the latter half of the twentieth century.

Under Moody in 1950s, the course was also revised so as to give Sophister students an opportunity for greater specialization.²³ Irish History (400-1914) became a possible area of study at Junior Sophister level. At Senior Sophister level, the final section of the three-part course required students to choose one subject from a specified list, on which papers were set at the Moderatorship exam, or write a thesis. Of the eleven subjects listed only one (#8 – Young Ireland) corresponded to Irish history.²⁴ This demonstrated that while Irish history was held in higher esteem than previously, it was still peripheral overall up to the 1960s.

[University College Cork:](#)

In stark contrast to Trinity College, University College Cork during this period maintained a robust Roman Catholic ethos under the stewardship of Alfred O’Rahilly, whose influence, it was noted, continued into the 1960s.²⁵ Within the National University, UCC was given a role towards the “readjusting of cultural conventions in this country”, and the promotion

²⁰ F. S. L. Lyons, ‘The dilemma of the Irish contemporary historian’ in *Hermathena*, no. 115 (1973), p. 55.

²¹ Consider for instance, Brendan Bradshaw’s critique on the negative result of this new style of writing, especially in relation to 19th century Irish history: “... confronted by the catastrophic dimension of Irish history, the discomfiture of the modern school of value-free historians is apparent. So is the source of their discomfiture: a concept of professionalism which denies the historian recourse to value-judgments and therefore, access to the kind of moral and emotional register necessary to respond to human tragedy.” Bradshaw, ‘Nationalism and Historical Scholarship in Modern Ireland’, p. 341.

²² For the most strident opposition to the ‘Revisionists’ see Fennell, ‘Against Revisionism’; and Bradshaw, ‘Nationalism and Historical Scholarship in Modern Ireland’.

²³ McDowell et al., *Trinity College Dublin, 1592-1952*, p. 458.

²⁴ Dublin University Calendar for the year 1954-55 (Dublin, 1954), pp 150-7.

²⁵ John A. Murphy, *Where Finbarr Taught: A Concise History of Queen’s/University College Cork* (Cork, 2007), p. 56. See also Donnchadh Ó Corráin (ed.), *James Hogan, Revolutionary, Historian and Political Scientists*, (Dublin, 2001), esp. pp 35-8.: O’Rahilly was college Registrar between 1920 and 1943, and president until his retirement in 1954.

of an ‘Irish-Ireland ideal’. This was reflected both in staff, and in courses set for study.²⁶ With regards to History during the period, one influential figure dominated; Professor of History from 1920 to 1963, James Hogan.

As regards Irish history, courses at UCC, similar to UCG and UCD, were structured around two key examination periods; the First University Examination -to be taken at the end of the first year (provided that the student has met certain requirements), and the Degree examination, following the completion of a student’s third and final year.

Beyond the few taking History *as Gaeilge* under D.J. Leahy,²⁷ the great majority of UCC history students followed the three-year course outlined by Hogan. In 1936-37, for first year at both pass and honours level, this comprised of two parts; European History from 1763 to modern times, and Irish History between 1558 and 1700, with the Honours course treating the Pass lecture topics in more detail. For textbooks, the syllabus initially recommended the works of Alice Stopford Green, *The Making of Ireland and its Undoing*, Hayden and Moonan, *A Short History of the Irish People*, John Prendergast, *The Cromwellian Settlement in Ireland*, and Philip Wilson, *The Beginnings of Modern Ireland*. It is interesting to note the inclusion of an additional text recommended for Honours, namely Richard Bagwell’s *Ireland under the Tudors*, (London, 1885-1890),²⁸ especially considering Bagwell’s position as part of the Anglo-Irish school of scholarship of the late nineteenth century. Ciaran Brady specifically noted how Hayden (as well as MacNeill) “simply refused to engage with their [Lecky, Orpen and Bagwell] accounts”²⁹ in rejection of their

²⁶ Notably, in relation to staff, were Daniel Corkery, member of staff in the School of English and famous for his work *Hidden Ireland*, as well as Éamon Ó Donnchadha and his brother Tadhg (Torna), in the School of Irish, who alongside other members of the Governing Body of UCC were involved in the continued Gaelicisation of UCC, See John A. Murphy, *The College: A History of Queen’s/University College Cork, 1845-1995* (Cork, 1995), p. 245.

²⁷ University College Cork, *Féilire 1935-36* (Cork, 1935), pp 107-110; Leahy was lecturer in History and Geography (through Irish). Ciaran Brady also references a Mr. Patrick Kennedy, who offered a combined general course in history and geography until the late 1930s, as an untrained historian. Brady, ‘Arrested Development’, pp 288-9.; There was no record of Kennedy in the UCC University Calendars however. For a list of lecturers and Professors from University College Cork see ‘The National University of Ireland’, *Calendar, 1970*, (Dublin, 1972), pp 383-95.

²⁸ Henry Morley (ed) *Ireland under Elizabeth* was also recommended for Honours.

²⁹ Brady, ‘Arrested Development’, p. 296.

ideological stances.³⁰ That Bagwell was recommended for reading alongside the likes of Stopford Green and Hayden would point to an academic atmosphere at UCC whereby such counter-narratives as Bagwell's were not excluded (though not necessarily promoted, considering that this was not included as part of the general course.)

Nevertheless, a particular nationalist reading of Irish history can be detected through the recommended texts, especially in the degree years. In 1935-36 for more modern Irish history, the readings ranged from the speeches of Henry Grattan, to Hayden and Moonan, to works on Daniel O'Connell, and R.R. Madden's several volume work, *The United Irishmen- Their Lives and Times*; a work whose aim, as later defined, was “to rehabilitate the United Irishmen, to lend them respectability, and to explain their rebellion as an inevitable consequence of bad government.”³¹ For the course on Early and Medieval Irish History to A.D. 1169, the recommended reading featured Eleanor Hull, *History of Ireland*, as well as Curtis' *History of Medieval Ireland*, which were also used at TCD. More substantial however was the prominence of Eoin MacNeill, who had three works- *Celtic Ireland* (Dublin 1921), *Phases of Irish History* (Dublin, 1919), and a series of articles on the life of St Patrick (1926 to 1929) recommended,³² as well as Stopford Green's, *History of the Irish State to 1014*. Originally a series of public lectures delivered at UCD in 1915-16, and subsequently published, R.A. Stuart Macalister, *Ireland in the Pre-Celtic Times*, (London, 1921) was also among the reading list.³³

³⁰ Similarly, following a scathing review of Stopford Green's work by Robert Dunlop, where he questioned Green's adequacy and trustworthiness as an historian, Green's response was telling. As noted by historian Leon Ó Broin, she contended that what was really at play was “the old conflict between tradition and enquiry, and by tradition she meant how [Unionist] writers had hitherto tended to deal with the story of Ireland's past.” See Ó Broin, *Protestant nationalists in revolutionary Ireland*, p. 23.

³¹ DIB, ‘Richard Robert Madden’, <http://dib.cambridge.org/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a5302> viewed 07/02/18.

³² MacNeill's *Irish Laws and Institutions* was also among the few texts cited for Honors 'Special Study', alongside inter alia, Seathrún Céitinn's *History of Ireland*, and Gougard *Christianity in Celtic Lands*. MacNeill's collection of articles on St Patrick were published in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* ,(Ser. 6, Vol. XVIII, pp. 1-21, 1928; Ser. 6, Vol. XIX, pp. 1-15, 1929) and in the 'Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy', Vol. XXXVII, Sect. C, pp. 118-140, March, 1926.

³³ University College Cork, *Féilire 1935-36* (Cork, 1935), pp 107-110; Benedict Fitzpatrick, *Ireland and the Making of Britain*, (London, 1921) was also featured.

UCC was the most diverse out of all the NUI colleges in terms of how the Irish history course was structured, following a more asymmetrical chronological model. Irish history from earliest until modern times (up until 1887) was being taught, though not necessarily in a linear order.³⁴ First year classes generally tended to focus on modern Irish history.³⁵ Though Hogan specialised in late-medieval to early modern history, he taught a broad combination of Irish history, philosophy and political science for his degree courses. Although no Irish history, beyond 1815 was taught throughout the 1940s and 1950s, Irish history remained a central part of the syllabus throughout the period, and continued to do so after Hogan's retirement in 1960. This precipitated a change in how history was structured in UCC, under his replacement Seamus Pender, who had also been appointed Professor of Irish History in 1955.³⁶ Section B of the First Year course in 1964-65 examined "the General History of Ireland from AD 1800), covering the Act of Union until recent times, with Honours students making 'a special study of the periods 1842-58 and 1891-1916.'³⁷ As for the Second and Third Year courses, more ecclesiastical history was included with regard to Irish history than previously.

[University College Galway:](#)

Of the two other NUI colleges, University College Galway was the most similar to Cork, in terms of ethos, and the importance it placed on Irish history. UCG was the smallest of the university colleges. In 1926-27, only 246 students were enrolled.³⁸ Despite this, the University's commitment to the Irish language, later enshrined in the University College Galway Act, 1929³⁹

³⁴ The general syllabus for Pass and Honours Degrees included (a) History of Ireland from 1799 to 1887, to be taken in First Year, and (a) History of Ireland to the year 1485, in Second Year.

³⁵ Except for a brief experiment in the 1930s where the period from Elizabethan era to the Penal Laws was stressed instead.

³⁶ *Irish Independent*, 22 April 1955.

³⁷ University College Cork, *Féilire*, 1964-65, p. 85

³⁸ Coláiste na hIolscgoile, Gaillimh, Féilire do 1926-27, 'Calendar for University College, Galway, for 1926-26' (Dublin, 1926), pp 305 ff.

³⁹ This act was the result of a number of years of debate and discussion, embodied in a November 1925 'Conference on Galway University College' whose report called for Galway to be made a Gaelic University. Their terms of reference were "to determine how University College Galway can best engage in some special work of National importance, e.g. fulfilling of the functions of an Irish-speaking University College through the conducting of University teaching of general subjects through the medium of Irish." See *Conference on Galway University College: Report on the Conference*, quoted in Séamus Mac Mathuna, 'National University of Ireland, Galway' in Tom Dunne, John Coolahan, Maurice Manning and Gearóid Tuathaigh (eds), *The National University of Ireland, 1908-2008: centenary essays*

provided a strong cultural and political reason for official support of the College⁴⁰ and was reflected in a lectureship *as Gaeilge* in History being established in November 1927.⁴¹ Holders of this position were thereafter required to lecture History through Irish and to allow students to be examined in it. Two separate history courses were consequently being taught at UCG: one through Irish, under Síle Ní Chinnéide, and one through English under Mary Donovan O'Sullivan, Professor of History, from 1912 to 1957.⁴²

Out of the four universities examined, UCG was unique in that it did not publish the syllabuses for individual subjects as part of its university Calendar until the 1970s.⁴³ Consequently, this research focusses on the annual examination papers for this earlier period. Two papers existed for the first year Pass course: one on English history and one specifically on Irish history. The course on Irish history ranged from (at least) the Norman Conquest until the end of the Tudor Reign (1169-1603).

For the First University Exam (under Donovan O'Sullivan), Paper one covered Irish history from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century.⁴⁴ The B.A. Degree Examination ('An Chéim') consisted of four papers.⁴⁵ For the degree *as Gaeilge*, the first paper in 1935 examined European History from the Middle Ages to the seventeenth century. It featured two questions (out of eight), on Irish history, notably Q.3 on the difference between the state of Irish Christianity in the twelfth century and what the pope declared it to be.⁴⁶ These Pre-Norman reforms of the Irish Church was

(Dublin, 2008), p. 71.;

⁴⁰ An tAthair Eustás Ó Héideáin, 'History of the School of Education, NUI Galway : 'The Beginnings'', (2001), http://www.nuigalway.ie/faculties_departments/education/history.html, viewed 13/02/2018; tAthair Eustás Ó Héideáin O.P., served as Professor of Education at UCG from 1968-1988.

⁴¹ This was proposed, as one of four (the others being in mathematics, education, and commerce) lectureships, to supplement the six professors already competent to lecture through Irish. Ultimately, only the first three positions were approved of. See Séamus Mac Mathuna, 'National University of Ireland, Galway', pp 72-6.

⁴² Ní Chinnéide was specifically commended for the quality of her History teaching through Irish by former students and later academics. See J.J. Lee, 'Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh' in John Cunningham and Niall Ó Ciosáin (eds), *Culture and society in Ireland since 1750: essays in honour of Gearóid Tuathaigh* (Dublin, 2015), pp 2-4.

⁴³ See 1971 as an example.

⁴⁴ Paper 2 covered the same period but for European history.

⁴⁵ NUIG Archives/Special collections/ 'The National University of Ireland, *University College Galway, Examination Papers*, 1935 [G 32-35 I-IV].

⁴⁶ NUIG Archives/Special collections/ 'The National University of Ireland, *University College Galway, Examination Papers*, 1935 [G 32]: This was specifically discussed using Seathrún Céitinn's account of

also a popular topic in secondary schools, as noted in Chapter 6. This highlights common ground between a university emphasis on ecclesiastical history (also seen at UCC under Pender), and an important element of the Leaving Certificate examinations questions in Irish history.

Paper two specifically examined Irish History from the seventeenth century until modern times.⁴⁷ Paper four required the student to write a thesis on any one of six options (three of which were specific to Ireland, while two others could feasibly use Irish history to support an answer.)⁴⁸ Irish history under Ní Chinnéide was promoted from a national perspective, while also taught as a contingent part of European history.

In terms of ideology, the examination questions in UCG featured a more nationalistic interpretation of Irish history than TCD for example. The 1935 B.A. Degree examination, Paper two, Question 5 (as Gaeilge) asked the student to draw all of the comparisons between the work of Tone and that of Casement “i gcúis na hÉireann” (‘for the cause of Ireland’). The wording of the questions specifically framed these two figures in positive terms. Despite the difference in ethos, there was co-operation between TCD and UCG during the period, as demonstrated by Professor Moody being the chief external examiner who devised the papers (both ‘First University’ and ‘Degree’) in 1944 and 1946, alongside O’Sullivan, while Curtis had previously helped devise papers.⁴⁹

Irish history was a central aspect of history at UCG. Like TCD, History and Politics were related, as demonstrated by Paper Three, but unlike Trinity, UCG maintained a far greater emphasis on Irish history in both the First University Exam and in its degree courses.

The staff at UCG, while small, proved constant. Professor Donovan O’Sullivan and Síle Ní Chinnéide ran the History department between them for over thirty years. The course for Irish

Pope Adrianus.

