



# Free Second Level Education:

## *The Context for Change and Lessons for Today.*

Talk by Áine Hyland at an ASTI conference

***50 Years on: Reflecting on the Legacy of Free Second Level Education***

Gresham Hotel – 28<sup>th</sup> April 2018.



# Post-primary education before 1967

***Before 1967, post-primary education was provided in:***

- (Voluntary) Secondary schools
- Vocational Schools
- Secondary Tops
- Preparatory Colleges
- Juniorates of Religious Orders and Communities



# Number of Secondary Schools and no. of pupils – 1926/7 to 1962/3

YEAR	No. of Secondary School	No. of Pupils
1926/7	283	24,766
1936/7	329	35,890
1946/7	393	42,927
1956/7	480	62,429
1960/1	526	76,843
1961/2	542	80,400
1962/3	557	84,916



## Report of the Council of Education on the Curriculum of the Secondary School, 1962.

- ..... the unqualified scheme of “free secondary education for all” is utopian: if only for financial reasons. ... There are also objections on educational grounds. ... only a minority of pupils would be capable of profiting by secondary (grammar school) education .... if secondary education were universally available free for all, the incentives to profit by it would diminish and standards would inevitably fall.



## Interim Report of a Dept. of Education committee on post-primary education, Dec. 1962

- ▶ ...we unhesitatingly recommend a compulsory and free period of post-primary education for all Irish children. .... (we recommend) a comprehensive system. ....a common form of post-primary course, extending over a three year period, should be available both in existing vocational and secondary schools. .. The units we envisage following this common course would be termed “Junior Secondary Schools”. They should aim at operating with a minimum of 120 pupils, i.e. an annual intake of a minimum of 40 pupils...
- ▶ We are not prepared to recommend that senior secondary school courses should be available free to all pupils who wish to partake of them.

# Investment in Education Report - Number of Pupils in Full-time Education, February 1964

	6-12	13 years	14 years	15 years	16 years
National Schools	389,739	31,039	5,843	938	254
Sec. Schools and Sec. Tops	6,832	17,715	21,139	19,472	15,438
Vocational Schools	135	4,714	10,268	8,334	4,185
Population (estimated)	401,400	56,600	56,400	56,600	56,200
% participation	<b>98.8%</b>	<b>94.6%</b>	<b>66.4%</b>	<b>51.5%</b>	<b>36.8%</b>



# Investment in Education Report 1965 Progression from Primary School

## **Of the relevant age cohort**

- 42% went to Secondary School or Secondary Top
- 23% went to Vocational School
- **35%** left full-time education



## Investment in Education Report 1965 - Transition to University

- C. 2,000 p.a. (fewer than 4% of the cohort) went to University!
- More than 20% of those who entered university dropped out.





# Investment in Education Report


- There were significant disparities by social class and by urban/rural in participation rates in post-primary education.
- The rate of completion of primary school and of transfer to post-primary education was lowest among the children of unskilled workers and the unemployed.
- Young people from professional backgrounds were at least five times more likely to complete senior cycle education than children of unskilled workers or unemployed, and more than 25 times more likely to go to university.



# Investment in Education Report 1965 – conclusions based on analysis of participation rates

## **The main areas in which improvements might be sought are as follows:**

1. The number who leave school without having reached primary cert level
2. The low rate of participation in post-primary by children from social groups F and G (unskilled, semi-skilled, unemployed etc).
3. The high rate of early school leaving from junior cycle
4. The small proportion of continuation pupils who reach third level
5. The low rate of participation in university – and the relatively low certificate attainment of many entrants.



# Investment in Education Report 1965

## The School Location Analysis (Appendix XII.B)

- ▶ Work on the School Location Analysis was started by the Investment in Education Team in early 1964 and continued until the end of 1965.
- ▶ It was detailed and painstaking work which required careful mapping and details about every primary and second level school in the country.
- ▶ The statistical analysis were based on CSO statistics – Superintendent Registrars' Districts and Registrars' Districts.
- ▶ Computerised analysis was used.
- ▶ The language used in the chapter was detached, dense and technical.

