

The Pied Piper of Neo Liberalism Calls the Tune in the Republic of Ireland: An Analysis of Education Policy Text from 2000-2012.

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Abstract

This article offers an analysis of the rhetoric of education policy text during the timeframe from 2000 to 2012 in the Republic of Ireland. The study was framed within two different discourses of the role of the teacher: one discourse regards the teacher as a professional within a dynamic system of democratic relations (Anyon, 2011; Apple, 2012; Ball 2012; Giroux, 1988; Lynch, 1999) while the other discourse regards the teacher as a functionary and technician within a top-down hierarchical system of compliance, surveillance and legal edict (Department of Education and Skills 2000, 2003, 2010; 2012; Teaching Council Act, 2001, Teaching Council Code of Professional Conduct, 2006, 2012). The tale of The Pied Piper of Hamelin is used as a metaphor to interrogate education policy within a small peripheral nation at a time of economic austerity coupled with a deepening deficit in vision and democratic values across Europe and the Anglo-American world (Morpurgo, 2011). The study asks who is making the policy, whose interests are being served and what evidence is there of a politics of moral engagement with any of these issues? Findings show that while the tune of neo-liberalism in education policy started off 'pianissimo' in the early 2000s it grew to 'mezzo-forte' by 2006 and reached 'fortissimo' in the period after the bank bailout in November 2010. Irish people continue to remain seduced by the irresistible tune played by the Pied Piper of Neo-Liberalism. Achieving a different world order will require a paradigm shift from competitive individualism to a different logic of collaboration, care and creativity. Similar to the perplexed world of 1895 we now need a new Five E's

Campaign to restore the vital and lost link between education, equity, ethics, economics and the environment (Mc Kernan, 2004).

Key Words: neo-liberalism, education policy, democracy, teacher, teaching, surveillance, monitoring, professionalism, moral engagement

The Irish Background and Context

We need a discourse that is capable of handling all the connections between economy, society and the State. This cannot simply be a discourse for experts; it must be a publicly informed discourse with real participation. Neither can we afford to jettison real and important areas of scholarship and policy such as economics, sociology, law and administration. It is not a time for anti-intellectualism. Neither can the new citizenship we need to create be reduced to an appeal for voluntary activity. Much more than that is at stake (Higgins, 2011, p. 78)

The statement above by the President of Ireland Michael D. Higgins invites the public to engage with a new discourse that (re)makes the vital connection between economy, society and the state. The task is perceived as intellectual and inclusive with the solution involving more than an ideology of volunteering. This is a radical and interesting challenge at a time when Ireland's education system is suffering the worst series of cut-backs and austerity measures in staffing levels and has become part of a global attack on democracy, teachers and teaching. Teachers are regarded as little more than cogs in the machine of a competitive smart economy, part of a new balance sheet that views all public sector workers as a cost to the state rather than a real resource to assist the nation along a recovery pathway in a supposedly knowledge world.

Education cuts imposed by a neo-liberal Europe are designed to reduce this part of the public sector to a lean, robotic machine working with public accountability and splendid corporate efficiency but with little capacity to engage in the politics of moral engagement about what new type of education system we should be developing for all the children of our nation at a time of global uncertainty and challenging times. The austerity measures signal a reduction in the role and power of the nation state as much as they signal a reduction in the conception of education as a 'public good'.

Ireland as a small peripheral nation on the edge of Europe has had a long history of scholarship and has produced many well-known writers, thinkers and philosophers

from James Joyce to Seamus Heaney (Hederman and Kearney, 1982). However as a pragmatic nation, on the periphery of continental Europe, Ireland consistently displays a lack of capacity for large scale public debate and participatory democracy.