⁴⁷ Paper 3 covered English and European history from the fifteenth to the late nineteenth century.

⁴⁸ *University College Galway, Examination Papers*, 1935 [G 35]; The options for Paper 4 were as follows: “(a) Buadh na síothchána agus uathbhás an chogaidh. (Benefits of peace and the horrors of war.); (b) An Córás Féodálach mar chóras cosanta. (Feudal system as a defence system) (c) An rian d’fhág Ionnsadh na Lochlannach ar shaoghal na nGaedheal. (Effects of Viking attacks on Irish life) (d) Na ‘Géadhma Fiadhaine’. (Wild Geese) (e) Fuil agus Iarann I stair na Prúise (Blood and Iron in Prussian History) (f) An mhuscailt a thug Réabhlóid na Frainne ar chúrsaí poiblíde na hÉireann.” (The positive effects that the French Revolution had on public life in Ireland.) -Topics personally translated to English.

⁴⁹ Ollscoil na hÉireann, Summer Examinations, 1946, ‘History’ G 155.

History as Gaeilge consistently dealt with the ‘Golden Age’ of Irish history, from the fifth to the ninth centuries, in the first year. Ní Chinnéide differed her emphasis on early modern and modern history at Degree level however in subsequent decades. Donovan O’Sullivan was also consistent in what she taught; from the coming of the Normans until the end of the Elizabethan period for first year, before continuing from then until the late nineteenth century with her Degree classes. This was the course from the 1920s until her retirement in the late 1950s. The course altered slightly under her successor Gerald Hayes-McCoy, though not in any fundamental way until the early 1970s. The examination papers highlighted how history teaching (especially *as Gaeilge*) promoted a nationalist ideology.

The modernisation of UCG in general, and the History Department under Hayes-McCoy in particular, is evident in the fact that by 1972, the University Calendar now featured the History syllabus in detail, as well as a detailed reading list (similar to the other major universities).⁵⁰ All students were required to study core aspects of Irish and European history.⁵¹ Irish history from the eighteenth century until modern times was taken in Third Year by Honours candidates only. This decision would seem to support claims made in earlier chapters, notably Chapter 4, as to the avoidance of recent Irish history, being considered at UCG by only the most advanced students. Honours candidates were also required to take a course in Constitutional history, similar to TCD.

Fig 1.24– Calendar for UCG, 1972-73:

⁵⁰ Coláiste na hIolscgoile, Gaillimh, Féilire do 1972-73, ‘Calendar for University College, Galway, for 1972-73’ (Dublin, 1972), pp 93-6.

⁵¹ Candidates for honours being “expected to show a wider knowledge of the subject matter of the course” than pass candidates. See Coláiste na hIolscgoile, Gaillimh, Féilire do 1972-73, ‘Calendar for University College, Galway, for 1972-73’ (Dublin, 1972), p. 93.

HISTORY.**First Year.****Pass.**

The History of Ireland from the period immediately preceding the Norman invasion to the end of the fifteenth century.

A general survey of the History of Europe, with particular reference to the history of England, in the late medieval period.

A general survey of the History of Europe from the end of the fifteenth century to the opening of the nineteenth century. In this, particular attention will be paid to the broad themes of the evolution of modern society, the development of European states, and the relations which existed in the period covered between Europe and other parts of the world.

Lists of text books which are recommended for study will be distributed to students at the commencement of the year. Wide reading is essential for the proper understanding of the subjects discussed in the lectures, and for adequate performance at examinations.

The periodic writing of set essays is required. The essays which are written will be discussed with the students.

Attendance at Tutorial Classes is required. Arrangements regarding these Classes will be announced early in the Michaelmas Term.

Honours.

Candidates for Honours at the First University examination will be expected to show a wider knowledge of the subject matter of the course than candidates for Pass.

Second and Third Years.**(1) The History of Ireland:**

- (A) from the end of the fifteenth century to the middle of the eighteenth century and
- (B) from the middle of the eighteenth century to modern times.

James Hardiman Library, NUI Galway

Course (A) is taken both by Honours and Pass candidates in the Second Year.

Course (B) is taken by Honours candidates only in the Third Year.

(2) The History of Europe:

- (A) from the end of the fifteenth century to the middle of the seventeenth century;
- (B) from the middle of the seventeenth century to 1815, and
- (C) from 1815 to 1878.

Course (A) is taken both by Honours and Pass candidates in the Second Year. Pass candidates take Course (B) in the Third Year. Honours candidates take Courses (B) and (C) in the Third Year.

In addition to the above, Honours candidates will be required to attend a course of lectures in Constitutional History during the Second and Third Years.

Lists of text books which are recommended for study will be distributed to students at the commencement of each year. Particular attention is drawn to the fact that wide reading is more than ever necessary for students in the Second and Third Years. Students are urged to use every effort to attain proficiency in written composition; their adequate performance at examinations will depend on their ability to make reasoned, literate statements. The periodic writing of set essays is required. Acquaintance with the course prescribed for the First Year will be presumed.

Students presenting History as a Subsidiary subject in the Second Year will attend lectures in the History of Ireland, Course (A) above, and in the History of Europe, Course (A) above.

STAIR.**An Chéad Bhliain.**

1. Oidhreacht an tSean-Saoil Mheánmhuiiri.
2. Stair na hÉireann go 1166.
3. Stair na hEorpa, 313–962.

James Hardiman Library, NUI Galway

Gnáthchúrsa.

Blunt : The Ancient World and its Legacy to us.
Ó Riain : Stair na hÉireann.
Mac Néill : Ancient Laws and Institutions.
Gougaud : Christianity in Celtic Lands.
Ni Chinnéide : An tSean-Eoraip.

Onóracha.

W. G. de Burgh : The Legacy of the Ancient World.
Alfoldi : Conversion of Constantine and Pagan Rome.
P. N. Ure : Justinian and his Age.
N. K. Chadwick : Poetry and Letters of Early Christian Gaul.

An Dara Bláin.

1. Stair na hÉireann, 1166–1603.
 2. Stair na hEorpa, 962–1618.
- Staidear speisialta ar trí cinn aca seo :
- (a) An Córás Feodach.
 - (b) Cogai na Croise.
 - (c) An Choinimhlint idir an Impireacht agus an Pháipacht.
 - (d) Síosma Mór an Iarthair.

Gnáthchúrsa.

Curtis : History of Medieval Ireland.
Trevelyan : Illustrated English Social History : I and II.
Ganshof : Feudalism.
Daniel-Rops : Cathedrals and Crusades.
Norman Cantor : Medieval History.
Hughes : The Reformation in England.

Onóracha.

Runciman : A History of the Crusades.
Ullman : The Origin of the Great Schism.
Ronan : The Reformation in Dublin.
Constant : The Reformation in England.
Lecler : The Two Sovereignties.

An Tríú Bláin.

1. Stair na hÉireann ó 1603.
2. Stair na hEorpa, 1618–1815.

James Hardiman Library, NUI Galway

Staidéar speisialta ar :

- (a) Cúrsai na Fraince sa 17ú agus san 18ú céad.
- (b) Cúrsai na hÉireann san 18ú agus sa 19ú céad.

Gnáthchúrsa.

Lecky : History of Ireland in the 18th Century.
O'Hegarty : A History of Ireland under the Union.
S. Gwynn : Grattan and his Time.
Ó Siocfhradha : Beatha Theobald Wolfe Tone.
S. Mae Giolla Easpaig : Tomás Ruiséil.
Postgate : Robert Emmet.
Ó Duibhir : Domhnall Ó Conaill.
Hone : Thomas Davis.
Woodham-Smith : The Great Hunger.
Thornley : Isaac Butt and Home Rule.
Ó Broin : Parnell.
Cruise O'Brien : Parnell and his Party.
S. Ó Lúing : Art Ó Griofa.
Rayner : European History, 1648–1789.
Huxley : Grey Eminence.
Lewis : The Splendid Century.
de Tocqueville : France before the Revolution.
Goodwin : The French Revolution.

Onóracha.

Mac Nevin : Pieces of Irish History.
Edwards and Williams : The Great Famine.
MacIntyre : The Liberator.
Norman : The Catholic Church and Ireland in the age of Reform.
Trevelyan : The English Revolution, 1688–'89.
Thompson : The French Revolution.
Madelin : L'Ascension de Bonaparte.
Markham : Napoleon.
Berlin : Historical Inevitability.
Butterfield : Man and his past.
Carr : What is History?
Molfar a thuilleadh ó am go ham.

James Hardiman Library, NUI Galway

[University College Dublin:](#)

While central to the majority of staff in its Department, Irish history maintained an inferior position within the overall History course at UCD until the late 1940s. As the largest constituent college of the NUI, UCD provided the third level education for the largest number of secondary teachers. It is also significant as Hayden, Ryan, and notably in relation to education, Corcoran were members of staff. This allows for a more detailed study to be conducted on this university college. UCD also provided the most variation in terms of syllabus selection for the B.A. in History. This owed much to its superior staff size. In 1924-25, the School of History boasted three full time members: John M. O'Sullivan Professor of Modern History; prominent Gaelic scholar Eoin MacNeill,⁵² Professor of Early (including Medieval) Irish History, (and at the time Minister for Education); and Mary Hayden, Professor of Modern Irish History.

In terms of ethos and atmosphere, it is important to remember UCD's origins. Originally titled the 'Catholic University' until 1883, it was presided over by the Society of Jesus, from then until the passing of the Irish Universities Act, 1908, when it was re-established as a Constituent College of the National University of Ireland.⁵³ This tradition helps explain the large number of clergy and Jesuits on the teaching staff, especially in the schools of Education and (from the 1930s onwards) History. Moreover, in the early decades of the new state, Professor of Modern Irish language and Literature at UCD was none other than Gaelic League co-founder and later, first president of Ireland, Douglas Hyde.⁵⁴

For the First University Examination, the course was simply outlined as 'Modern history', and could be taken as one of a student's five required subjects.⁵⁵ The syllabus was divided in two;

⁵² MacNeill was cited as 'John MacNeill' in the University calendars.

⁵³ University College Dublin, *Calendar for the Session, 1964-65* (Dublin, 1964), p. 23.

⁵⁴ Hyde was also Dean of the Faculty of Celtic Studies, of which Mac Neill, Hayden, and O'Sullivan were members.

⁵⁵ University College Dublin, *Calendar for the Session, 1924-25* (Dublin, 1924), pp 135; Students chose five subjects from the following list: Latin, Greek, Modern Irish, English, Welsh, French, German, Italian, Hebrew, Spanish, Mathematics, Mathematical Physics, Logic, Modern History, Experimental Physics, Chemistry, Botany, Zoology, Music, Geography.

O’Sullivan’s course on modern European History, and Hayden’s course on modern Irish and English History (1558 to 1700 for pass, ‘Modern Irish History A.D. 1700 to AD 1881’ ‘English History from AD 1815’ for honours.) On a linguistic level, it is also worth noting how, unlike her counterparts at TCD, Hayden placed Irish history first when framing the course, defining it as ‘Outlines of Irish and English History’.⁵⁶

For the B.A. Degree exam, two separate options for Irish history were available, Modern Irish History (under Hayden) and Early and Medieval Irish History (under MacNeill). As was the case throughout the NUI, second and third years attended the same course of lectures. Hayden’s honours course for Modern Irish History in the 1920s focussed on 1485 to 1870, across two years.⁵⁷ ‘Ancient Irish History’ followed a consistent structure, divided into two year courses, with the first year studying the Period: 1014 to 1492, focussing on the Pre-Norman Period, and the Norman Period separately.⁵⁸ The second year comprised a study of the Pre-Christian Period, (including a study of Archaeology) and of AD 432 to 1014.⁵⁹

Within the *Honours School of History*, to receive a degree a student was required to take one major subject and two minor subjects; the major being ‘Modern History’, with ‘Modern Irish History’ and ‘Early and Medieval Irish History’, being two of six possible minor subject options.⁶⁰ An honours degree in History therefore valued each of the courses specific to Irish History at half that of O’Sullivan’s general ‘Modern History’ in terms of academic weighting.⁶¹

In terms of content, the Degree courses in Modern Irish History were not outlined in any major way, beyond the dates set for study.⁶² However as *Hayden and Moonan* was originally

⁵⁶ University College Dublin, *Calendar for the Session, 1924-25* (Dublin, 1924), pp 136-7.

⁵⁷ This was divided into 1485-1642 (with a Special Study of the period 1595 to 1652), and 1652-1870 (Special Study of the Irish Parliament, from 1689 to 1800).

⁵⁸ Both were studied under the following headings: ‘Annals’; ‘Ecclesiastical Affairs’; ‘Social and Industrial History’; ‘Arts, Literature and National Culture in general’.

⁵⁹ University College Dublin, *Calendar for the Session, 1924-25* (Dublin, 1924), pp 190-1; For the honours course, students studied the Ordinary Course for the alternate year in more detail.

⁶⁰ See pp 142-3 for further details.

⁶¹ University College Dublin, *Calendar for the Session, 1934-35* (Dublin, 1934), pp 771-2.

⁶² By 1934-35 Hayden’s course covered the ‘Outlines of Irish and English History from AD 1691 to AD 1850’ at ordinary level, and ‘Modern Irish History A.D. 1485 to AD 1691’ and ‘English History from AD 1815’ at Honours level.

intended as a textbook for University students, and seeing that Mary Hayden was in charge of teaching Modern Irish history at UCD, it is not surprising that her text was used to guide classes during her tenure as Professor. Her private papers confirm this, with many of her lecture notes appearing almost as draft versions of chapters in her text,⁶³ while the text itself featured on the recommended reading lists.

Her private papers also provide some insight into what her classes consisted of, demonstrating (for example) how her First University Course began with a lecture on History, the Historical Method and source criticism.⁶⁴ Alongside this, Hayden outlined the need to evaluate ‘Great Men’ as more than being “wholly produced of their circumstances”, but as individuals as well, critiquing the ‘German School’ of Historiography, before outlining how to critique source material. As for the study of Irish history, she postulated how “We are to study the [history] of our own country. In some ways this makes the study easier. We understand our own better.” Her students were reminded to “Always remember that all countries, like all individuals, have material faults, have done many things, have...sometimes stood on the wrong side... -this is also so with individuals.”

Ultimately, Hayden’s lecture notes demonstrate the over-riding nationalist underpinnings of her course, while allowing for a degree of criticality. As she tells her students, one still “must be fair”, that one can “love our country without being blind to its faults” and that they were “Citizens of a small, but not a mean commonwealth, not the best in the world, but the best to us, like our parents.”⁶⁵ This demonstrated how any prospective teachers who attended her classes were being taught from this broadly nationalistic perspective.

