

The Changing Face of Teacher Education in Ireland: A major overhaul or a cosmetic review?

Carmel Mulcahy

Majella McSharry

School of Education Studies, Dublin City University,
Ireland

Abstract:

Irish education has undergone major changes in the recent past. These changes came about as a result of a White Paper on policy, *Charity Our Education Future*, (1995), the subsequent establishment of the Education Act (2000) which formally gave legal status to key aspects of education and the Teaching Council Act which was charged with the maintenance and improvement of the quality of teaching and teacher education. The professionalization of teaching and teachers was identified as key to the proposed changes. Change processes in any profession are challenging and demand collaboration and agreement from a number of stakeholders. In teacher education such changes involve existing practitioners, the training providers, the government and the unions, which represent parents, teachers and teacher education providers. In order to bring about change, there should also be evidence that the proposed changes are properly cost, are capable of improving current practice and that change management teams are available to support and evaluate the impact of the changes. This paper addresses the challenges that exist in bringing about successful change in a difficult economic and social situation, where the quality, impact and success of Irish education processes are being closely scrutinized. The paper places a strong emphasis on the role of teacher educators.

Keywords: Ireland, teacher educators, professionalization, policy, continuing professional development, ethics.

Corresponding author: Carmel Mulcahy
E-mail: Carmel.Mulcahy@dcu.ie
Educational Research eJournal- ISSN 2254-0385
© Faculty of Education. University of Alicante- Spain
DOI: 10.5838/erej.2012.12.02

1. Introduction

In 2001 major changes in Irish Education, which were prompted by the White Paper on Education (1995) resulted in the introduction by the Irish Government of The Teaching Council Act, (2001) which would result in major changes to Teacher Education in the Republic of Ireland. The function of the Act was clearly defined:

to maintain and improve the quality of teaching in the state; to provide for the establishment of standards, policies and procedures for the education and training of teachers and other matters relating to teachers and the teaching profession; to provide for the registration and regulation of teachers and to enhance professional standards and competence; for those purposes to establish a Council to be known as An Chomhairle Mhuinteoireachta or, in the English language, the Teaching Council; to provide for the repeal of the Intermediate Education (Ireland) Act, 1914, and to provide for related matters. [17th April, 2001]

In the intervening 10 years the Teaching Council has moved to introduce a series of processes and procedures based on research and perceived best practice in order to professionalise the teaching profession, allow for a registration of all existing and new entrants to the teaching profession, examine and review current provision for teacher education in the Republic of Ireland and ensure the highest level of teaching provision for Irish students. These developments have taken place against the backdrop of a changing Ireland, an Ireland where interculturalism is now a reality in our schools, an Ireland where the predominance of the Irish Church and its role in education is coming under scrutiny, an Ireland where, the demands of a knowledge economy has begun to infiltrate the provision of curricula and at teacher -education level a changed

approach which sees the impact of the Bologna Process on the provision of education, the generation of theory around new models of education and the perceived focus on processes and outcomes.

This paper will examine the implications of these and other changes for teacher educators and will look at ways forward in terms of marrying the needs of the Teaching Council, the providers of teacher education, the professional teacher and the demands of a changed economy and society.

2. Background

An OECD Working Paper, No 48, published in 2010 (Musset, 2010) highlights the importance of teacher education in the context of the current economic and social changes and the recognition of teachers as the school variable that most impacts on student achievement, even more than traditionally held concepts of class size. (OECD, 2005: p.26) Teacher education according to the OECD study fulfils a twin role: that of ensuring that teachers are competent, skilled practitioners when they enter the teaching profession and the perhaps bigger challenge of ensuring that teachers continue to be motivated and incentivized to maintain the highest levels of professional development throughout their careers. Musset recognizes the challenges that face policy makers across the OECD in particular in relation to the need to improve teacher quality in a socio economic context where the expectations of governments and employers and society in general are high in relation to teachers. In countries like Ireland where the economic situation has change dramatically for the worst in a short period of time, it could be argued that the changes mooted the Teaching Council in the recently published Policy on the

Continuum of Teacher Education, (2011) pose a major challenge for the Irish Government, the Higher Education providers of teacher education (HEI's) the teaching profession and the schools who provide placements for teachers across all education sectors.