# Distance of national school pupils from the nearest post-primary school -1964

Type of School	Under 1 mile	1 – 4 miles	5 – 9 miles	10 miles +
Boys Sec	50.2	11.2	24.1	14.5
Boys Voc	53.1	14.5	25.4	6.9
<b>Nearest PP school for boys</b>	<b>55.1</b>	<b>16.1</b>	<b>23.9</b>	<b>4.9</b>
Girls Sec	54.9	12.2	22.7	10.2
Girls Voc	54.3	13.5	25.2	7.0
<b>Nearest PP school for girls</b>	<b>58.1</b>	<b>15.4</b>	<b>22.4</b>	<b>4.1</b>

# The Spread of Day Fees Charged by Secondary Schools 1964

Actual Fees	No. of Pupils	% of Pupils
£0- £5	387	0.5
£5 - £10	4,315	5.5
£10 - £15	18,746	24.0
£15 - £20	19,593	25.0
£20 - £25	9,972	12.7
£25 - £30	4,976	6.4
£30 +	20,302	25.9



# Developments during George Colley's term as Minister for Education May '65 to July '66

- ▶ Govt agreed in January 1965 that a Development Branch would be set up and this was publicly announced by Colley in June 1965
- ▶ The Development Branch continued the work of Investment in Ed on the Location analysis and collated the data for the County Reports
- ▶ Colley actively pursued a policy of amalgamation of primary schools
- ▶ He appealed for collaboration between secondary and vocational school in Jan 1966
- ▶ He initiated a common Intermediate Cert curriculum – setting up 14 subject committees which reported in May 1966
- ▶ He proceeded with the building of the first three comprehensive schools.



# Minister Colley's Intentions


- His intention was to raise the school-leaving age to 15 in 1970, and to develop a system of secondary education which would provide junior cycle education for all – to be followed (subsequently) by two years in senior cycle.
- This would coincide with extending the two year course in vocational schools to three years.
- Post-primary education would be organised on comprehensive lines “wherever conditions are favourable”.



# Speech by Taoiseach, Seán Lemass, in the Dáil on 7<sup>th</sup> July 1966

- ▶ The recent National Industrial and Economic Council comment on the Investment in Education report emphasises the need for a very considerable expansion of financial outlay on educational development ...
- ▶ To an ever-increasing extent the policy of the Government will be directed to this, **and we will have to endure the political criticisms which it may evoke from the unthinking, as other desirable developments are necessarily slowed down to enable this essential educational programme to be fulfilled.**





# Appointment of Donogh O'Malley as Minister for Education - 13<sup>th</sup> July 1966

In a letter to the Taoiseach on 29<sup>th</sup> July 1966 O'Malley outlined radical and extensive proposals for educational reform including

- ✓ Rapid completion of the three comprehensive schools and the establishment of new comprehensive schools in other areas
- ✓ **A national transport scheme for post-primary pupils**
- ✓ **A school meals service at post-primary level**
- ✓ A scheme of grants for audio-visual aids.


*"This is an imposing list of new and extended services but in my short period as Minister for Education it has become abundantly clear that we shall have to introduce them quickly if we want to make any progress in education".*



# Intensive planning in the Development Branch during summer 1966

## *Notes on the Organisation of Secondary Education in a Sample Rural Area:*


- ▶ “The purpose of these notes which use Co. Mayo as an example, is to examine whether the limitations and the uneconomic use of resources of the present system .... Will be sufficiently countered by the proposals for the development and reorganisation of secondary education which seem likely to prevail in rural areas in the future. **Are they bold enough? Do they go far enough? The contention of these notes is that they may not**”.



# ***Financial Assistance for Post-Primary Students***

(Dev. Branch “notes” - Summer 1966)

- ▶ These notes provided a detailed analysis (including cost estimates) of providing free post-primary education up to the end of the compulsory attendance period
- ▶ **Within junior cycle, the scheme “should give assistance, to the poor child to meet the cost of books, stationery, transport etc”. “So far as the very poor child is concerned, free tuition is not enough – he will not have the money to pay for the books and stationery he will need ...**
- ▶ **It should provide free education for the poor child, together with a larger subsidy for books and accessories, to enable him to take his education up to Leaving Cert**
- ▶ It should offer a scheme of financial assistance, based on ability and graduated according to income, to the low income group to enable them to proceed to university or technological college.