The recommended texts for the Honours courses contained a proliferation of texts from nationalist historians like Stopford Green, polemicists like the Young Irisher, John Mitchell, and accounts from United Irishmen active in the 1798 Rebellion (Byrne). These gave further

⁶³ NLI/Mary Hayden Papers/ MS 24,007, Notes on Irish History, Language and Literature, (Early 20th Century).

⁶⁴ NLI/ MS 24,007 (1), 1935-36.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

evidence of the nationalist outlook adopted in Hayden's classes regarding Irish history. Moreover, Hayden's textbook was also highly influential to teachers in secondary schools, as seen in Chapter 4. Hayden was similar to the UCC and UCG historians, in that she maintained a traditional approach to historiography, which promoted the 'Great Men' of Irish history, with a particular emphasis on high politics and military engagements.

By 1945, Hayden had retired⁶⁶ and had been replaced by her former M.A. student Robert Dudley Edwards. Rev. John Ryan had also replaced MacNeill as Professor of Ancient Irish history. Dudley Edwards' considerable standing in the Department (and in Irish academia in general) can be seen by the fact that it was now possible to complete a B.A. degree with a joint major in Modern History and Modern Irish History, requiring two years' study in each.⁶⁷ Irish history was elevated to an equal level of importance as European History. Furthermore, Modern Irish history was now a component part of the Modern History course, which all history students were required to take for their Degree.⁶⁸ As well as highlighting its growing status at UCD, this also demonstrates how Irish history was to be studied not simply in isolation, but within a wider European framework.⁶⁹

'Modern Irish History' by 1955-56 was now solely taken in conjunction with Modern History, as an Honours course. In terms of course focus, it was specifically cited for Honours students how "Honours Courses will include special historical study of social and economic questions..."⁷⁰ This was an early indication of the changes which occurred in Irish historiography in the post-war period. Such changes helped to underpin curriculum reform at second level in the following decade.

⁶⁶ Hayden retired in 1938.

⁶⁷ University College Dublin, *Calendar for the Session, 1944-45* (Dublin, 1944), p. 130: One could still observe the previous situation, taking a degree with Modern History as the major, with Early and mediaeval Irish History, and Modern Irish History being two possible minor subjects to this.

⁶⁸ For example, the course for 1943-44 was on the "Revolutionary Epoch in Europe, 1763-1815; preceded by lectures in Absolutism and the Balance of Power" (Four Lectures per week.) A further lecture was to be given weekly on 'The Revolutionary Movement in Ireland, 1760-1803.' The following year's course on 'Europe during the Renaissance and Reformation' also included a weekly lecture on 'The Reformation in Ireland, 1534-1603.'

⁶⁹ University College Dublin, *Calendar for the Session, 1944-45* (Dublin, 1944), pp 178-80.

⁷⁰ University College Dublin, *Calendar for the Session, 1955-56* (Dublin, 1955), p. 93.

The 1960s in UCD (as elsewhere) was a period of significant change, not least of all in terms of staff. In 1964-65 Ryan resigned as Professor of Medieval Irish History.⁷¹ The previous year saw the appointment of Rev. F.X. Martin as Professor of Medieval History. The UCD History Department, “with well-known professors such as Robert (Robin) Dudley Edwards and T. Desmond Williams” was looked on at this time “not only as one of the most progressive and successful departments in the college, but also as one run by strongly independently-minded people.”⁷²

Irish history was integral to the department in terms of staff, with two of the three History lecturers in the 1920s and 1930s specialising in the field: MacNeill in Early and Medieval Irish History, and Hayden in Modern Irish History. This focus was also coupled with a nationalist perspective. Yet, until the mid-1940s, Irish history was of lesser academic importance, with Modern history being the primary aspect taught, under John M. O’Sullivan. This reflected the contemporary state of academia, in which Irish history was not as widely researched as other more established fields of enquiry. Hayden for example, while praised for her ‘undoubted talent’ was specifically criticised by historian of UCD Donal McCartney for her lack of involvement in modern historical research.⁷³ The increased professionalization of Irish history from the 1930s onwards and growth of the history departments allowed for further research to be conducted, which helped raise its status. Moreover, Irish history was given parity of esteem for the final degree at UCD under Dudley Edwards, being a component part of the Modern History course, as well as a possible dual major subject in its own regard, as opposed to being a minor subject as before.

[Summary:](#)

In the initial decades of this study, Irish history occupied a somewhat ambiguous position in Irish academia. While promoted and professionalised by a select few, namely Curtis at TCD, and MacNeill at UCD, its teaching was only recently being promoted in any comprehensive way.

⁷¹ Ryan continued as acting Professor for the remainder of the academic year.

⁷² Donal McCartney, *UCD: a national idea: the history of University College, Dublin* (Dublin, 1999), p. 218.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 70.; He contrasts her with Edmund Curtis of TCD, whom she defeated for the post in 1909.

Gradually, it began to take on a more prominent position within each of the major institutions, especially among the NUI colleges. The different universities operated separately from one another, with no real correlation between the courses provided in each. These were framed according to the wishes of the heads of staff within the history departments, and invariably were coloured by the ethos and cultural outlook of the various institutions. This differing cultural outlook had a major part in the extent to which Irish history was being taught and as to who attended the Universities. The majority of university-going Irish Catholics did not attend Trinity College owing to the ‘ban’ and so it can reasonably be assumed that most Catholic graduates who became qualified history teachers were trained in one of the constituent colleges of the NUI, while most non-Catholic history graduates who later became teachers attended Trinity College during the period.

Overall, despite the History departments in Irish Universities being “invariably small, culturally isolated from each other and, above all, lacking the resources for intellectual regeneration”,⁷⁴ a fair degree of consistency existed in how Irish history was taught across the NUI colleges. The 1950s saw a significant degree of change in what was set for study at UCD and TCD, and in the 1960s at UCC, and reflected the growing status of Irish history as a discipline. Testifying to this, UCC created a chair in Irish History in 1955, granted to Seamus Pender. The prominence of the Catholic Church was also evident, for example in the increased ecclesiastical history taught at UCC under Pender, as well as in appointments to the history faculty at UCD in the mid-1960s.⁷⁵ That said, this was not as pronounced in History as it was in Education.

Though they differed considerably in terms of ethos, there was some degree of interplay between TCD and the NUI. In terms of what prospective teachers were learning, Ancient Irish history was celebrated as central under MacNeill and Ryan at UCD, Hogan at UCC, and Ní Chinnéide (as Gaeilge) at UCG. While this was the focus of Curtis’ classes, the overall structure

⁷⁴ Brady, ‘Arrested Development’, p. 288.

⁷⁵ McCartney, *UCD*, pp 218–20.

of History in Trinity meant that this was peripheral compared to British and European history until the 1950s. Irish history was not taught for the Sophister years, testifying to its lesser importance from the 1920s to the mid-1940s. Perhaps more surprisingly, at UCD, Irish history was considered less important than European history according to marks allocated for the final Degree. While it received parity of esteem by the 1950s, the fact that Irish history was not the dominant aspect of University history teaching in the two largest university colleges is important when considered in relation to those graduates who would go on to become history teachers. Such a programme allowed them to study the “manifold aspects of Continental History” and avoid a “narrow nationalism” as feared by Rev Corcoran, but also resulted in the formal undergraduate training of the majority of prospective teachers lacking in Irish history up until the late 1940s. This was despite official rhetoric as to its importance, and is an important realisation, especially considering Irish history’s centrality to the history curriculum in secondary schools.

Higher Diploma in Education:

The importance of an adequate supply of efficient teachers in securing the success of any system of education does not need to be emphasized”.⁷⁶

The B.A. Degree was only the first step in becoming a registered secondary teacher in Ireland. Any person wishing to become registered was required to receive a Higher Diploma in Education (H.Dip) from one of the recognised universities as well as complete one year of teaching experience. Based on the consecutive model, this year-long professional course was conducted within the University only after the student had successfully graduated from their undergraduate studies. The Higher Diploma in Education training course began in 1912 and was supported by the regulations of the Registration Council, originally made in 1917, and which took effect in their permanent form on 1 August 1927.⁷⁷ These requirements mirrored those set up by the

⁷⁶ *Report of the Department of Education 1925-26-27*, p. 53.

⁷⁷ ‘Notes on Current Educational Topics’ in *The Irish Monthly*, 1927, p. 618.

English Registration Council for Secondary Teachers, which did not take effect until 1931.⁷⁸

While voluntary, the H.Dip was the final academic requirement required by prospective teachers, and the most directly related to teacher training.

This section explores interconnections between university schools of education and secondary teaching of history. It firstly outlines the H.Dip programmes across the NUI and Trinity briefly, identifying core similarities between them. It specifically examines the ‘Teaching Methods’ section in UCG in greater detail. It chose UCG as a representative sample owing to its quality of data, and as an additional way of considering the programme being offered there, which was not published in the Calenders, as noted in the previous section. This was the most subject-specific aspect of the H.Dip courses taught during this period, and so, is most applicable when trying to understand what prospective history teachers (and not simply teachers in general) were learning. This section then notes that the religious and cultural differences were more notable than any institutional divergence. Finally, it focusses on the potential influence of leading academics, such as Corcoran and Auchmuty on history teachers, as highlighted through their writings on school history. This allows for a more critical analysis of academic influences on secondary education. These two figures proved to be exceptions to the rule, in that the majority of academics in history of education were not preoccupied with history teaching in secondary schools. Of those who were, this is how they viewed their subject, with some of them, Corcoran in particular, being more influential than others.

H.Dip programmes across Irish Universities:

As noted by Coolahan, the training of secondary school teachers was the primary role of university Education departments during this period.⁷⁹ There was a criticism that the courses were too theoretical, to the detriment of more practical considerations.⁸⁰ Despite this, there was little

⁷⁸ Originally set up in 1912, to take effect from 1921, these requirements for registration were adjourned repeatedly.

⁷⁹ John Coolahan, ‘The historical development of teacher education in the Republic of Ireland’ in Andy Burke (ed.), *Teacher Education in the Republic of Ireland: Retrospect and Prospect* (Proceedings of the Standing Conference on Teacher Education North and South (SCoTENS), held in Dublin November 2003, Armagh, 2004), pp 5–6.

⁸⁰ Brendan Walsh, “I never heard the word methodology”: personal accounts of teacher training in

divergence between programmes of study across Universities. This is reasonable, considering the need for a standard to be maintained for registration purposes across the NUI and TCD. At UCD, the H.Dip programme consisted of two courses (one on Theory, one on practice.) The modules for the former in 1924-25 were as follows:

1. Philosophy in its relations to Education
2. The History of Education and Works of Educational Writers
3. The Principles of School Management, Organisation and Hygiene
4. General and Special Teaching Method

Course B on the ‘Practice of Education’ consisted of (I) Experimental Investigations to Method⁸¹ and (II)’Teaching in Schools’.⁸² A central element of Part I were classes conducted by staff of the Department of Education, demonstrating methods of teaching in five specific areas, with students required to take classes in three or more. Among these were “(d) History, national and comparative.”⁸³ In terms of practical teaching experience, each student was required to complete at least one hundred hours of teaching, under the supervision of the Professor of Education.⁸⁴ Furthermore, each student “shall attend lessons given by experienced teachers...shall examine classes orally and in writing, as may be directed; and shall furnish written notes and reports on such lessons and examinations.”⁸⁵ These notes contributed to their overall mark in the course.

The programme under Corcoran’s successor W.J. Williams continued much the same as before (not surprisingly seeing as he was lecturer of education under Corcoran). Different readings were however set for the History of Education module, representing more recent traditions of education to be studied. The greatest change was in Section IV ‘General and Special Teaching Method’ in which section (c) ‘Special Methods’ were now much more subject specific.

Ireland 1943–1980’ in *History of Education*, xlvi, no. 3 (2017), pp 366–383. See also Thomas O’Donoghue, Judith Harford and Teresa O’Doherty, *Teacher Preparation in Ireland: History, Policy and Future Directions* (2017), pp 97–102.

⁸¹ ‘Experimental’ was understood in the sense of students learning through doing, as opposed to meaning ‘alternative’ or ‘different’.

⁸² University College Dublin, *Calendar for the Session, 1924-25* (Dublin, 1924), pp 284-5.

⁸³ University College Dublin, *Calendar for the Session, 1935-36* (Dublin, 1935), p. 245.

⁸⁴ University College Dublin, *Calendar for the Session, 1924-25* (Dublin, 1924), p. 285.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

Previously students were required to study “the special methods of teaching applicable to one of the following groups: (1) Language, Literature and History, (2) the exact sciences including Geography.”⁸⁶ By 1944-45, they were now required to study two of seven specific branches, which included “4. History and Geography”⁸⁷

The UCD course changed how it was being outwardly presented in the Calendars, following Williams’ retirement. The course itself in 1964-65 remained as outlined a decade previously. By this year, the School of Education also employed a number of what were termed ‘Part-Time Non-Statutory Teaching Staff.’⁸⁸ These were employed to teach specific parts of the Education and the H.Dip courses, similar to the employment of ‘Special lecturers in Methods of Teaching’ in TCD during the 1940s and 1950s.⁸⁹

UCC mirrored UCD in terms of course content, which remained relatively unchanged for the first three decades under investigation. The H.Dip programme, covered over three terms the ‘Theory, Practice, and History of Education’, with lectures for the first of these being on ‘Philosophy in relation to education’, ‘Methods’, and ‘Organisation in Schools’. ⁹⁰ The programme under Frances Vaughan differed slightly from that of her predecessors, notably through the inclusion of the History of Irish Education as a significant part of the ‘History of Education’ course. This course was less prescriptive in 1944-45 than in previous decades, now simply describing general areas of interest rather than specific aspects of educational history to be studied. The ‘History of Education in Ireland’ was also among the specific subjects in which lectures were given through the medium of Irish throughout the 1950s and 1960s.⁹¹

⁸⁶ University College Dublin, *Calendar for the Session, 1935-36* (Dublin, 1935), p. 244.

⁸⁷ University College Dublin, *Calendar for the Session, 1944-45* (Dublin, 1944), p. 250; The other branches were 1. Greek and Latin; 2. Vernacular Languages; 3. Other modern languages; 5. Mathematics; 6. Experimental Sciences; 7. Observational Sciences.”

⁸⁸ University College Dublin, *Calendar for the Session, 1964-65* (Dublin, 1964), p. 15.

⁸⁹ For the year 1964-65, this UCD staff consisted of Thomas A. O’Rourke, Denis Buckley, Ann Armstrong, and Mary Purcell.