Our schooling system is described as a publicly aided-system. The schools, both primary schools and secondary schools, are owned and controlled by the Churches, mostly the Catholic Church. In turn the state controls the examination system, pays teachers salaries and gives capital grants for school repairs and buildings. In the last century the education system in Ireland was largely described by these two main power brokers, the State and the Catholic Church, acting as gatekeepers and controllers for the roll out of education policy (O’Buachalla, 1988). In that context education was rarely if ever seen as problematic and there was little public need identified for data about the system, debate about issues within the school or the role of teachers.

Economic crisis in the 1980s started to change this dynamic. An OECD (1991) report found that teaching approaches were from a previous century. While this prompted a series of conventions, papers, reports and legislation it did not prompt any serious level of state investment in the continuing education of experienced teachers. In fact by the early years of this century the state found a smart neo-liberal approach to completely abdicate responsibility for this and reframe it an ‘individual’ problem.

Debate during the 1990s led to the formulation of the Education Act in 1998 as an instrument to govern the education system. This legal instrument defined the roles and responsibilities of the various actors, the Minister for Education and Science and school administrators, teachers and inspectors. The statute received the approval of the Churches after they won the assurance that the ethos and characteristic spirit of their schools was to be preserved and protected by this law.

In reality during this timeline education in Ireland was problematic with inequality and injustice prevailing in all aspects of the system. By the early 2000s national statistics showed that improvements made with regard to access to higher education were mostly serving the elite and the professional classes. Children from poorer socio-economic backgrounds were not getting to college and the hegemony of the middle

classes was being perpetuated and, if anything, considerably improved upon by a range of measures, including free higher education. It is easy to find exemplars that relate to issues of inequality and injustice in class, gender and ethnicity and these have become more contentious with the increase in the number of immigrant children (Devine, 2011).

From the mid-1990s onwards there were some attempts made at improving the continuing professional learning of the teaching force but mostly in a fragmented way, focusing on curriculum reform and with meagre levels of state investment (Granville, 2005). A number of research and development projects started to educate experienced teachers in a different way, inclusive of school administrators, and taking a deeper and more discursive approach. For example, the *Teaching and Learning for the 21st Century* project aimed to build the capacity of teachers to become authors of their own work and to assist pupils taking responsibility for their own learning (Hogan et al., 2007). The final report *Learning Anew* advocated for valuing the teacher as an important national resource in society. In the past when people spoke of resources of a country they spoke of its mineral wealth, such as, silver and coal, but nowadays, within a knowledge society, teachers needed to be regarded as a key national resource:

The appropriateness of viewing teachers as a resource of comparable significance for a 'knowledge society' to what reserves of mineral wealth were for an industrial society...the kinds of energies given to such renewal...are still quite minor compared to the importance of the resource itself (Hogan et al., 2007, p. 79).

Alas this thinking was to become severely challenged as austerity measures were implemented and the flames of neo-liberalism took a strong hold on the public sector after the bank bailout terms were reached between the Irish government and the EU, IMF and the ECB in November 2010. A new type of national discourse quickly emerged which pitted the public against all aspects of the public sector for the first time in the history of the state. This populism continues on a daily basis and is largely unchallenged.

What tune does the Pied Piper of Neo-Liberalism play?

I have chosen the children's story the Pied Piper of Hamelin as retold by Morpurgo (2011), and illustrated by Clark, as the metaphor to look anew at the current 'framing' for the role of the teacher within education policy. The children's story has corruption, greed, austerity, political negotiation and the eventual sad loss of the children until a new world order is found in the village of Hamelin. The Pied Piper of Neo-liberalism plays a seductive tune and this is reflected in a world order that drives a competitive market economy where individualism thrives and the collective is shunned. In this world education is perceived as a 'private good' which can be traded. This is in sharp contrast to the view of education as a liberating force, a 'public good' and a 'public service' for the deep human liberation of the lives of men and women and the betterment of society (Giroux, 2009).