The establishment of the Teaching Council on a statutory basis in March 2006, under The Teaching Council Act, 2001, to promote, support and regulate the teaching profession, conferred significant powers on the Council in the area of teacher education. Under the terms of the act the objectives of the Council were determined as follows:

1. to regulate the teaching profession and the professional conduct of teachers.
2. to establish and promote the maintenance and improvement of standards of: programmes of teacher education and training, teaching, knowledge, skill and competence of teachers in recognized primary and post-primary schools, and professional conduct of teachers.
3. to promote the continuing education and training and professional development of teachers.

[Teaching Council Act. Chapter1, Par. 6]

The Teaching Council set out its draft policy paper on the continuum of teacher education in 2010, which includes initial teacher education, induction into the profession and early and continuing professional development. Prior to the publication of the draft and the subsequent publication in 2011 of the final document entitled Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education, the Council undertook a rigorous process of research and consultation both at a local and international level. The policy was developed by the Council following an extensive programme of research on the history of teacher education in Ireland, (Coolahan, 2007) a nine Country Cross

–National Study (Conway, et al 2009) and wide ranging consultation with a range of stakeholders in Teacher Education, including the providers, the host schools and the teaching bodies themselves. In addition to the development of the Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education, the Council also developed a Professional Code of Conduct for Teachers in 2007, updated and reviewed in 2011, which will have consequences for the provision of teacher education into the future. This particular aspect of Irish Teacher Education will be addressed later in the paper.

3. Historical Review

In 2007, the Teaching Council commissioned a leading educationalist, Professor John Coolahan, to undertake a review of Teacher Education: A Review Paper on Thinking and Policies Relating to Teacher Education in Ireland. The paper outlines the previous restructuring of education 1965-1975, which coincided with “a period of major social, economic and cultural change in Ireland, when a vibrant national economy provided resources and motivation for significant reforms, not dissimilar to the period from the middle nineties to 2007”. (P.2) These changes resulted in a greater autonomy for the providers of Teacher Education, an increase in the staffing levels, a change from single sex to mixed colleges of education and greater freedom for students of education, in particular at Primary Level, who up to this point lived on campus and were subject to a fairly restrictive student life experience. The Colleges of Education, responsible for the training and education of Montessori and Primary teachers in Ireland were run by religious orders and that is still predominantly the case today. The fact that over 90% of Irish

primary schools are denominational and primarily Catholic, partly explains and partly contributes to the continuation of this situation. However the development of such schools as those run by Educate Together who provide a multid denominational approach to Primary Education and the impact of globalization and inter-culturalism on Ireland, has not been addressed by the Teaching Council to date. In the case of Teacher Education, this is an issue that needs to be brought into the public domain.

By the end of 1975, teaching in Ireland had become an all-graduate profession, with a variety of concurrent degrees and consecutive degrees in particular at 2nd Level. The emphasis still remains on the provision of subject degrees at 2nd level with add –on Teacher Education qualifications. There are a number of concurrent 2nd Level teaching degrees in specific fields with a traditionally strong emphasis on workshop and laboratory sessions such as Science and Physical Education. The period however, post 1975 saw little progress made on Teacher Education and scant regard paid to teaching as a profession. Colleges of Education were closed and attempts made to close a number of Education Faculties within the university sector.

In June 1991, the OECD published its review of Irish education, with particular reference to the teaching career. The report deemed the standard of teacher educators to be high and well placed to provide a foundation on which to build. Referring to the concept of a continuum of teacher education the review stated that:

“It is our basic contention that the education and training for this career (teaching) should be continuing and not seen simply as a preparation for and introduction to it. This entails creating a framework in which the elements of induction and in-service play a role at

least as vital as that of initial training”.
OECD, Reviews of National Policies of Education (Paris: OECD, 1991), P. 92.

Much of what is contained in the recent Teaching Council Policy Document (2011) is echoed in the OECD Report references to the 3 I’s: initial, induction and in-service education and the development of closer contact between the HEI’s and the placement schools. It is a cause for concern that these same issues are being re-visited in a time of political and economic upheaval where ongoing cutbacks in education have impacted negatively on the morale of student teachers, host schools and teacher education providers. This issue will provide one of the single greatest challenges to the continuum of teacher education into the future. Coolahan credits the OECD with impacting on the positive stance taken towards teachers in the Green Paper on Education: Education for a Changing World, published in 1992, which adopted the 3 I’s approach and mooted the development of Teaching Council. The subsequent National Education Convention which took place in 1994 highlighted the role of host schools, the need for closer relations between these and teacher education providers, the perceived short length of current programmes of education and the need for a focused induction programme and ongoing professional development for teachers.