⁹⁰ It is interesting to note that while (A) was termed ‘Philosophy in its relation to Education in the syllabus’, this was examined in 1926 as Paper 1 ‘Principles of Education’. See University College Cork, *Examination Papers*, (C63), ‘Examination for Higher Diploma in Education – Summer, 1925-Honours’;

⁹¹ University College Cork, *Féilire, 1954-55*, (Cork, 1954), p. 148; See also UCC, *Féilire, 1964-65*, (Cork, 1964), p. 107; the other two were ‘School Organisation’ and ‘Methods of Teaching’.

UCG divided the H.Dip programme into four aspects: Philosophy in Relation to Education, History of Education, School Organization, and Teaching Method.⁹² Of the four sections, ‘Teaching Method’⁹³ was, by its very nature, the most subject specific.⁹⁴ This section featured numerous questions specific to the teaching of history. These demonstrate the general content of classes on teaching method- highlighting the importance of note-taking by students, and issues surrounding the appropriate use of textbooks for example.⁹⁵ They also showcase the contextual debates on how history should be taught. In the 1955 Autumn examination (as Gaeilge), one question on the use of textbooks and atlases specifically contrasted geography with history, saying that geography should use these sparingly. This, by way of opposition, points to an attitude regarding the textbook’s central position in history (with the caveat that a student could potentially disagree with the statement in their answer).

As for approaches to teaching, the 1935 examination (Q. 6, as Gaeilge) asked the student to consider whether History should make more use out of storytelling as a means of teaching the subject, reflecting the prominence of the narrative mode. In 1946 (Q. 11) the candidate was asked to “Bring out the importance of *correlation* in the teaching of *one* of the following pairs: (b) Geography and History (c) History and Vernacular Languages (d) History and Religion...” (a to f). That history featured in half of the possible options shows how it was likely a popular subject chosen at H.Dip level. In terms of H.Dip subject specialisation, whilst exact figures are currently unavailable, traditionally English and History were the dominant subject groupings in H.Dip intakes.⁹⁶ Furthermore, this question shows how the value of this approach was recognised at

⁹² The National University of Ireland, University College Galway, *Examination Papers, 1925, Examination for Higher Diploma in Education-Summer Examinations, 1925* [G 10] ; University College Galway, *Examination Papers, 1935, ‘Examination for Higher Diploma in Education-Summer Examinations, 1935*

⁹³ Simply called ‘Method’ in 1925 and 1935.

⁹⁴ That is not to say that subject specific questions were not asked in the other areas, just that they were more prevalent in this. For examples of subject-specific questions elsewhere see UCG, *Examination Papers, ‘Sgrúduigte an tSamhraidh, 1925- Onóracha: ‘Philosophy in Relation to Education’, q.1.*

⁹⁵ Questions on the importance of textbooks to History featured in 1925, 1935 (Autumn exam), 1946 and 1955 respectively.

⁹⁶ Sheelagh Drudy, ‘Second level teacher education in the Republic of Ireland: Consecutive Programmes’ in Andy Burke (ed.), *Teacher Education in the Republic of Ireland: Retrospect and Prospect* (Proceedings of the Standing Conference on Teacher Education North and South (SCoTENS), held in Dublin November 2003, Armagh, 2004), p. 31.

this time. This is significant, demonstrating how integration was being promoted, between history and other subjects, especially its interplay with the Irish language and with religion.⁹⁷ In 1955 (as Gaeilge) the candidate was asked to consider the connections they would make between local and national history (in one specific class, either at primary or secondary level.) In the same year the English version of the exam (Q.7) asked the candidate to “Discuss the concentric mode of teaching history.” Prospective history teachers were therefore expected to be familiar with this method. The Concentric mode was also discussed by Zúñiga with reference to history education in Chile.⁹⁸ It is important to note however that questions of this sort were among many possible options each year, as the H.Dip course covered a host of subjects.

The exam structure was considerably altered by 1965. The Methods section was now arranged by specific subjects. Two questions were asked on each of the nine featured subjects, so that a student could potentially answer all four questions required on two subjects only.

The general H.Dip programme at TCD was almost identical to the programme offered in the NUI colleges.⁹⁹ One notable difference related to candidates who wished to obtain the Higher Diploma with Honors. In 1944-45, these candidates could either submit a thesis on an approved subject or were required to pass an exam in one of five possible areas shown below:

By passing an examination in <i>one</i> of the following:—	
(a)	NEW EDUCATIONAL MOVEMENTS AND METHODS. The new developments in educational thought and procedure in Great Britain, on the Continent and in the United States. Special study of reforms in curricula.
(b)	COMPARATIVE EDUCATION. The Educational Systems of Ireland, Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Russia and the United States.
(c)	ADULT EDUCATION. The history, principles and practice of Adult Education in England.
(d)	TECHNICAL EDUCATION. The history, principles and practice of Technical Education in Ireland.
(e)	SCHOOL EXAMINATIONS. The principles and practice of School Examinations, internal and external. Detailed study of recent investigations and their results. Critical study of suggested reforms.

⁹⁷ The 1924 examination also featured a question on the value of correlation, demonstrating how Larkin’s course, at least in this instance, dealt with similar topics throughout his period in charge.

⁹⁸ Zúñiga et al., *History Curriculm in Chile*, pp 69–70.

⁹⁹ Dublin University Calendar for the year 1944-45, (Dublin, 1944) pp 380-2.

These examples, especially (a) New Educational Movements and Methods and (b) on Comparative Education challenge received notions that teachers in Ireland were insularly focussed during this period, and not aware of international developments in education. The latter subject was a component part of the general course in TCD by 1964.¹⁰⁰

The small size of the School was similar to that at UCD. Between 1923 and 1924, sixteen people complete their Higher Diploma in Education at TCD.¹⁰¹ In 1925-26, this had risen to twenty (8 men and 12 women).¹⁰² The amount of students taking the H.Dip continued to grow. In total, 55 people were awarded the H.Dip at TCD in 1963 (4 First Class Honors, 14 Second Class Honours).¹⁰³ The exact number of these taking history is unclear.

Differences in outlooks:

While the programmes maintained a certain degree of similarity across all of the four institutions, there were significant differences in terms of cultural and religious outlooks, most notably the place of Catholic teaching within the NUI programmes. These were more notable than any institutional divergence. Education was seen by both the Catholic and Protestant Church authorities as an area directly within their purview.¹⁰⁴ Such an understanding of the Church's role in education helps explain the overwhelming clerical influence within the various Schools of Education in Irish Universities at this time, especially in the NUI.

Fig. 1.25: Staff:

¹⁰⁰ *Dublin University Calendar for the year 1964-65*, (Dublin, 1964) p. 315; The higher Diploma in Education with Honors was discontinued by 1964.

¹⁰¹ Figures for the amount of students who completed the H.Dip (though the specific subjects are not cited) were compiled from the University Calendars. See *Dublin University Calendar for the year 1924-25* (Dublin, 1925) p. 387.

¹⁰² 'Notes on Current Educational Topics', p. 620.

¹⁰³ *Dublin University Calendar for the year 1964-65* (Dublin, 1964), pp 530-1.

¹⁰⁴ See for ex McCartney, *UCD*, pp 218-9, where this is specifically cited as regards UCD and History.

Education Departments, 1920s-60s:					
TCD:	Robert J. Fynne (1922–50)			Rev. Ernest A. Crawford. (1950-) (Lecturer in Ed. since 1947)	
UCD	Rev. Timothy J. Corcoran (1908-42)	William J. Williams (1942-49)	J.	Rev. Seán Ó Catháin, S.J.* <i>-Lecturer in Education</i> (1950-66)	
UCC	-Miss E.M. O'Sullivan. (1910-35) -E.P. McSweeney (lecturer) (until 1939)	Frances M. Vaughan (1936-48)	M.	Miss Lucy Duggan, (1949-62)	Rev.E.F Keohan (1963- 68)*
UCG ¹⁰⁵	-Patrick Larkin (1924-1967); -An tAthair Pádraig E. MacFhinn (1931-1965) <i>-(Lecturer in Education (as Gaeilge))</i>				

TCD was responsible, for the most part, in educating members of the Protestant churches, as at undergraduate level. A link existed between TCD's Prof. Fynne and the Church of Ireland Rutland High School, for example.¹⁰⁶ In contrast, the dominant Catholic ethos of the NUI was reflected in the staff of the various Schools of Education. At UCG, Professor Patrick Larkin was accompanied by Rev. Pádraig E MacFhinn, 'An tAthair Eric' as he was affectionately known, who provided the H.Dip courses through Irish, as well as personally supervised students on teaching practice.¹⁰⁷ These two figures were in charge of Education at UCG from the 1920s through the 1960s.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ An tAthair Eustás Ó Héideáin, 'History of the School of Education, NUI Galway : 'The Beginnings'', (2001), http://www.nuigalway.ie/faculties_departments/education/history.html, viewed 13/02/2018: * represents members of staff who were in charge but were not given the official position of professor.

¹⁰⁶ Freeman's Journal, 19 Dec. 1923

¹⁰⁷ An tAthair Eustás Ó Héideáin, 'History of the School of Education, NUI Galway : 'The Beginnings'', (2001), http://www.nuigalway.ie/faculties_departments/education/history.html, viewed 13/02/2018

¹⁰⁸ UCG did employ an 'Assistant in Education' who helped run the courses. In 1934, this position was filled by Rev. Bro Leonard McCabe; again highlighting the clerical dominance of education at University level. See University College Galway, *Calendar for 1934-35*, (Dublin, 1934), p. 8.

Cork was unique among the Irish universities in that the School of Education was run, firstly by members of the laity, and perhaps even more surprisingly for that time, by women for the majority of the period. From 1910 until 1962, three different women served as Professors of Education at UCC. However, this was not seen as a major issue. The School was considered in ‘safe hands’ during the 1940s and 1950s, with these lay women upholding Church orthodoxy in their teachings, in line with the general University ethos.¹⁰⁹

The decision to elect Frances Vaughan as replacement to E.M. O’Sullivan as professor of Education was controversial on different grounds. Her appointment was vehemently opposed by Cormac Ó Cuilleanáin, later professor of History of modern Irish literature (1950-66), for not representing the Irish-Ireland factions within the University. Vaughan, Ó Cuilleanáin declared, was supported by “everything, everybody that is anti-national, anti-Republican, anti-Gaelic... it is the last stand of the enemy here.”¹¹⁰ While this attitude was not widely accepted, as evidenced by Vaughan’s election, this incident is important in highlighting the vocal Irish-Ireland lobby within UCC during the 1930s to 1950s.

The overall ethos of the UCC School of Education remained faithful to promoting the moral training of future Catholic teachers. The reading for the (renamed) course on the ‘Philosophy and Sociology of Education’ comprised five books in 1965-66, of which three were specific to Catholicism, including Pius XI’s encyclical.¹¹¹ Equally, the history of Catholic Education was a prominent aspect of History of Education in UCC (as well as in UCG and UCD), attesting to the general Catholic ethos maintained within the NUI Schools of Education.

Influence of leading academics on secondary history education:

The School of Education at UCD was dominated in the early twentieth century by Rev. Corcoran; a figure “conspicuously influential in determining the character, content and

¹⁰⁹ Murphy, *History of UCC*, p. 281.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 248.

¹¹¹ University College Cork, *Féilire, 1964-65*, (Cork, 1964), p. 109; The three works were: Pius XI *The Christian Education of Youth*,¹¹¹ William J. McGucken, *the Catholic Way in Education* (Milwaukee, 1934) and John D. Reddan and Francis A. Ryan, *A Catholic Philosophy of Education* (Milwaukee, 1943). This was the exact same as ten years previous, with the exception of Reddan and Ryan.

methodology of the school system of the independent Irish state,”¹¹² and from 1908-1941, first Professor of the Theory and Practice of Education. Considering how he was responsible for the H.Dip courses at UCD, Corcoran’s writings on how history should be taught in secondary schools¹¹³ are of additional importance. His understanding of what history should entail at this level, and how it could best be promoted is crucial, as teachers under his tutelage would have been trained according to his guiding principles. Among these was the belief that “the philosophy of education, in a final training course, can and should be set in the closest association with the history of national and extra-national culture, and so be made a powerful instrument for conserving and for developing and widening the stream of national and human tradition.”¹¹⁴ His H.Dip course therefore inextricably associated teaching the philosophy of education with the promotion of national culture.

Corcoran’s influential role underlined the importance of his traditionalist approach to historiography and association of Catholicism with the history of the Irish nation, illustrated by his published essays on history teaching in secondary schools. These essays highlighted Corcoran’s desired methods for historical instruction, namely the centrality of the textbook, once it was “transmuted into material for real mental exercise …[through] the ‘method of critical discussion.’” Such critical exposition and discussion, he argued “can be carried on both orally and in writing; it can lead to the use of books, encyclopedias, atlases, for the investigation of specific topics.”¹¹⁵ Not all of his views prevailed in secondary schools. Corcoran also stressed the need to expand the understanding of history by emphasising more than purely military or political history and warned against parochial nationalism. The former was certainly not achieved in the secondary school syllabuses or examinations, while allowing for study of European history was never intended to displace a dominant nationalist narrative.

¹¹²E. Brian Titley, ‘Rejecting the Modern World: The Educational Ideas of Timothy Corcoran’ in *Oxford Review of Education*, ix, no. 2 (1983), p. 137.

¹¹³ Corcoran, ‘The Teaching of Modern Irish History’. Corcoran, S.J., ‘New Programme: History’.

¹¹⁴ Rev. Timothy J. Corcoran, ‘Teachers and Universities’ in *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, xvii, no. 66 (1928), p. 315.

¹¹⁵ Corcoran, S.J., ‘New Programme: History’, p. 259.

More influential was Corcoran's essential belief that "There is no greater falsehood than the view that history is a secular subject, to be avowed without any intrinsic relation to religious life, to beliefs, to the supernatural."¹¹⁶ As he continued

The Catholic spirit and the Catholic outlook, alone true and just, both most essential to truth and justice, and to historical completeness, must be integrally restored to the direction of historical studies and teaching as a department of Irish education.¹¹⁷

Considering UCD's status amongst the NUI, this would have had a bearing on the other constituent colleges as well.