The neo-liberal world order emanated from the conservative stance taken in the 1980s by Margaret Thatcher, Prime Minister for Britain and Roland Reagan, President of the USA. The hallmarks of neo-liberalism are individual competitiveness, letting the markets rule unfettered from any type of imposed constraint or regulation, and reducing state support and investment in all public services (Apple, 2012; Ball 2012; Lipman, 2004). What follows across the western world has been the gradual privatization of education and support for a system of meritocracy inside education organizations which are run by new principles of quality management and along the lines of successful business corporations (Lipman, 2004). The language of the corporate world is included in this relentless drive for value-for-money with terminology such as, 'quality', 'team work', 'training', 'freedom', 'choice', 'line management' and 'accountability' becoming the new lexicon of educational institutions and replacing terminology, such as 'autonomy', 'professionalism', 'democracy', 'education', 'critical thinking', 'care' and 'community'. The tune played by the Pied Piper of neo-liberalism represents a strong attack on participatory democracy and all forms of public space for dialogue, argumentation and contestation.

The neo-liberal tune pushes responsibility and accountability downwards to lower layers in the hierarchical chain and brokers no opportunity for 360 degree feedback, contestation or any alternative worldview. Social problems are nowadays reframed as

individual responsibility. Thus educational inequalities and injustices are all reframed as the problems of people's individual lives and not a matter for concern by the state or the Ministry of Education:

primarily a social problem of community and family inadequacies rather than an economic problem of structural inequality (Ball, 2008, p.153).

individual failings are just that, and attributed to laziness and lack of drive, motivation, and intelligence: individual characteristics that are not necessarily racial ones, but that consequently absolve the state and societal institutions from any responsibility (Leyva, 2009, p.369).

The concept of the collective and the role of social democratic principles, including care and concern for others, have become marginalized and further compounded by the fall of communism in the eastern world. While the neo-liberal world view has been in existence since the concept of globalization in the 1980s its operating principles are gaining momentum at this time of global economic crisis.

Why is this tune of neo-liberalism presenting such a logical coherence to citizens when it is solely based on value-for-money and the principles of competitive individualism? What appears to be its irresistible tune? Why do people still believe that this ideology will work when it hasn't worked to bring peace and prosperity to the world for the last thirty years? Politicians consistently remind people that money is scarce and they promise value-for-money from all public services. They have convinced people to some extent that they are mindful of hard-earned taxpayers' money and that they continue to work tirelessly to achieve greater productivity for less pay from all public sector workers. They speak of the requirements of the knowledge world and the need for flexible team players and lifelong learners. They present education as a balance-sheet with freedom of choice for parents and value-for-money for all tax-payers.

Absent from this lexicon is the need to develop educational vision, values or concern for social justice in the education of all children irrespective of their social class, the color of their skin, their gender, their ethnicity or their religious background (Ball, 2008, 2012). However in the new framing of education the role of the state in matters of equality of opportunity is considerably reduced and responsibilities, which were once the sole responsibility for the Minister for Education and Skills, are nowadays

shed upwards, sideways and downwards in a rush to delegate responsibility for education matters away from the Ministry and the education system:

A 'horizontal' or 'functional' redistribution of powers shifting some of the state responsibility and authority 'sideways', that is, away from central governments and bureaucracies and towards trade unions, industrial federations, semi-independent corporations, and specialized agencies; a 'vertical' redistribution of state power by decentralization 'downwards', that is, towards self-governing bodies, local groups, and civic initiatives; privatization and marketization; and a globalization of politics which shifts some of the state responsibilities and powers 'upwards' to various supra-state bodies (Crook et al., 1992, p. 80).

This consistent mantra for generating a lean public service, geared toward public accountability, appears reassuring to people in a global world where many people are unemployed and those with jobs are in competition with others in the workplace. In Ireland people appear to be clinging to the quiet hope that their own individual lifestyle will be secured as well as the employment and happiness of their own children.