The publication of the White Paper: Charting Our Education Future, published in April 1995, marked a watershed in Irish Education and subsequently led to the Education Act in 1998 which put Irish Education on a statutory footing. There are strong echoes between the OECD Report of 1991, the Green and White papers on Irish Education, 1994 and 1995 and the current Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education. Why was the momentum built up by the White Paper not acted on, thus precluding the need for

the current Policy document? Coolahan refers to a “policy drift”, where implementation of the proposed changes, were allowed to drift. Working Groups were eventually set up to examine teacher education at Primary and Secondary levels, however little reference was made to induction or in-career development. Proposed changes were not cost and again there was an emphasis on extension of programmes, a review of programmes and a restructuring of teaching practice. The Secondary Group raised the issue of selection processes for teacher education, and the need for induction programmes for beginning teachers. No action was taken on either report.

It is reasonable to question whether the proposals contained in the Teaching Council documentation, regardless of the perceived needs for such changes, have any greater chance of success, given the current restraints on the government finances and the perceived diminution of the teaching profession as will be discussed later.

4. The International Picture

The Teaching Council commissioned a report by Conway et al (2009) to inform the debate on the continuum of teacher education. The report looks at teacher education across 9 countries including Ireland and sets out a series of recommendations and findings, which have to an extent informed the Teaching Council policy document. A study undertaken by the OECD, entitled *Teachers Matter* (2005) acknowledges the high status accorded to teachers in Ireland. Drawing on this report, Conway (et al) outline the need to develop comprehensive policies for the continuum of teacher education, which should be underpinned by the professional Code of Practice outlined below. Teacher

education challenged by globalization, sustainable development and the knowledge society and this challenge has become more focused internationally since the publication of the OECD Report in 2005 which underlined the importance of recruiting, retaining and developing teachers throughout their professional careers. Other reports such as the McKinsey Report of 2007 and the UNESCO Report (2005) *Education for All: The Quality Imperative* and the EU Tuning Project (2008) focus on the need for teacher professionalism in light of the challenges of working with a diverse student body and the need to develop new approaches to relationships with colleagues, students and the wider community such as social workers, psychologists, health professionals, etc. In reviewing the developments in teacher education across England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Finland, New Zealand, Singapore, the USA and Poland, the Irish researchers identify Finland, and to a lesser extent Poland, as countries where teacher education focuses on teachers’ visions and values for education as opposed to a more standardized and competence based approach in the other countries studied. There is a case made for the development of compassionate, caring teachers with the capacities to bring about change and communicate effectively with colleagues, students and the wider community. (Noddings, 1997) There would appear to be an acknowledgement of the move away from the Balkanised teacher (Hargreaves 2003) to a return to the moral inquiry and reflective stance as advocated by Dewey (1933). The research review highlights the role of the teacher as a cultural and civic person with the capacities to contribute to student learning and development in a fluid environment where the social learning context has posed challenges for

traditional concepts of knowledge generation. These attributes are echoed in The Code of Professional Conduct. (2011) While Ireland has currently got control over its approaches to teacher education, there is a focus on a convergence of policy as advocated by the OECD and the EU to promote quality across member states and the possibility of movement of teachers within the EU where qualifications can be recognized by other States within the EU. Conway et al while not advocating a restricted set of competences do recommend the development of professionals standards which are suitable for the Irish system.

5. The Current Challenges

As previously noted the Teaching Council was established as a statutory body with the responsibility of regulating almost all aspects of formal education in the Irish context. Since then the Council has produced a wide range of policy documents, in line with the Teaching Council Act of 2001, aimed at professionalizing the teaching profession in early childhood education, primary education, secondary education and further education. It is now incumbent upon all newly qualified teachers (NQTs) and in-service teachers to register annually with the Teaching Council (at a cost of €90 per annum) in order to continue to be recognised as a teacher and in the case of primary and secondary teachers, to receive a salary from State funding through the Department of Education and Skills. For NQTs this fee is simply another hoop they must necessarily jump through in order to launch their teaching career. However, since the introduction of the fee, it has given rise to ripples of anger amongst more established teachers who fail to see obvious returns

for their money. While many teachers revolt at paying an annual trade union subscription fee, at the very least teacher unions such as the Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO), the Teachers Union of Ireland (TUI) and Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland (ASTI), have been very vocal in advocating for teachers' rights and conditions. The Teaching Council, on the other hand, generated €6.83 million in the 2009 financial year, mainly through registration fees from approximately 70,000 teachers, as well as course accreditation fees (The Teaching Council Annual Report, 2009/2010). The Council's expenditure in the same period was €3.78 million (ibid), used mainly to cover Council staffing and administrative costs from which teachers see little return. There is also some level of confusion as to how the Council's surplus income is used.