Likewise, the academic writings of James J. Auchmuty, would have had a specific bearing on candidates qualified at TCD, where he was employed as a 'Special lecturer in Methods of Teaching', specifically in relation to history¹¹⁸ in the late 1930s and early 1940s.¹¹⁹ Auchmuty was the author of an important study (discussed in Chapter 2) entitled *The teaching of history* (Dublin, 1940).¹²⁰ This work notably focussed on objective source analysis and the development of skills of criticality. His position as lecturer on the H.Dip programme gave him an opportunity to advance his perspective on history teaching, as it would be extremely unlikely that his book did not feature among the "books, Official Reports, and other Publications" which lecturers recommended for study. Indeed this book was part of a series entitled 'Modern Teaching', edited by Professor Fynne. Auchmuty's work offered a reference point and to some degree an alternative perspective to the dominant approach to the teaching of Irish history for those who completed their training as history teachers in TCD in the early 1940s. Notably, Auchmuty was against using history to teach moral lessons: a dominant feature of Corcoran's thinking. To do so, in

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 256.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 258.

¹¹⁸ *Dublin University Calendar for the year 1944-45* (Dublin, 1944) pp 379-80; The other specialised subjects were English, Classics, Mathematics, Modern Languages (including Irish), Geography, Science, and Religion.

¹¹⁹ Auchmuty was a former schoolmaster at Sandford Park. See *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 17, (MUP), 2007, Auchmuty, James Johnston (1909–1981). He was also Vice-President of the Dublin University History Society, See *Dublin University Calendar for the year 1944-45* (Dublin, 1944)] p. 69* (The Provost was President.)

¹²⁰ Auchmuty, *The teaching of history*.

Auchmuty's view, would inevitably lead one to distort the motives and context of past events and people for present purposes.¹²¹

In terms of historiographical approaches, Auchmuty was at odds with the emerging trends in academia. As noted by his biographer, "In an age when it was already becoming fashionable to deride the so-called 'Great Man' theory of history...Auchmuty was anxious to maintain a place for a study of the great individuals."¹²² As described by Dutton, Auchmuty's thinking was that, "while most historical circumstances were the result of a complex of events and forces, it is nonetheless often the case that a single exceptional person- even if not the *creator* of history- is an exemplar of particular times and events, a catalyst for historical development."¹²³ The biographical approach was further exemplified in his work *Irish Education: A Historical Survey*, which was recommended reading for the History of Education course in TCD and remained the standard text in this field for the next two decades.¹²⁴ This approach reflected the dominant discourse of history at secondary level, as previously discussed. This demonstrated how what was being taught in secondary schools reflected the orthodoxy of historical thinking and methodology in the 1920s and 1930s, as also represented by Hayden at UCD, and the emphasis on the Great Men approach. Auchmuty also represented a turning point, differing from the trends within wider academic circles from the 1940s onwards, when that orthodoxy changed. The curriculum in secondary schools did not reflect this, until the late-1960s and early 1970s.

Conclusion:

Despite official calls that they be more uniformly defined in the early 1930s¹²⁵ the Higher Diploma courses offered by the four major Irish Universities were all relatively similar, in terms of the programme that they offered and how the course was structured, between lectures and training. A major difference was the more overtly religious aspect of the NUI, where the H.Dip courses promoted Catholic teachings and writings and which saw strong clerical influence within

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 8.; this was discussed in Chapter 2.

¹²² K. R. Dutton, *Auchmuty: the life of James Johnston Auchmuty (1909- 1981)* (Brisbane, 2000), p. 171.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 119.

¹²⁵ ASTI/SC/ 3 Feb. 1933.; Minister Derrig specifically requested for "a more exact and specific definition of a course of training leading to a Higher Diploma."

the teaching staff. Trinity provided largely for the training of teachers from Protestant denominations. Beyond this, their differences were minimal.

The Higher Diploma in Education provided the final academic qualification necessary for teacher registration which aimed at ensuring that teachers employed at secondary schools were of a capable standard. Throughout the first two decades of the state, the growth of the H.Dip programmes and the “steady improvement in the quality and standard of the students in training for the teaching profession” was positively viewed, owing to the “considerable effect” that this would have “in raising the standard of education throughout the country.”¹²⁶ The course was criticised in later years. The H.Dip was considered in 1966 to be “basically sound and...fundamentally well suited to the provision of professional training for graduates to equip them to teach in secondary (or post-primary) schools.” Certain improvements were however “imperatively necessary...to produce teachers considerably better trained on the practical side than was hitherto the case.”¹²⁷

This meant that even qualified history teachers were battling a contradiction between the rhetoric as to what to teach and how to conduct their teaching, and the reality of their situations, in terms of their practical ability to achieve these theoretical ideals. Moreover, the amount of registered teachers was far less than the total amount employed in secondary schools, highlighting critical challenges to history teaching at this level.

¹²⁶ *Report of the Department of Education, 1932-33*, (Dublin, 1934), p. 2.

¹²⁷ ASTI/OP/1966, C.E.C. REPORT, pp 69-71.

Conclusion:

In the wake of Independence, Irish history was promoted to a position of prominence in the secondary school curriculum never before occupied. With this in mind, this research sought to consider three central research questions. First, it set out to establish what Irish history was being taught in secondary schools and how it was done. Being the first time that an indigenous government could dictate the course for learning, what were those in positions of power within education promoting to the future generations as regards their national history? Second, what cultural and political ideologies and contextual issues influenced the teaching of Irish history during this period? Finally, it considered how policy and official rhetoric related to practice, and the reality of Irish history in secondary schools during this period, from the perspective of the teachers.

The thesis answered these by following a three-part approach. First, it situated secondary Irish history teaching within a wider educational and socio-cultural framework in Chapter 1. From this it emerged that while the general structures that were adopted owed their origins to pre-Independence British models, these structures were adapted to suit the specifically Irish context and needs. It also demonstrated the importance of contextualising a study on the teaching of Irish history, as the overall structure was crucial to both the form which the teaching of Irish history took, and its purpose in secondary schools. Secondly, the thesis assessed the content of Irish history teaching by conducting research into the curriculum, into the textbooks used, and the examination papers. From this it identified the central aspects of Irish history, as presented in secondary schools throughout this period. Finally, by engaging with the files of the Department of Education Inspectorate, and non-official sources such as records of the teacher unions, it was possible to consider how this material was seen by the teachers and officials alike, while also offering an insight into the realities of how Irish history was being taught.

As for ‘what’ was being taught, through its in-depth study of the major texts used, this thesis systematically demonstrated the central aspects of Irish history being promoted in print. It found that a general narrative was maintained across each of the textbooks, which tended to focus

on a traditional ‘Great Man’ approach to history with a strong emphasis on high politics. The Irish example was very similar to that seen in Britain, Northern Ireland, and internationally. The consistent approach among the major textbooks would point to an educational environment in which there was an overall consensus in terms of what the textbooks’ general message should be in line with the value placed on moral education and the culturally dominant ‘Policy of Gaelicisation’ implemented by the Department of Education but which offered a wide range of choices within that understanding. The narrative maintained in secondary schools was structured in a generally teleological manner promoting Gaelic Catholic Ireland, but with some degree of nuance. While the areas emphasised in the textbooks and Certificate examinations in particular were predominantly from the nationalist tradition, they were not exclusively so. These variations increased the higher one progressed, being more prevalent at Leaving Certificate level (in the examination at least). In the textbooks, different emphases were placed on various events and figures in Irish history, according to the political and class bias of the author, and on the expected audience (as gauged by affordability).

The textbooks dictated the perspective from which Irish history was to be taught, and how this was to be done. The official syllabus outlined what was to be taught in general: Irish History ‘from earliest times until the present’ at Intermediate level, with the Leaving Certificate syllabus to be a more detailed study of this. This was later outlined into specific topics in 1941. That same year, the Leaving Certificate was also radically altered, with the structure which emerged, of rotating periods for study, remaining in place until 1969. This thesis disagreed with Gabriel Doherty’s contention that the syllabus issued by the Department of Education was “the most detailed expression of official attitudes …regarding the significant elements of the nation’s past.”¹ Instead the syllabus is seen as a guide towards official attitudes, while the actual expression of an authoritative official position was to be found in the Certificate examinations.

It was through the exams that the inspectorate (representing the Department) exercised much of their authority especially in the earlier part of this period. Moreover, the Certificate

¹ Doherty, ‘National Identity and the Study of Irish History’, p. 327.

examinations highlighted in detail the principal Irish historical events and figures, as understood by the Department of Education. When coupled with the ‘backwash effect’ discussed in Chapter 7 in particular, the Certificate examination increasingly dictated which aspects of Irish history were to be stressed in the classroom and reinforced dependence on textbooks. This was acknowledged in the 1960 Council of Education report, which noted how the rotation of Leaving Certificate examination courses between 1943 and 1969 served to help the examiners correcting, rather than the teachers tasked with teaching. This meant that the overall system in place for history was dictated more by the mode of evaluation rather than the actual teaching of the subject, again increasing the ‘backwash effect’ of the exam onto classroom practice. The importance of exam papers in guiding teaching caused considerable difficulties for teachers, as they were not privy to what this examination material would consist of. No sample papers were made available as it was seen as unbecoming of their profession to officially ask for them, while the inspectorate did not release any information with regards to how exams were being graded. Moreover, devising examination papers became increasingly outside teachers’ control, due to the role of University professors setting the exams from the late 1930s.

The examination papers demonstrated how certain parts of the syllabi were repeatedly favoured over others, as noted in Chapter 5 and 6. The nature of the Leaving Certificate during this period, notably through its more in-depth study of shorter periods, meant that there was less of a consistent narrative than at Intermediate Certificate, if judged according to the topics broached. Thematically, there was a continuation of some of the approaches of the Intermediate Certificate with emphasis on the Great Man approach, and military and political history. The Leaving Certificate however maintained a greater overall emphasis on cultural and religious history, especially in relation to Pre-Norman Gaelic and Early Christian Ireland. Considering the low progression rates however, the Intermediate Certificate provided the dominant official narrative of Irish history transmitted to students in secondary schools between 1924 and 1969.

This narrative as expressed through the examinations used the Norman invasion as a foundational episode, from which all that came after stemmed. The focus was on central events

giving prominence to a narrative of oppression and resistance, such as the Confederation of Kilkenny, the ‘War of O’Neill and O’Donnell’, and the United Irishmen and the 1798 Rebellion. This featured an overwhelming dominance of male historical figures.

The first of the research questions was answered by cross comparing the popular exam topics and the detailed graphs on textbook emphasis (Appendix 1). It emerged that the most prevalent topics at exam time were among the most prominent featured in the textbooks by James Carty. This was despite there being no official link between textbook and syllabus. This can be interpreted in two ways. First, that the Intermediate examinations were catering their questions to Carty’s text, knowing that it was the most popular book in use. Such a stance was touched upon in the ASTI files, cited in Chapter 7, which criticised how the exam seemed to be favouring answers from a particular (unnamed) textbook. This can reasonably be assumed to be Carty, due to its ubiquity. Second, the correlation between the exams and Carty’s textbook demonstrates how the politics and ideology which *A Class-book of Irish History* promoted aligned with the values of those who set the examinations, both stressing (for the most part) the same aspects of the past as integral to Irish history. It is worth noting that while they were very similar, Carty did highlight some aspects which were not as prevalent in the exams such as his focus on Irish literature, and the ‘Lives of the People’, as well as Pre-Norman Irish history, including St Patrick and the five fifths and the fall of the High Kingship. This would reflect the publication date of Carty, being published before the Intermediate syllabus was altered in 1937, as well as the private nature of publication, whereby textbooks closely aligned with, but were not confined to the school syllabus.

There were a number of issues in terms of textbook production, especially at Leaving Certificate level from the 1940s onwards, whereby the available texts were not seen to adequately cover the courses of study. As noted in Chapter 8 however, the more advanced the learning became, the less reliance there was on the textbooks, and the greater importance that the teacher would have. Such an evaluation is consistent with the official departmental accounts of History.²

² *Report of the Department of Education, 1960-61*, p. 63.

The complaints of the textbooks' inadequacy as regards the Leaving Certificate course, especially from the 1940s to 1960s, supports two conclusions: Firstly, that those textbooks available were predominantly geared towards the lower (and consequently simpler) Intermediate Certificate understanding of Irish history. Secondly, seeing as the Intermediate level was the culmination of most of these student's education, the most prevalent version of Irish history taught in secondary school maintained an Irish Whig interpretation of history, though with occasional deviations.

This thesis, while offering an original contribution, is not the last word on the teaching of Irish history during this period. Irish history was also transmitted in numerous ways outside the school context. Other areas worthy of further research are the extent to which an alternative form of history was being picked up in homes, including on matters not part of the history curriculum, such as the Irish Civil War and the historical interpretations which circulated since 1922, amongst landless people and those on very small farms regarding their own economic and social situations. This could be part of a broader study of the narrative of Irish history promoted in the wider public sphere; through music, radio, sports and associational culture, commemorations, and more recently, through cinema and television. Moreover, a comparative study of the teaching of national history in Ireland with other emerging or newly independent countries in Europe, especially in the wake of World War One, would be of use, in order to assess the exceptionalism (or otherwise) of the Irish context considered in this thesis.

A study on how textbooks were 'received' by secondary school students, and the degree to which students actually engaged with the material taught in schools would greatly contribute to our scholarly understanding of school history. The inherent difficulty in obtaining reliable and sufficient source material might however make such a project unfeasible. Further research could also be conducted on the history of examinations, especially in relation to history as a subject. There was much secrecy surrounding examinations in the Irish Free State, and beyond, as noted in chapter 6 especially. It is worth questioning for instance, whether there was any moderation of performance between various subjects in any one year and across years, in order to accurately

assess concepts of standards. To find out the marking schemes one had to mark the examination papers. Moreover, to reveal the marking scheme to those who did not do marking was to place oneself in breach of the official secrets act. Can the reasoning behind this be identified? More research could be conducted on the levels of generic intellectual skills assessed (from lower order to higher order) by subjecting the history examination papers to the sort of interrogation conducted by Madaus and MacNamara on the Leaving Certificate examination more widely in 1969, or by considering them against Benjamin Bloom's Taxonomic Scale.³ This would allow for a greater understanding not only of what was being asked, but also of the contemporary expectations as regards childhood psychology and intellectual ability. These suggestions point to future possibilities for research in the field. While important to acknowledge, these issues were outside the remit of this thesis which sought to consider Irish history as officially promoted through the school context.