In Ireland we now have, as outlined in Holborow's (2012) article, a new type of debt, 'sovereign debt', that has been placed on the shoulder of every citizen and billions of euros have been injected into a black hole in the bank vaults that seems to have become lost in transaction. At the same time of financial austerity Ireland's exports, mostly from pharmaceuticals, technology and agricultural products and services show a strong growth curve. The growth generated is doing nothing to alleviate the suffering of the ordinary people. Thus we are witnessing growth and austerity living side by side. Is the world returning to the patricians and plebian divisions of former feudal times?

The Pied Piper of Neo-Liberalism is leading our children, young educated people, to distant lands in search of employment in a mythical knowledge world. Statistics show that people are leaving Ireland at the rate of 1,000 per week (Holborow, 2012, p. 99). The tragedy is not that they are leaving but that they carry no hope of returning to live, love and learn in their native land. Education seen within a human capital framing positions learning as increasing 'an individual's earning potential and by extension, something for which an individual, not society, is responsible' (ibid, p. 102). This individualist framing ignores the social dimension of education and

‘Narrow skill-getting for an imagined job is a poor and alienating representation of the rounded lived experience of education’ (ibid, p.102).

What needs to be done in a world where education is debased and participatory democracy is under threat? Barr (2008) calls for reinvigoration of public contestation and the opening of a public space for dialogue on these important matters as we search for an alternative discourse:

In an age of supposed liberal-democratic consensus and neo-liberalism, it is not democratic aspiration ‘from below’ that reigns but, in Perry Anderson’s words, ‘the asphyxiation of public and political difference by capital above’ (Anderson, 2000, p. 16). Politically, few demands are made in terms of democratic participation, with the citizen-spectator replacing more active notions of citizenship (Woolin, 2002). In such a world there is an urgent need for a reinvigoration of democratic contestation (Barr, 2008, p. 16).

The Changing Role of the Teacher within the Education System

There are two distinct discourses on the role of the teacher: one discourse regards the teacher as a public transformative educator while the other discourse regards the teacher as a technician or functionary of the system. The framing of the teacher as a public educator and transformative intellectual has existed in the literature for some time and has been updated in a continuing way by educational philosophers, psychologists and sociologists alike (Giroux, 1988; Apple, 2012). It includes the conception of the teacher as a co-inquirer and co-educator. Teaching itself has been variously described along similar lines: as a way of life by the Irish education philosopher Hogan (2003); as a process of care by Noddings (2003) and as a transformative process by Biesta and Miedema (2002). All these conceptions of the teacher and teaching have the primacy of relationship at their core and are premised on autonomy and a deep capacity for professional judgment.

Such conceptions of the teacher and teaching run counter-culture to a neo-liberal movement to de-professionalise teachers and to train teachers in a top-down, linear and technical manner. This technical approach uses a deficiency model with an exhaustive checklist of skills, dispositions, competences and knowledge that include a predefined mantra about what to teach, how to teach and what to assess. This latter conception positions the teacher as a de-professionalised functionary and technician, a

puppet on a string within the control of the policymakers and their economic superiors. We have evidence of this already happening to teachers in our nearest neighbour, England and Wales. The results of this oppressive teaching approaches show young disaffected people rioting on the streets in London and low morale among teachers:

Education is being de-democratised and education workers' rights and securities eroded. The education workforce has become increasingly casualized and there has been decreased autonomy over the curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. These developments have been accompanied by increases in levels of report writing, testing, accountability, monitoring and surveillance both in-house local management and by government external agencies. Public service morale and standards of provision have declined...the intensification of work and more accountability under neoliberalization are having hugely detrimental effects on teachers and pupils/students (Beckman et al., 2009).

According to Hargreaves (2003) if the global education community, teachers and teacher educators, continues to stand idly by and allow this to happen then teachers will merely become the 'drones and clones of policymakers' anaemic ambitions' (p. 2).