However, given the relatively recent foundation of the Council, perhaps it is premature to judge what its potential legacy might be. It is possible that the Council's vision for teacher education reform will only be realised with the benefit of hindsight. This may be the case with two of the latest policy documents produced by the Teaching Council, the updated Draft Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers (September 2011) and the Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education (June 2011), with the latter being particularly 'visionary' in light of historical realities of Irish teacher education and more critically in light of current austerity measures in Irish education.

Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers

The Teaching Council Act 2001 sets out that the Council shall 'establish, publish, review and maintain codes of professional conduct for teacher, which

shall include standards of teaching, knowledge, skill and competence' (Section 7 (2) (b)). The first codes were published by the Council in 2007, with reviewed codes presently at draft stage. The codes appear to have two primary functions: firstly, to guide and support teachers in promoting the values and integrity of the teaching profession and secondly, to act as a legal framework, outlining professional misconduct within the teaching profession. The revised codes currently being proposed are built around two pillars – ethics and standards. The Council emphasises ethics within teaching as integral to the profession. It draws teachers' attention to the core values they stand for as educators. The codes state that the role of the teacher will be underlined by respecting dignity and diversity and promoting equality and social justice; caring about pupils' best interests; demonstrating integrity through honesty, reliability, professional commitment and action; and establishing relationships of trust with all within the school community through fairness and openness (p 6).

The draft codes also focus on standards of professional conduct that are central to the practice of teaching. This section of the codes continues to highlight terms such as care, fairness, respect, individuality, diversity, equality, trust and respect (p7). It asserts the positive value of maintaining high standards in curriculum planning, methodological innovation, assessment differentiation, classroom management, pupil interaction, critical evaluation, continuous professional development and peer collaboration. Teachers are reminded of the need for integrity when dealing with student examinations, school funds, confidential information and electronic communication. The codes also highlight the seriousness of being in the possession of illegal materials or teaching under the influence of an

impairing substance. There is increasing level of legal consequence within the aforementioned examples which balances the Council's suggestions for standards between a lengthy list of 'dos' and a brief but ominous list of 'don'ts'.

6. The Continuum of Teacher Education

The Teaching Council's recent policy document on the Continuum of Teacher Education, proposes quite a major overhaul to current approaches to teacher education. Focused on innovation, integration and improvement within initial teacher education, induction and in-career development (p 8), the policy calls for a move away from a front loaded ideology of teacher education fixed mainly on initial teacher training, towards a life-long approach to teacher development.

Possibly the most fundamental change to initial teacher education is the extension of three year BEd programmes to four years, of one year consecutive PDE programmes to two years and the possible extension of four year concurrent programmes to five years. This encompasses a significant extension of school placement periods. In a time of unprecedented financial cuts, these changes have considerable resource implications for Higher Education Institutes (HEIs), as well as for schools. In spite of this, there remains an air of urgency in amending what the Councils sees as the problem of fragmentation in Irish teacher education (p 8).

One example of remedying fragmentation is outlined in the Council's requirement to make more explicit the inter-relationship between University based foundation and professional studies and school based placement. This is largely reflective of Graham Donaldson's Report of the Review of Teacher Education in Scotland

which advised that:

Rather than seeing the components as offering different things, and being at either end of a spectrum, they should be seen as interlinked, with the connections being the means of developing educational theory through practice (2011, p 42).

As outlined in the previous section, the Policy has been informed by a review of previous initiatives in relation to Teacher Education and a wide ranging report on the continuum of teacher education across 8 other jurisdictions.