## ***Financial Assistance for Post-Primary Students*** (Dev. Branch “notes” - Summer 1966)

- **Special provision will also need to be made for really poor parents who have to send their children out to work when they reach the school-leaving age in order to supplement the family earnings. These parents cannot afford NOT to have their children earning. The idea is that some amount by way of a maintenance allowance would be payable and would be confined to the very poor pupils, when they reach the compulsory school age.**



# Memorandum from O'Malley to the Taoiseach - 7<sup>th</sup> Sep 1966

- ▶ O'Malley submitted a memorandum to the Taoiseach outlining two possible ("Preliminary") schemes for free post-primary education. He told Lemass that he hoped in a forthcoming speech to "**make a general reference – without going into details – to some of the matters referred to in this Memorandum, should you so approve**". Having quoted some statistics from the Investment in Education report, he stated: "*It must be acknowledged that the picture presented above, discloses a state of serious social injustice*". The Minister deliberately linked the achievement of equality of educational opportunity with the economic need to have an adequate supply of well qualified school leavers.



# Announcement on 10<sup>th</sup> Sep. 1966 by Minister Donogh O'Malley

At a weekend seminar of the National Union of Journalists in Dun Laoghaire on 10<sup>th</sup> Sep. 1966, O'Malley condemned the inequalities of the post-primary education system. He stated:

- ***“I am glad to be able to announce that I am drawing up a scheme under which in future, no boy or girl in this State will be deprived of full educational opportunity – from primary to university level – by reason of the fact that the parents cannot afford to pay for it”.***



## Provision of Free Post-Primary Education (memorandum to Govt. 11<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1966)


- This was a 52 page memorandum setting out details of the proposal for free post-primary education. It included statistics from Investment in Education and comments from the NIEC report. It also provided justification and detailed costings of the various proposals.



# Provision of Free Post-Primary Education (memorandum to Govt. 11<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1966)

- **Part A: free tuition** in certain post-primary schools. The proposal is to offer a supplemental grant of between £15 and £25 to secondary schools which make free education available.
- **Part B: Financial Assistance** to enable poor children to purchase books and accessories (£16 for junior cycle and £14 for senior cycle. In addition a maintenance grant of £40 p.a. for very poor children.
- **Part C:** Financial assistance (graduated) for **university education**
- **Part D: A State-supported transport scheme** to post-primary schools will be absolutely essential to ensure equality of opportunity for children in rural areas. The cost for the first full school year estimated at £300,000.





# Estimated Eventual Annual Cost of the proposals of 11<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1966

➤ Part A – Free Tuition	€1,442,000
➤ Part B – Free Books and Maintenance	€270,000
➤ Part C – University Education	€830,000
➤ Part D – Transport	€1,000,000
➤ Less Savings on Scholarships	€540,000
<b>➤ NET TOTAL:</b>	<b>€3,002,000</b>




# County Reports and Public Meetings

- ▶ The County Reports were completed by the end of 1966 – and the public consultation meetings took place around the country from the end of 1966 to summer 1967. Various commentaries have indicated that these public meetings achieved little – but they should not be underestimated. For the first time, discussions on educational planning and policy were in the public domain. The planning process was coherent and systematic. Information and documentation were publicly accessible.



# A New Dawn – Sep. 1967!

- The vast majority of secondary schools (485 out of 551) entered the free scheme by Sep. 1967.
- 92% of day pupils in secondary schools were covered by the scheme in 1967/68.
- The initiative effectively trebled the intake into secondary schools within a few years.
- Net expenditure for secondary education increased by over €3.5 million in one year.
- Building grants for secondary schools were increased – 70% of the cost was a grant and 30% was a loan repayable over 15 years.
- The “yellow school buses” were one of the more visible manifestations of the success of the scheme.



# Equality of Educational Opportunity was NOT achieved!

- ▶ **“It is clear that the problem is more intractable than has been previously envisaged. In addition it has now become evident that the system works in most countries in such a manner that more public money is spent on the education of persons who start life in reasonably favourable situations than on those who start life in very unfavourable circumstances. Thus, even the much lower objective of equality of expenditure per student is not likely to be achieved in most European countries in the foreseeable future. ...Secondly, ... when the general run of society moves ahead in response to better opportunities, the failure of those who are not able to benefit ... becomes more evident and also of more concern”.**
- ▶ Bill Hyland, 1971.