The Changing Relationship between the Teacher and the State

If the teacher is perceived as a functionary of the state then clearly all that's needed is to train the teacher in the required skills and competences and tell them what to do in each and every instance. Quality and clarity are assured through evangelical certainty implemented through a range of edicts, protocols and accountability. However, if the teacher is perceived as a professional then a relationship with the state is needed, one that requires dialogue and a forum for participatory democracy (Apple, 2012; Ball, 2008, 2012; Lynch, 1999).

Ball (2008, 2012) argues that the neo-liberal view of education uses 'performativity' as the dominant discourse for the relationship between the state and the teacher. Lynch (1999) cautions that advocacy for education for freedom and liberation necessitates dialogue within an egalitarian framing of partnership:

(we) need to query the value and worth of our own work to determine whether it is, in Freire's words, a force for domestication or freedom. The only way that this can be systematically determined is through direct dialogue and partnership with those with whom we research and write. Without such a partnership, it would be

very difficult to develop any coherent theory of egalitarian change which would have genuine transformative potential; it needs to be owned by those most directly involved (p.30).

The rhetoric of educational policy reform to date has been about decreasing levels of investment while demanding increased productivity. In most countries this has meant reducing the number of teachers in the public sector and using different type of contracts of employment for those remaining. These changes happen alongside changes that intensify the work of teachers and increase forms of teacher surveillance. In Ireland a national social partnership exists, the Public Service Agreement (Department of Finance, 2011). This has guarantees that there will be no reduction in the number of teachers before 2014 in return for higher levels of 'productivity'. In the meantime teachers retiring are not being replaced and anywhere that new teachers are being employed their contracts are much diminished contracts. Career guidance and counseling services have been greatly reduced and the modest stipend teachers received for undertaking higher education studies, such as completing a Masters study, have all been removed.

Competitive individualism has been introduced within the teaching force and teachers who are compliant and obedient are rewarded. The current emphasis on teaching by national prescription reduces recognition of the role of the teacher as a professional and the role of the teacher's emphatic disposition for care of the young or indeed, recognition for any other creative, political or mystical aspect of teaching that is not measurable:

(we) have a shared understanding of education as an enlightening and emancipating force for the democratic development of each person. We have remained acutely conscious of the struggle to retain this conception of education as a human liberating force against the backdrop of a reductionist agenda sweeping the education world with its focus on outcomes and external modes of accountability (Mooney Simmie and Moles, 2011, p. 471).

The Changing Face of the Social Justice Agenda within Education

Anyon (2011) in her case study of schools in the 1970s showed that teaching was differentiated within schools based on social class and the stratified needs of the labour force. Within a working class school she observed that procedures were mechanical with rote behaviour and little decision-making by pupils who were

engaged in following steps given by the teacher with no explanation. Schoolwork was about getting the right answer in the middle-class school and involved more conceptual work. Pupils were still following directions but these involved some level of decision making. Neatness and accuracy were crucial aspects of the training regime. Within two highly affluent schools students were constantly asked to express and apply ideas and concepts. Individuality and flair were rewarded. Schoolwork not only involved conceptual work, but discovery, construction, and meaning making. Individuals were allowed to express themselves in their work. In an elite affluent school schoolwork was solely devoted to developing one's analytical intellectual powers. According to Anyon's (2011) thesis these schools were preparing young people for their future role as workers in the assembly line, as civil servants, as managers or as elite rulers of the capitalist social system.

What of Anyon's 1970s study is still relevant today? In a western world with most of the assembly line manufacturing gone East the needs of the western economy have changed to the type of schoolwork found mostly inside Anyon's (2011) middle-class school. This involves following directions accurately and neatly, requires reasonably high levels of literacy and numeracy, working at a higher conceptual level than routine work but not high enough to permit questioning, meaning-making and critical engagement, working cheerfully alongside colleagues for the common goals of the employer and having the right disposition to take full responsibility for the tasks required.