Under the proposed partnership model between HEIs and schools, all schools are expected to accommodate students on placement (p 13). Experienced in-service teachers are expected to provide structured mentoring support for student teachers through extensive classroom observation and constructive conversations. The increased duration of placements is also aimed at schools providing student teachers with the opportunity to undertake a range of non-teaching activities. The Council's cumulative aspiration is to allow for the development of a more reflective, enquiry-oriented approach to the school placement (p 13). Central to this reflective or enquiry based approach, is the commencement of a professional portfolio within initial teacher education, which the teacher would continually build up through their period of induction and their life-long career development. To date the National Induction Programme (NIP) has been available in education centres throughout Ireland for NQTs wishing to avail of it. However, the commencement of the Teaching Council's responsibility for teacher induction and probation in Sept 2012 flags a less 'optional' approach to induction. Similarly, the Continuum policy states that Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is a responsibility of all registered teachers and that eventually renewal of

registration with the Teaching Council will be subject to the receipt of satisfactory evidence in relation to engagement in CPD (p 19). Outside of curriculum in-service, CPD to date has been viewed as somewhat of a personal choice for those who wish to elevate themselves through the school ranks and improve their salary by undertaking a programme of study in their own time. The Council is now proposing that a teacher's CPD should be based on his/her needs within the school community and should be included in his/her scheduled non-teaching time. Again the partnership model plays a key role in this process with teacher education providers being expected to nurture and facilitate teachers' engagement in professional development.

It is without question that the Draft Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers (September 2011) and the Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education (June 2011) outline essential considerations and make valuable suggestions for teacher education. However, the Council's call for cooperation and compliance, emerges at exactly the same time that teachers have become the group of Irish civil servants hardest hit by national budgetary cuts.

7. Teaching Council Policy V's Government Austerity

One can hardly argue with teachers' frustration when on the one hand they are being reminded by the Teaching Council of the need to embrace trust, ethics, care, diversity and professional development and on the other hand Government cuts are eroding the infrastructure on which these values are based.

In general teachers in Ireland have a reputation for commitment and dedication to their profession and those within their

care. Indeed, a national survey conducted on behalf of the Medical Council published in April 2011 found that, after doctors, teachers are the second most trusted profession in Ireland (79%) (Public Attitudes Survey Measuring Trust and Satisfaction). A similar result was obtained when the Teaching Council commissioned research in 2009. 1,000 respondents were drawn from an iReach panel of 15,000 adults and built on a nationally representative model. Some 45% of respondents were parents while 13% were teachers or had been teachers. Results again indicated that there was high level of satisfaction with the way teachers do their jobs with almost one in four (24%) very satisfied with the way teachers do their jobs and a further 40% satisfied. By contrast, only 12% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the way teachers do their jobs.

However, the constant threat of cuts, redundancy and redeployment has the potential to replace trust with suspicion. Teachers' trust in school management is being dismantled by uncertainty, while those in management are likely to find teachers are less loyal when their tenure is as secure as their next 'better offer'. Against the backdrop of fluid contracts and limited resources schools are increasingly ill-equipped to take on student teachers for current placement requirements, never mind on extended placements proposed by the Teaching Council. The Council undoubtedly envisions that school placement should benefit placement schools as well as students under its new partnership model. However, there has been a longstanding tendency for schools to view their facilitation of student teachers as an act of good will for which they get little in return and which can bring more burdens than benefits. Therefore, without a change in mindset surrounding the value of a

reciprocal approach to school placement, it is possible that teachers and school management will view extended placements as an unnecessary partnership to engage in while partnerships within their own school are being unravelled.

The search for job security is especially true for new entrants to teaching, who have been notably disadvantaged. All teachers have experienced dramatic salary cuts. However NQTs face a further 14% salary cut. Those entering the workforce in 2011 began two points further down the salary scale, earning €5,000 less annually, than those appointed in 2010. Therefore, while the Teaching Council reminds teachers of the importance of ethics within the profession, it could be said that the two-tier system they now inhabit is the most unethical reality of all. It is possible that the Work Placement Programme launched in 2011, further exacerbates this issue. Under this scheme unemployed teachers offer schools unpaid work in order to rebuild their teaching experience. This creates a three-tiered stratified system in schools containing - established teachers with reduced pay, new entrants with dramatically reduced pay and job seekers with no pay.