This study has shown that the promotion of Irish culture and identity was essential to the official purpose of school history. However, religion was also integral to the curriculum and the state examinations at Leaving Certificate level, and also at Intermediate level before the course was re-organised in 1937. The political and religious ideology of those in power was reflected through the syllabus, and especially as it related to Irish history. The syllabus' focus on a Gaelic identity, in line with the private religious-run schools, resulted in the promotion of an historical narrative that was overwhelmingly Gaelic, nationalist, and Catholic. Irish history was seen as central to the 'Policy of Gaelicisation' in official rhetoric, and was also important to the overall curriculum, being included in English, Irish, and Geography classes as well. The political purpose of history education was national, but not party political. This purpose was consistent with concepts of citizenship training, as noted in Chapters 3, while the religious purpose of history was seen as a form of moral training. However, due to the belief that the Department of Education should have minimal direct interference in what was being taught, there were few expressed objectives when it came to teaching Irish history, as well as very little direction given in the

³ Bloom (ed.), *Taxonomy*; George F. Madaus and John Macnamara, *Public examinations: a study of the Irish Leaving Certificate* (Dublin, 1970).

curriculum. The department exercised its influence through examinations and inspection, while the main textbooks were also approved for translation and funding by the state, even if they were never officially endorsed by the Minister.

How the programme was put into practice inhibited the success of official ideological goals. The failure to change how classes operated, meant that change in programme often had little effect. In the opening decades of the state, the classroom realities belied many of the political issues discussed previously. If history was seen as boring⁴ then it mattered little if it were Irish or European history which was to be taught, the end result would be a failure to engage the student. History was often treated as a lesson in reading and memorisation of detail, to the detriment of actual learning. As noted in 1957 “It is the experience of most history teachers that young people often miss the wood for the trees, remember details whilst forgetting their place and significance, and thus have no clear outline of the period being studied. This, indeed, is the real problem involved in the teaching of history; the course must be covered fully, but the outline must not be lost sight of.”⁵ Similarly, towards the late 1960s and early 1970s, as violence was beginning to spread in the North, claims that history teaching was to blame were being challenged owing to the awareness that “too much of our history is deadwood; we must learn to make it alive and real.”⁶

While history was taught extensively at secondary level, it was deemed by some to be “too verbal, too intellectualised”, which limited its actual effect on students.⁷ This coheres with international scholarship as to what kids actually learn, and the tangible effects of history teaching. Within the theoretical research on curriculum, it is widely accepted that “the direct influence of formal curricula on teaching practice is at best uncertain.” It has also been asserted that

⁴ *Report of the Department of Education, 1928-29* (Dublin, 1930), p. 91.

⁵ E.J. Hally, *Intermediate History Notes- Irish and European* (Dublin, 1957).

⁶ Tierney, ‘History Teaching’, p. 37.

⁷ Magee, *The teaching of Irish history in Irish schools*, p. 7.

national curricula, like textbooks, are the result of political power struggles and their importance in teaching depends on both selection and interpretation. What is in the guidelines and text books is not necessarily what students learn...Moreover, students' comprehension of history varies a great deal and is influenced by a complex interplay between school, society, and personal experience.⁸

This has also been considered in important recent scholarship on Northern Ireland.⁹

Though teachers were positioned in a central role by both the inspectorate and the secondary school system, the constraints of the examinations, the curriculum, and the general cultural and political ethos outlined in Chapters 2-6 meant that teaching occurred in a tightly prescribed educational space. History teaching differed between Intermediate and Leaving Certificate level, as those in charge of the former were more likely to be untrained and unqualified, as well as being under greater pressure in terms of student attendance and the amount of time dedicated to what was ostensibly a four-year course. Those teaching at Leaving Certificate level were more likely to have completed the appropriate qualifications and were considered by the inspectorate as being of a superior quality.

The heavy constraints on teaching were due to a number of reasons. The under-resourced schools and overcrowded classrooms; the pressures of an examination system which prioritised rote-learning, as well as the number of untrained teachers working, which often led to the over-reliance on textbooks, with large passages being memorised without criticality. Moreover, those teachers who were trained were more versed in European than Irish history, if they attended either UCD or TCD until the late 1940s. As the period progressed, the standard of teaching was seen to improve. The rise in H.Dip figures in the 1950s and 1960s coincided with the rising status of Irish history in the universities, meaning that not only were more teachers becoming qualified, but an increasing amount of them were more trained in Irish history as well. However, by highlighting the considerable constraints affecting education, and history in particular during this period, the romanticisation of the teacher that a range of educational organisations and particularly the

⁸ Nygren, 'International Reformation of Swedish History Education 1927–1961', pp 331–2.

⁹ Barton & McCully, 'History, identity, and the school curriculum in Northern Ireland'.

Department of Education aimed to promote can be challenged. Such a position was severely hampered by the difficult circumstances under which teachers actually worked.

History teaching between 1924 and 1969 was not as static as argued by John O'Callaghan. Though ultimately unsuccessful, there were numerous attempts to change the course during the period, as well as repeated complaints by teachers as to their dissatisfaction with the programme. The attempts at creating a composite subject of 'History and Geography' in the early 1940s was evidence of this.

A wider cultural and political nationalist agenda can be detected through analysing the programme, the textbooks used, and the exams officially set. This framed Irish history as a story of a Gaelic race of people, involved in a series of glorious military failures, culminating in the 'Resurgence of 1916'. History, it is argued, is "critical to the creation of ethnic groups and nations, given that shared past experience, or the perception of shared past experience, is the strongest rationale for the existence of the group."¹⁰ The Irish history taught in secondary schools was to be part of a process to forge collective meaning and establish common values through education.¹¹ This coheres with the theoretical concept of 'educationalization', as propounded by Marc Depaepe.¹² The new Free State government were involved in the 'educationalization' of the post-colonial struggle, in order to establish a separate and legitimate national identity in the wake of independence. The aspects of Irish history chosen for students to learn fitted into this. However, this political agenda was not as overt as previously accepted. This was chiefly owing to the limited authority which the Department of Education exercised over secondary education.

The most prevalent topics tended to be military or political events seen from a nationalist perspective. Importantly though, the examinations rarely dealt with contemporary history (post-1870) until into the late 1950s, while the most popular textbooks generally provided only a chronicle of events during the twentieth century. The Revolutionary period was not as important

¹⁰ Smith, *Reckoning with the past*, p. 13.

¹¹ Schissler & Soysal, 'Teaching Beyond the National Narrative', pp 1–2. For more on the concept of the nation-state and education see Meyer et al., 'World Expansion of Mass Education, 1870-1980'.

¹² Depaepe & Smeyers, 'Educationalization as an Ongoing Modernization Process'.

to the overall story as might have been expected. The changing contexts, from the 1920s and 1930s; the 1940s to mid-1950s; and mid-1950s to late 1960s had a considerable effect on what aspects of Irish history were stressed in the exams. The textbooks used remained constant throughout the period. Moreover, the numerous contextual difficulties meant that often, any overt agenda was massively restricted, which lessened the impact that history was to have.

This thesis in part contends with the views of some of the major historians involved in the 'Revisionist' debate, from the late 1960s onwards. School history was not as crudely nationalistic or as anti-English as assumed by the 'revisionists'. These attempts cannot be said to fully reflect the reality of school history during the period under investigation. What they were 'reacting' against did not fully correspond with the reality of the situation. Lyons, for instance, can be criticised for falling into the same trap that his work supposedly was meant to counter; that is arguing based on assumptions and received notions rather than research-based truth. D.G. Boyce noted how the revisionists focussed predominantly on portrayals of nationalism. The revisionists' mentality (if such a unified concept can be said to exist)¹³ did not intend that "nationalism should be relegated to a less central role in Ireland's history. Rather, it is to urge that nationalist writing that simplifies the tradition, ignores its variety, sets aside its own internal disputes and contradictions, can hardly be said to amount to historical thinking at all." He posed the question: is it to be 'history as it happened', or "a version of earlier events that are germane to the present?"¹⁴ School history during the period under investigation reflected the latter in parts, as seen in the 'Whig' interpretation of Irish history discussed in Chapter 4. It was not solely by such an understanding however. This research therefore demonstrates the culture to which the Revisionists were opposed. It also demonstrates how the popular view of history which was being

¹³ There is a considerable issue with considering the 'Revisionists' as a coherent school of thought. In fact the very loose application of the term 'revisionism' has led to a situation whereby some historians were labelled as both 'revisionist' and 'anti-revisionist', depending on the outlook of the person offering the description. The lack of acceptance of what defines a 'revisionist' led to some historians, such as Joseph Lee being seen to represent both; for instance being praised by Bradshaw for instance, while denounced by Hugh Kearney; See Ó Tuathaigh, 'Irish Historical "Revisionism"', pp 320–1. Moreover, Moody and Edwards never overtly stated that their aim was to create a 'value-free history', but rather viewed that as a desirable end. See Brady, "Constructive and Instructive": The Dilemma of Ireland's First "New Historians".

¹⁴ Boyce & O'Day (eds), *Modern Irish History, Revisionism and the Revisionist Controversy*, p. 8.

denounced by the later historians, was not as extremely blinkered or one-sidedly nationalistic as previously contended.

It is also important to understand the changes that occurred within Irish history teaching in the late 1960s. These were concurrent with, but not directly connected with the debates occurring in Irish academia as to purpose and methodology. The use of school history to promote certain cultural values was not entirely abandoned in the later period. Moreover, as the debates within academia demonstrate, progress should not be inherently accepted as being coterminous with betterment. Instead, the changes which occurred should be understood as being situated in the context of 1960s Ireland, when, as noted in Chapter 3, ‘movement was the order of the day’. The fierce opposition coming from certain sections of academic society as to changes in history writing are therefore important to recognise, to avoid an idealised view of continuous improvement.

History teaching in this period had to face a prosaic reality. This reflected the difficult nature of education during the period, as especially highlighted in Chapters 1, 7, and 8. For all the assertions as to its integral position, History as a subject, and the study of Irish history within this, was never elevated to the high position which the official rhetoric claimed it to hold, being less important to the overall curriculum than its inclusion in 1924 would have one expect. Despite the initial claims that it could constitute 100 percent of the course, and despite being defined in the 1950s as “that detailed study which is so essential”¹⁵ Irish history never received the attention within the school programme that this would imply. History had to contend with Geography at Intermediate level for scholarship points. Of the 400 marks allocated to History and Geography as a combined subject, History received 250, Geography 150. Irish history never constituted more than fifty percent of the course at any time, with European history also taught, except for a brief experiment in 1941. This meant that Irish history was never worth more than 125 marks in total towards the exam. The diminutive status of Irish history is evident. 2,000 marks went to the Certificate exam in total, meaning that Irish history (as specifically taught in History) was worth

¹⁵ Hally, *Intermediate History Notes*.

only 6.25 percent overall. While it featured in other subjects as noted in Chapter 3, these figures still offer a damning indictment of claims that Irish history was nearly, if not as important as the language¹⁶ in the re-making of Irish secondary education following Independence.

This has some very real ramifications. It demonstrates the considerable divide between rhetoric and reality in educational practice. If governments are to stress the importance of history, both in terms of allowing for an appreciation of a nation's culture and identity and towards developing skills of empathy and criticality, then there also needs to be a corresponding increase in subject status, time allocation, and resources granted. This gulf between purpose and practice, in relation to the teaching of Irish history was crucial. It shows how the success of any official programme is dependent on the ability to provide subjects with appropriate resources, structures, and favourable conditions.

In order to make reasoned decisions as to subject value and merit, it is necessary to come from an informed position. This thesis, by showing what has gone before, provides some very real practical benefits to those attempting to understand the position of Irish history in secondary education, and its future. It is important towards promoting research-based policy decisions as regards educational reform. As argued by Cannadine in his own work on history teaching in England, and as equally applicable to debates in Ireland over reforms of the Junior Certificate History programme and the removal of the subject's mandatory status, "no government should try to 'reform' history teaching in schools without some awareness of what has gone before, and of how things got to be the way they now are."¹⁷ Irish history as taught during this period promoted a positive nationalist narrative, as a means to help foster a specific national identity amongst students in secondary schools. Its ability to successfully achieve such aims may have been belied by the harsh everyday realities facing the education system, but its overall potential was never doubted. What we teach shows what we value, and what was valued was Green.

¹⁶ Consider that between its two strands (language and literature), the 'Gaeilge' course was worth 600 marks for the examination.

¹⁷ Cannadine et al., *The right kind of history*, p. 17.

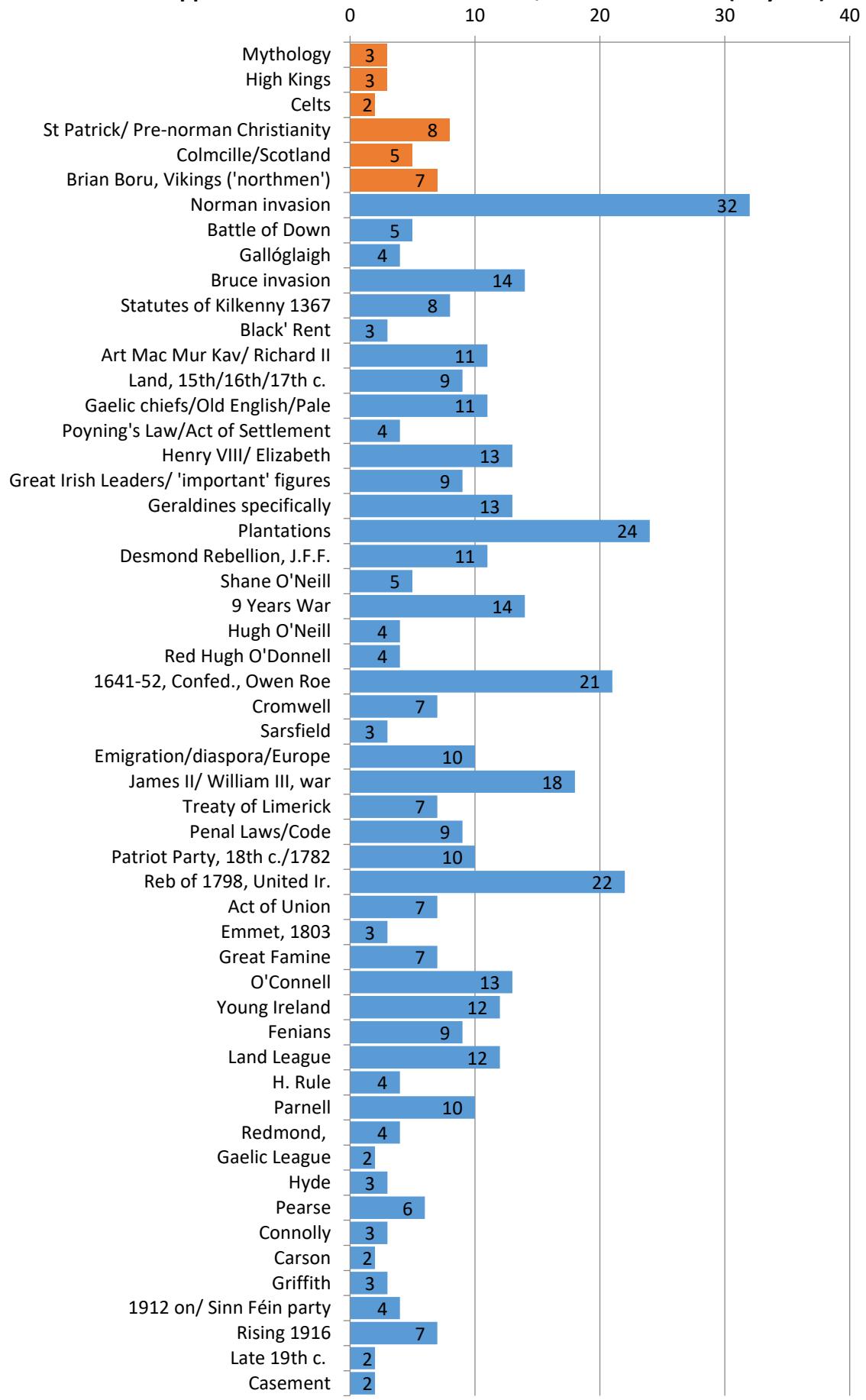
Appendix:

1. Textbook emphasis:

Content	Carty # of pp	H & M		Ó Siadhail		Casserley		Ryan		
		TOTAL	# of pp	TOTAL	# of pp	TOTAL	# of pp	TOTAL	# of pp	
The Early People of Ireland	8	1.19%	10	1.79%	6	1.95%	9	2.87%	15	3.58%
Celts to St. Patrick (5 fifths/7 7ths..)	17	2.52%	21	3.76%	8	2.60%	16	5.10%	23	5.49%
St Patrick (389-461)	16	2.37%	6	1.07%	4	1.30%	11	3.50%	20	4.77%
From St Patrick to the Northmen/ Isle of S&Sch	11	1.63%	11	1.97%	6	1.95%	10	3.18%	56	13.37%
Irish Missionary Work Abroad	12	1.78%	7	1.25%	7	2.27%	8	2.55%	21	5.01%
Early Social Structure	11	1.63%	9	1.61%					23	4.49%
War of the Gaedhil with the Gaill	11	1.63%	19	3.40%	7	2.27%	9	2.87%	29	6.92%
Brian Borumha	13	1.93%	↑		10	3.25%	12	3.82%	↑	
The Irish Kingdom (1014-1169) H.K. with Opp	10	1.48%	14	2.50%	8	2.60%	12	3.82%	16	3.82%
Reorganisation/Reform of the Church			5	0.89%					17	4.06%
Lives of the People	19	2.82%								
Literary and Artistic Development	↑		4	0.72%					25	5.97%
Irish Kingdom in Scotland (Oirghaeil)									8	1.91%
Coming of the Normans/Fall of High-Kingship	23	3.41%	14	2.50%	7	2.27%	12	3.82% (SEE BELOW)		
The Norman Conquest (1175-1257)	14	2.08%	30	5.37%	5	1.62%	11	3.50%	27	6.44%
The Irish Recovery (1257-1315)	12	1.78%			9	2.92%	5	1.59%	18	4.30%
From Edward Bruce to Art Mac Murchadha	12	1.78%	23	4.11%	9	2.92%	9	2.87%	23	5.49%
Lords and Chieftains (1418-1535)	14	2.08%	22	3.94%	9	2.92%	4	1.27%	↑	↑
The Tudor Conquest Begins (1535-1558)	11	1.63%	14	2.50%	5	1.62%	6	1.91%	20	4.77%
The Irish Defence (1558-1583)	13	1.93%	14	2.50%	8	2.60%	11	3.50%	41	9.79%
O'Neill and O'Donnell/ 9 Y.War	22	3.26%	23	4.11%	12	3.90%	9	2.87%	↑	
The Flight of the Earls	12	1.78%	9	1.61%					↑	
Lives of the People / Learning/Industry/Commerce	*								29	6.92%
The Ulster Plantation	12	1.78%	4	0.72%			7	2.23%	SERIES END	
1609-1640			19	3.40%	7	2.27%				
The Insurrection of 1641	9	1.34%	4	0.72%	6	1.95%	4	1.27%		
The Confederation of Kilkenny	13	1.93%	15	2.68%	6	1.95%	4	1.27%		
The Cromwellian Settlement	13	1.93%	4	0.72%	5	1.62%	6	1.91%		
The Restoration/Revolution 1688	/		8	1.43%	5	1.62%	8	2.55%		
The Battle of the Boyne/ williamite war	11	1.63%	19	3.40%	7	2.27%	7	2.23%		
The Treaty of Limerick	9	1.34%	↑	↑	↑	↑				
The Penal Laws	7	1.04%	8	1.43%	5	1.62%	8	2.55%		
Irish Abroad	12	1.78%	4	0.72%	3	0.97%				
			23	4.11%						
Patriots/Grattan's The Irish Parliament	12	1.78%	24	4.29%	8	2.60%	9	2.87%		
French Revolution							5	1.59%		
The United Irishmen	12	1.78% 7* Fr. Exp		1.25%	4	1.30%	6	1.91%		
The Insurrection of 1798	17	2.52%	6	1.07%	9	2.92%	6	1.91%		
Lives of the People	23	3.41%								
Religion	8	1.19%								
Industry and trade	7	1.04%								
The Irish Abroad	...									
The Act of Union (itself)	1	0.15%	7	1.25%	4	1.30%				
Ireland after the Union (1800-23)	(CB4) 7	1.04%	17	3.04%	3*	0.97%	6	1.91%		
Catholic Emancipation	9	1.34%	5	0.89%	6	1.95%	6	1.91%		
Tithe/Prim Ed./Poor Law/Municipal Reform			11	1.97%						

The Repeal Movement	6	0.89%	10	1.79%	7	2.27%	4	1.27%	
Young Ireland	11	1.63%	7	1.25%	6	1.95% included ↑?			
The Great Famine	11	1.63%	4	0.72%	↑	↑	7	2.23%	
Tenant League (1850s)			4	0.72%					
The Fenians	11	1.63%	6	1.07%	7	2.27%	6	1.91%	
Land League, Parnell/Davitt ('Struggle for Land')	21	3.12%	10	1.79%	19	6.17%	3	0.96%	
Parnell/The Irish Parliamentary Party	14	2.08%	20	3.58%	2	0.64%	5	1.59%	
The National Revival, The Ulster Question	11	1.63%	4	0.72%	9**	2.92%	5	1.59%	
From 1914 to the Treaty	20	2.97%	3	0.54%	10	3.25%	5	1.59%	
Literature (across entire period)	26	3.86%	24	4.29%	9	2.92%	7	2.23%	
Agriculture and Industry	13	1.93%							
Irish Free State					6	1.95%	6	1.91%	Ó S. *:
Lives of the People-I	9	1.34%							*R. Emmet
Lives of the People-II	13	1.93%							**framed differently
The Irish Abroad	12	1.78%							
		68.25%		77.44%		82.12%		86.29%	
									73.75%

Appendix 2: Amount of Questions, I.C.Exam 1926-68 (43 years)

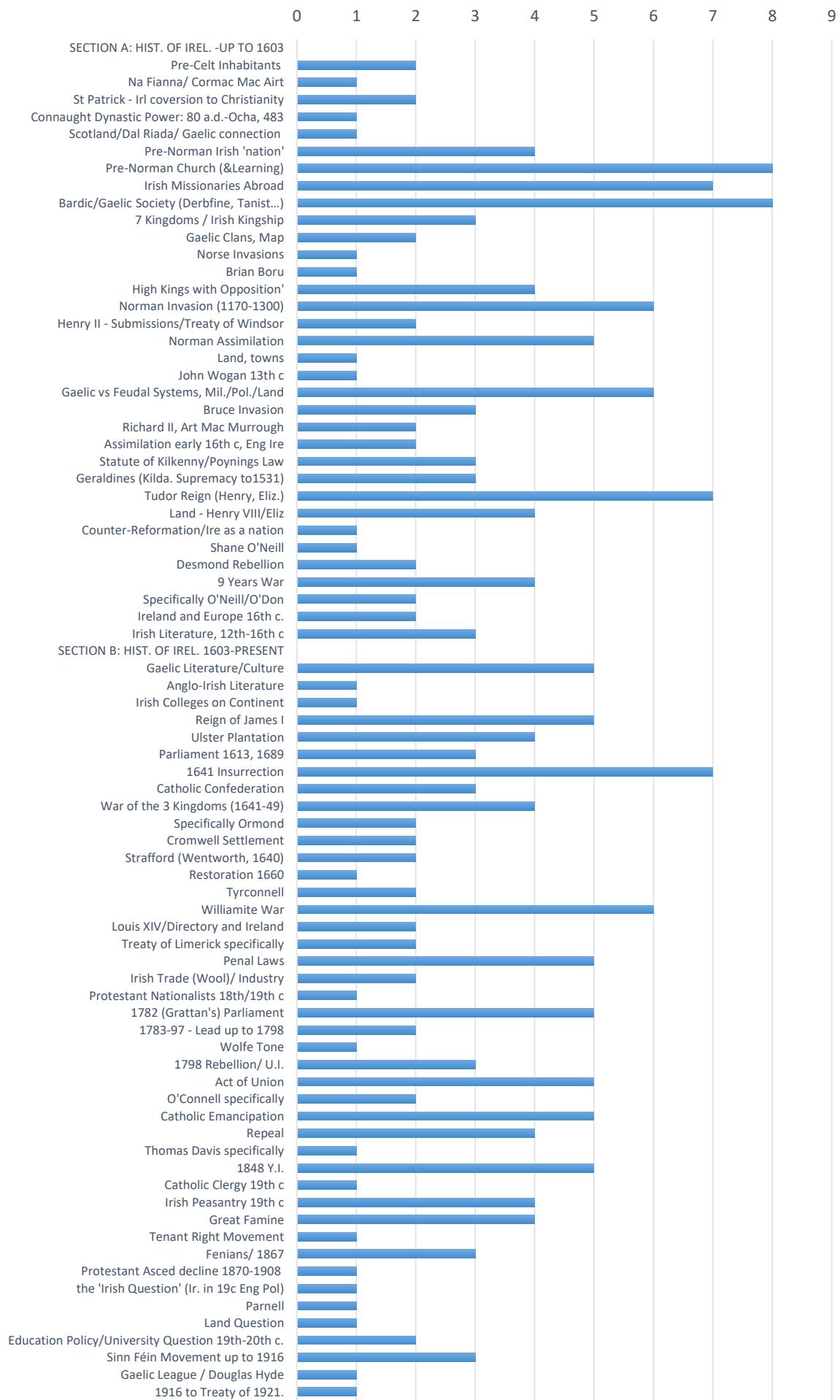


	1926-37	1926-40	1941-48	1949-68	TOTAL:
Mythology	3	3	—	—	3
High Kings	3	3	—	—	3
Celts	2	2	—	—	2
St Patrick/Pre-Norman					
Christianity	8	8	—	—	8
Colmcille/Scotland	5	5	—	—	5
Brian Boru, Vikings ('northmen')	7	7	—	—	7
Norman invasion	7	9	5	18	32
Battle of Down	1	2	1	2	5
Gallóglagh	1	1	0	3	4
Bruce invasion	2	3	3	8	14
Statutes of Kilkenny 1367	1	2	1	5	8
Black' Rent	0	0	0	3	3
Art Mac Mur Kav/ Richard II	1	2	2	7	11
Land, 15th/16th/17th c.	7	7	2	0	9
Gaelic chiefs/Old English/Pale	4	7	0	4	11
Poyning's Law/Act of Settlement	1	1	0	3	4
Henry VIII/ Elizabeth	6	6	1	6	13
Great Irish Leaders/ 'important' figures	2	3	2	4	9
Geraldines specifically	4	5	3	5	13
Plantations	10	11	4	9	24
Desmond Rebellion/ J.Fitzgerald	2	3	2	6	11
Shane O'Neill	0	0	2	3	5
9 Years War	2	2	2	10	14
Hugh O'Neill	1	1	0	3	4
Red Hugh O'Donnell	1	0	1	2	4
1641-52, Confed., Owen Roe	3	4	4	13	21
Cromwell	0	1	2	4	7
Sarsfield	1	1	1	1	3
Emigration/diaspora/Europe	8	9	1	0	10
James II/ William III, war	5	5	2	11	18
Treaty of Limerick	2	2	2	3	7
Penal Laws/Code	3	3	3	3	9

Patriot Party, 18th c./1782	3	3	1	6	10
Reb of 1798, United Ir.	6	7	4	11	22
Act of Union	1	2	2	3	7
Emmet, 1803	1	1	0	2	3
Great Famine	2	2	1	4	7
O'Connell	3	4	1	8	13
Young Ireland	3	4	3	5	12
Fenians	1	2	2	5	9
Land League/Davitt	3	3	5	6	12
H. Rule	0	0	1	3	4
Parnell	2	2	2	6	10
Redmond,	0	1	0	3	4
Gaelic League	0	0	0	2	2
Hyde	1	1	0	2	3
Pearse	1	2	1	3	6
Connolly	0	0	1	2	3
Carson	0	0	0	2	2
Griffith	0	0	0	3	3
1912 on/ Sinn Féin party	0	0	2	2	4
Rising 1916	2	3	2	2	7
Late 19th c.	2	2	0	0	2
Casement	1	1	0	1	2