According to the Teaching Council's Draft Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers (September 2011), care is one of the primary values underpinning the work of teachers. The care work of teachers is something that can be potentially lost within the pressure of a competitive examination system. Teachers often feel annoyed at the limited time for more pastoral relationships with their students in the midst of covering challenging and dense formal curricula. For this reason, care work is often left to school guidance counsellors and year heads. Therefore the recent reduction of guidance allocation and the moratorium on year head posts, leaves vulnerable

students in a very isolated place and teachers feeling increasingly frustrated. Both of the Teaching Council's recent policy documents refer to the social inclusion of difference and respect for diversity. However, the 2011 national budget specifically targeted one of the most vulnerable groups in Irish society – the Traveller Community. With a history of early school leaving and non-completion of state exams, teachers' efforts to include and motivate Traveller students are seriously undermined by the removal of resource teachers. Equally the removal of language support teachers from newcomer students critically undermines social inclusion. The issue of the preparation of teachers to work in Educate Together schools is also a cause for concern. Initial teacher education programmes provide modules in Religious Education, funded by the State, which are targeted at denominational schools. There is no corresponding course for the delivery of The Learn Together Curriculum, the Ethical Education curriculum delivered in Educate Together schools.

The notion of Continual Professional Development has a central place in the Teaching Council's Continuum of Teacher Education document. Teachers' motivation to undertake in CDP at their own expense is undoubtedly hampered by the aforementioned moratorium on posts of responsibility. Furthermore, in December 2011, teachers' salaries were capped at the equivalent of an honours degree allowance. This means that those currently pursuing further qualifications or hoping to do so in the future, will not reap the incremental reward that some of those teaching alongside them would have done in the past. It is certainly arguable that a monetary return should not be the only impetus for up-skilling and it is likely most teachers would state that it is not. The issue is that this

feeds further into a stratified and unequal teaching community. The Continuum document's assertion that teacher registration will be dependent upon evidence of CPD, is likely to cause further resentment amongst teachers who are ultimately being threatened into CPD that they can ill afford. Of course under the Teaching Council's proposed partnership model, HEIs are to provide CPD for teachers. However, it remains to be seen if either party can afford to cover the cost of this accreditation.

Higher Education Institutes are faced with an additional concern over the calibre of candidates that will be attracted to the teaching profession given recent salary reductions and allowance restrictions. The recent doubling of college registration fees and the extension of teacher education programmes also raise questions over who can actually afford teacher training. When induction and probation are added to extended training programmes, it will take approximately 7 years to become a teacher; an effort which does not bring a generous salary or job security. While those from lower socio-economic backgrounds can avail of local authority grants at third level, these sums would be largely inadequate against the backdrop of 7 years of training. This leaves only the wealthy in a position to pursue a teaching career, significantly impacting on the diversity of future educators. This will inevitably widen the gap between teachers and their students. As Bourdieu suggested:

to favour the most privileged, the school has only to neglect, to take into account the cultural inequalities between children of different social classes. (Bourdieu 1974, 37)

It equally gives weight to Campbell's assertion that 'teachers are far more likely to be monolingual, mono-cultural and culturally encapsulated than their

students' (2000, p 32). Therefore Teaching Council's promotion of diversity is likely to be seriously circumvented by its own extension of teacher education programmes and the Government's doubling of college registration fees.

8. Conclusion

Teaching in Ireland has always been held in high regard and there is evidence from OECD research and from national surveys conducted in recent years. Despite the failure to act on many of the proposals that emerged for the improvement of teacher education, there was genuine support throughout the education community for the White Paper on Education and the Education Act. The eventual legislation which allowed for the emergence of a Teaching Council would allow for the formal registration of teachers, the regulation of the teaching profession and the professional conduct of teachers and the promotion of the 3 I's of teacher education. It can be argued that the work of the Council to date has supported the continued professionalization of teaching and encouraged research into the role and function of Irish education.

However recent budgetary changes have resulted in a reduction of salaries for new teachers a freezing of degree allowances which were paid in addition to teachers' salaries and the removal of allowances for teachers who gained additional recognized qualifications such as post-graduate Masters and Doctoral degrees and qualifications in Teaching. While the majority of these changes exist for all teachers, the emphasis would appear to be on beginner teachers and those in the early stages of their careers. Such changes pose major challenges for the proposed extension of initial teacher education programmes by a further year

at least and the emphasis placed on continuing professional development for existing teachers. Needless to say, the consequent reduction in applicants for these programmes will impact on teacher education providers and may have consequences for the standard of teaching. Traditionally, teaching has attracted a high quality of applicant into the profession due to the high emphasis placed on ensuring that teaching remained a high paid and respected profession. Attracting applicants from diverse backgrounds is also under threat as extended programmes and increased fees place teacher training outside of the grasp of many.