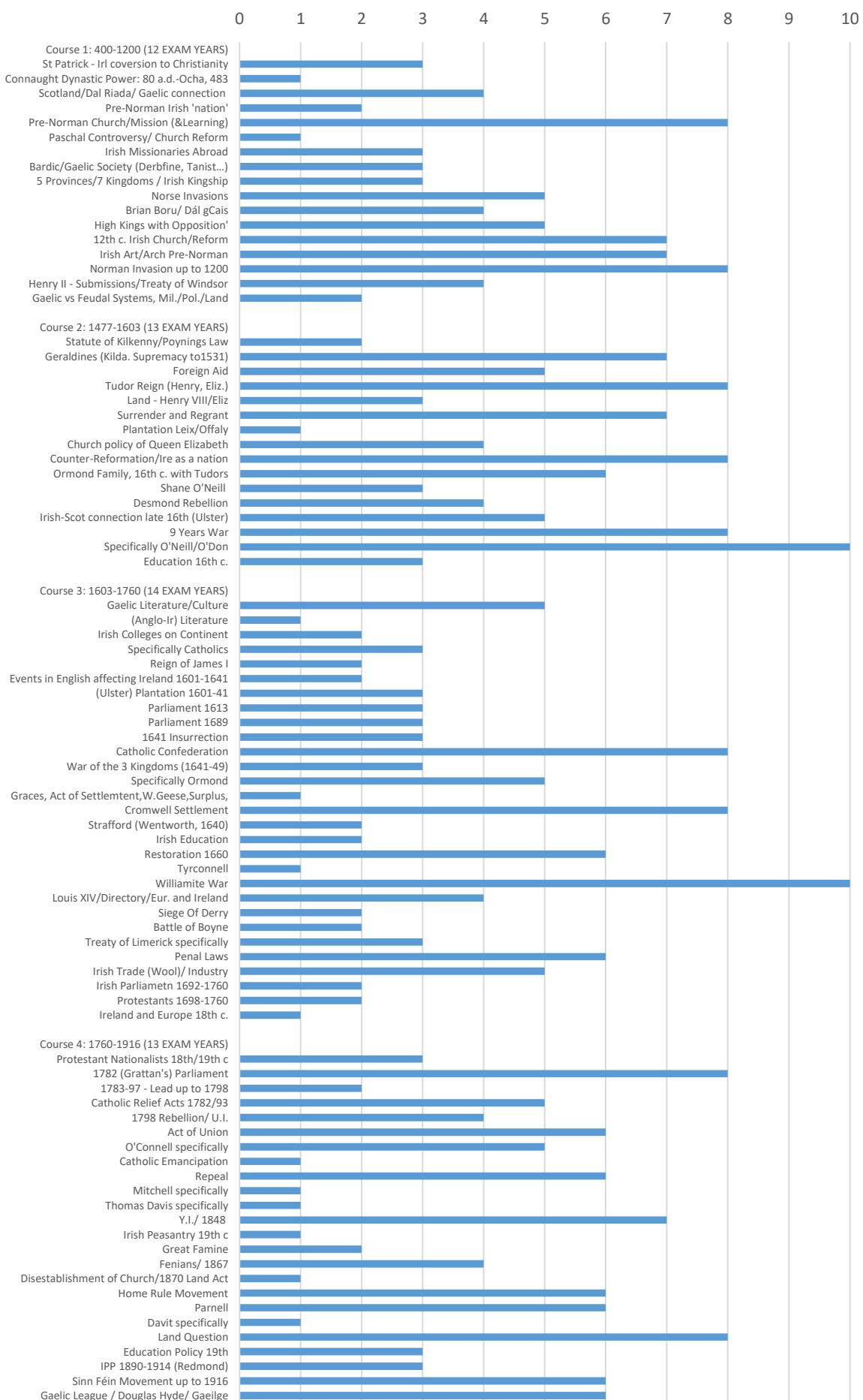
Note: With regards to the Irish Confederate Wars, while Chapter 5 discusses why the overall figure could be higher, this was not done initially as to do so would change how often the topic was broached on an annual basis as opposed to a simple numerical basis, and change the perception as to the topic's overall importance in terms of the aspects of Irish history most stressed across the period.

Appendix 4.1: Leaving Certificate Hons. Irish History Questions, 1926-40



Appendix 4.2:

Leaving Certificate Hons. Irish History Questions, 1944-69



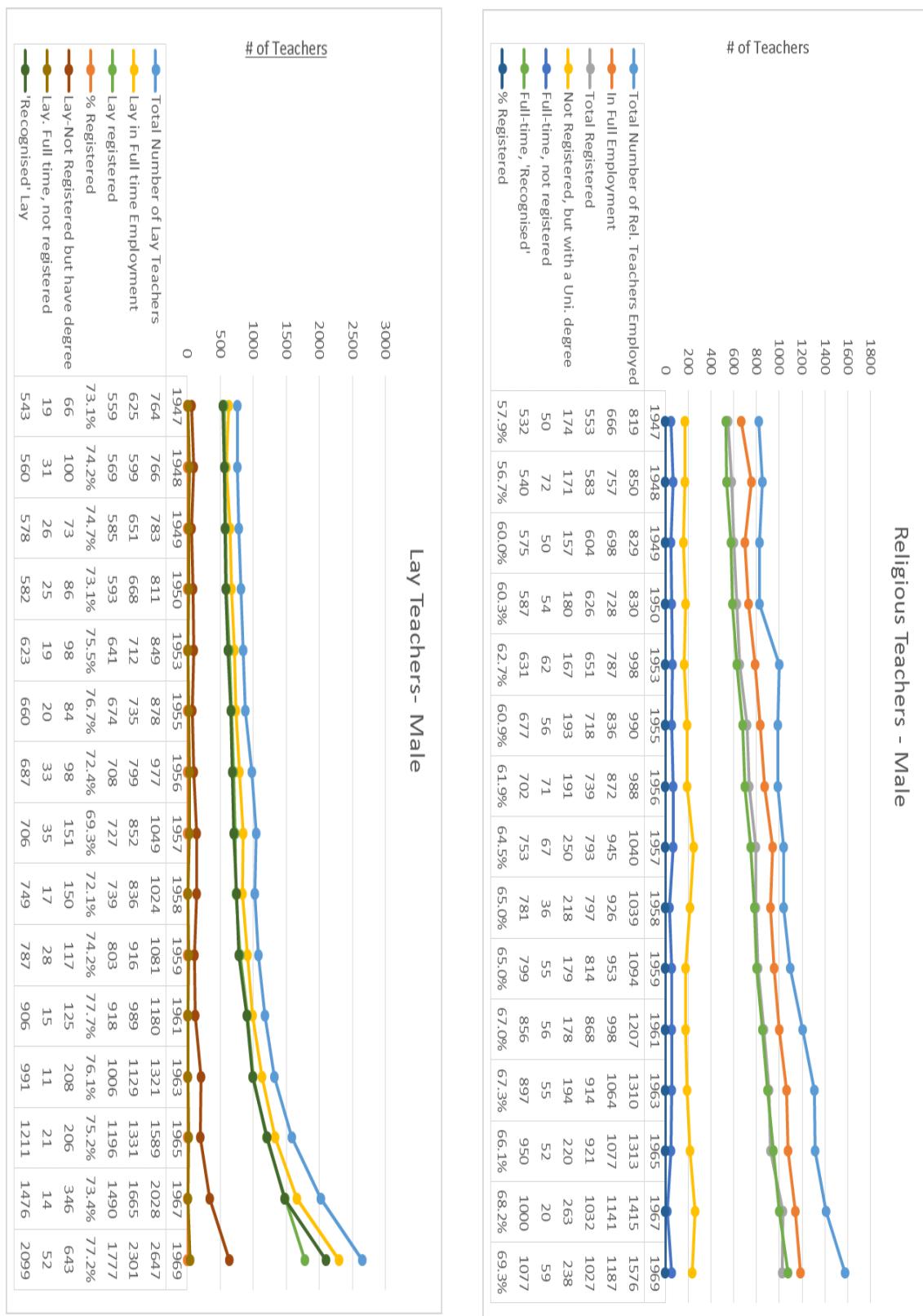
APPENDIX 5: Most important topics per period:

1926-40 (14 exam papers)

SECTION A: Hist.of Irel. UP TO 1603		SECTION B: Hist.of Irel. 1603-PRES.	
Bardic/Gaelic Society (Derbfine, Tanist...)	8	1641 Insurrection	7
Pre-Norman Church (Learning & Reform)	8	Williamite War	6
Irish Missionaries Abroad	7	Gaelic Literature/Culture	5
Tudor Reign (Henry, Eliz.)	7	Reign of James I	5
Norman Invasion (1170-1300)	6	Penal Laws	5
Gaelic vs Feudal Systems, Mil./Pol./Land	6	1782 (Grattan's) Parliament	5
Norman Assimilation	5	Act of Union	5
Pre-Norman Irish 'nation'	4	Catholic Emancipation	5
High Kings with Opposition'	4	1848 Y.I.	5
Land - Henry VIII/Eliz	4	Ulster Plantation	4
9 Years War	4	War of the 3 Kingdoms (1641-49)	4
		Repeal	4
		Irish Peasantry 19th c	4
		Great Famine	4

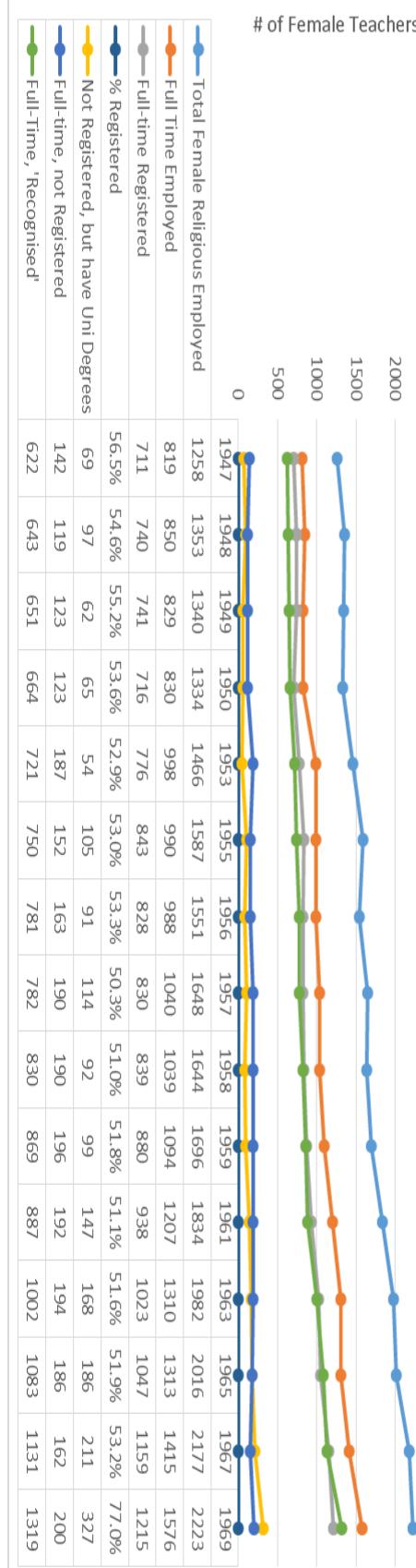
1944-69		Course 3: 1603-1760 (14 EXAM YEARS)	
Course 1: 400-1200 (12 EXAM YEARS)			
Pre-Norman Church/Mission (&Learning)	8	Williamite War	10
Norman Invasion up to 1200	8	Catholic Confederation	8
12th c. Irish Church/Reform	7	Cromwell Settlement	8
Irish Art/Arch Pre-Norman	7	Restoration 1660	6
Norse Invasions	5	Penal Laws	6
High Kings with Opposition'	5	Gaelic Literature/Culture	5
Scotland/Dal Riada/ Gaelic connection	4	Specifically Ormond	5
Brian Boru/ Dál gCais	4	Irish Trade (Wool)/ Industry	5
Henry II - Submissions/Treaty of Windsor	4		
Course 2: 1477-1603 (13 EXAM YEARS)		Course 4: 1760-1916 (13 EXAM YEARS)	
Specifically O'Neill/O'Don	10	1782 (Grattan's) Parliament	8
Tudor Reign (Henry, Eliz.)	8	Land Question	8
Counter-Reformation/Ire as a nation	8	Young Ireland/ 1848	7
9 Years War	8	Act of Union	6
Geraldines (Kilda. Supremacy to 1531)	7	Repeal	6
Surrender and Regrant	7	Home Rule Movement	6
Ormond Family, 16th c. with Tudors	6	Parnell	6
Foreign Aid	5	Sinn Féin Movement up to 1916	6
Irish-Scot connection late 16th (Ulster)	5	Gaelic League / Douglas Hyde/ Gaeilge	6
		Catholic Relief Acts 1782/93	5
		O'Connell specifically	5

Appendix 6. TEACHER STATISTICS:¹

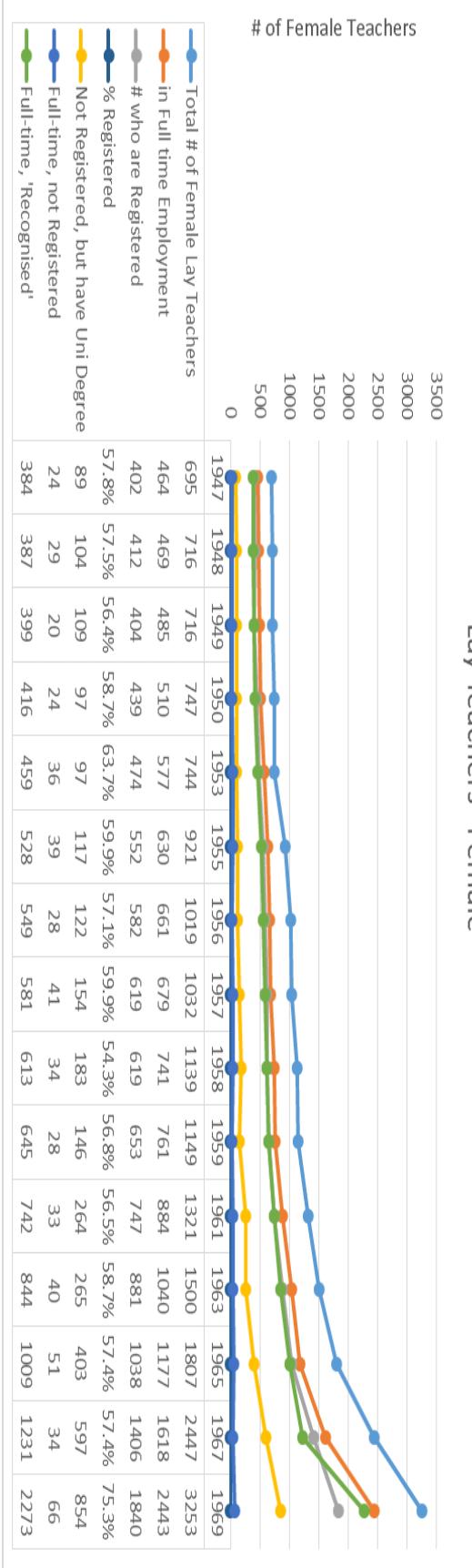


¹ Table compiled from figures in ASTI Official Programme of Annual convention, C.E.C. REPORT, 1949-69

Religious Teachers - Female



Lay Teachers- Female



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