It is fair to say the timing of the current policies, the failure to focus on key areas such as the financing of the proposed changes, the proposed extension of initial teaching programmes and the anomalies created by the cutting of allowances for CPD at a time when this is being proposed as policy by the Teaching Council does not augur well for the success of the current proposals. The inclusion of an increased emphasis on the teaching of literacy, numeracy and the Irish Language, while laudatory, only serve to highlight the lack of provision for inclusive teaching in an increasing globalized society.

References

- Bourdieu, P. (1974). The school as a conservative force: Scholastic and cultural inequalities. In J. Eggleston (Ed.), *Contemporary Research in the Sociology of Education* (pp. 110-123). London: Methuen. [\[Full text\]](#) [\[Back to text\]](#)
- Campbell, A. (2000). Cultural identity as a

- social construct. *Intercultural Education*, 11(1), 31 – 39. [Abstract] [Back to text]
- Conway, P., Murphy, R., Rath, A. and Hall, K. (2009). *Learning to Teach and its Implications for the Continuum of Teacher Education: A Nine Country Cross National Study*.
<http://www.teachingcouncil.ie>. Accessed January 2nd 2012. [Full text] [Back to text]
- Coolahan, J. (2007). *Review Paper on thinking and policies relating to Teacher Education in Ireland*. Position paper commissioned by the Teaching Council. [Full text] [Back to text]
- Dewey, J. (1933). *How We Think*. Boston: Heath and Company. [Full text] [Back to text]
- Donaldson, G. (2011). *Teaching Scotland's Future: Report of a review of teacher education in Scotland*. The Scottish Government. [Full text] [Back to text]
- EU (2008). Tuning Project. *Universities' Contribution to the Bologna Process*.
www.unideusto.org/tuningeu/images/stories/Publications
Accessed January 6th 2012. [Back to text]
- Government of Ireland. (1992). *Green Paper: Education for a Changing World*. Dublin: Stationery Office. [Back to text]
- Government of Ireland (1995). *Charting Our Education Future: White paper on Education*. Dublin: The Stationery Office. [Back to text]
- Government of Ireland (2001). *The Teaching Council Act*. Dublin: The Stationery Office. [Back to text]
- Hargreaves, A. (2003). *Teaching in a Knowledge Society: Education in the Age of Insecurity*. New York: Teachers College Press. [Abstract] [Back to text]
- Mourshed, M., and Barber, M. (2007). *How the World's Best School Performing Systems Come Out on Top*.
<http://mckinseysociety.com/topics/education>. Accessed January 3rd 2012 [Back to text]
- Musset, P. (2010). *Initial Teacher Education and Continuing Training Policies in a Comparative Perspective: Current Practices in OECD Countries and a Literature Review on Potential Effects*. OECD Education Working Papers, No. 48, OECD Publishing.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5kmbphh7s47h-en> [Back to text]
- Noddings, N. (1997). Thinking about standards. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 79(3), 184 -189. [Full text] [Back to text]
- OECD (1991). *Reviews of National Education Policies for Education: Ireland*. Paris: OECD. [Abstract] [Back to text]
- OECD (2005). *Teachers Matter: Attracting, retaining and developing teachers*. Paris: OECD. [Abstract] [Back to text]
- The Medical Council (2011). *Public Attitudes Survey Measuring Trust and Satisfaction*.
www.medicalcouncil.ie /Media-Centre/Press-Releases/2011/MC-Trust-Survey. Accessed February

- 1st 2012. [Back to text]
- The Teaching Council (2009). *Evaluation of Public Attitudes to the Teaching Profession*. Summary of Findings from iReach Market Research. www.teachingcouncil.ie Accessed Feb. 2nd 2012. [Back to text]
- The Teaching Council (2010). *The Teaching Council Annual Report, 2009/2010*. www.teachingcouncil.ie Accessed January 10th 2012 [Back to text]
- The Teaching Council (2011). *Draft Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers*. www.teachingcouncil.ie Accessed January 10th 2012. [Back to text]
- The Teaching Council (2011). *Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education*. www.teachingcouncil.ie Accessed January 11th 2012 [Back to text]
- UNESCO (2005). *Education for All: The Quality Imperative*. Paris: UNESCO. [[Full text](#)] [Back to text]