Within this harsh 'cage of prescription and routine' there is little concern for the needs of the marginalized or justice for those from poorer socio-economic backgrounds. There is no time allowed for a discursive approach to the ethics of care and concern for the different needs of pupils. These are perceived as a problem for the teacher to solve and not for the policymaker. According to Sandel (2009) this lack of a politics of moral engagement in education has led to assuming that respecting our fellow citizen's convictions means ignoring them in a stance of silence and avoidance:

Rather than avoid the moral and religious convictions that our fellow citizen's bring to public life, we should attend to them more directly – sometimes by challenging and contesting them, sometimes by listening and learning from them. There is no guarantee that public deliberation about hard moral questions will lead in any given situation to agreement – or even to appreciation for the moral

and religious view of others. It's always possible that learning more about a moral or religious doctrine will lead us to like it less. But we cannot know until we try. A politics of moral engagement is not only a more inspiring ideal than a politics of avoidance. It is also a more promising basis for a just society (p.269).

A Critical Approach to Mentoring with a Changing Ireland

My interest in deconstructing and reconstructing the neo-liberal world and analyzing the rhetoric of education policy comes from over thirty years of public service to education in Ireland (Mooney Simmie, 2009). I now teach a Masters study in Education at the University of Limerick to experienced teachers, school principals and tutors, from both primary and post-primary education, interested in exploring the mentoring construct. We interrogate mentoring using critical theory and philosophical inquiry. We strongly resist the conception of mentoring as a handbook of tips and techniques that experienced teachers offer student teachers or newly qualified teachers. Our framework for mentoring has evolved from our interrogation of the literature, critical friend work and ongoing dialogue with our students. It positions mentoring as a relationship of co-inquiry that has critical thinking, caring and agency at the centre and that takes full account of the socio-cultural and socio-political environment (Mooney Simmie and Moles, 2011). We have arrived at four key principles which we espouse and seek to emulate within our practice:

- The holistic, learner-centred nature of teaching and mentoring is supported within a commitment to caring for each person working within education. Interaction and dialogue are our preferred ways of sharing knowledge.
- Teaching is viewed as a profession with its own standards and codes of practice. We resist the reductionist definition of teaching as a set of skills or competencies (although we defend teachers as being very skilful and competent in their work).
- Within the traditions of academia the participants on the mentoring course interrogate education and mentoring in a critically reflective way. The school-university partnership is celebrated as a mutually enriching relationship.
- We acknowledge the complexity of teaching and mentoring and confront the difficult issues which surround contemporary education within a rapidly changing and challenging society.

Our students consistently tell us of the difficulty of implementing productive mentoring in their schools. Their studies show the depth of resistance at the school level to the concept of deep thinking and instead tell the story of a busy system continually searching for quick simple and pragmatic answers to complex problems (Mooney Simmie and Moles, 2012). This problem is not endemic to Ireland alone.

I have recently completed co-ordinating a European Comenius 2.1 project in science teacher education GIMMS – Gender, Innovation and Mentoring in Mathematics and Science. This study involved seeking to develop the capacity of science teachers to develop innovation and change in their school and classroom across six European countries: Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Ireland and Spain. We found resistance to deep change and innovation within all case studies and a hegemony of silence with regard to gender issues in science teaching. We argue that what's worth aiming for in innovation and change in teaching and teacher education is a renewed commitment to participatory democracy. We used a border-crossing deliberative discursive inquiry in the project between teachers across their professional lifespan and all education actors, including teacher educators and policymakers (Mooney Simmie and Lang, 2012).

The Neo-Liberal Tune as it Plays within the Irish Education System

The changing role of the teacher from 2000 to 2012 in this study was explored using a critical analysis of education policy documents relating to the Department of Education and Skills (DES) efforts to re-frame it's role within the education system (DES, 2000), its use of a legislative instrument to delegate downwards responsibility for teachers to become self-regulating (Teaching Council Act, 2001), efforts to change the monitoring and surveillance of teachers (DES 2003, 2010, 2012) and efforts to register, regulate and restrain teachers (Teaching Council Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers, 2006, 2012).

The study reveals three distinct timelines during this twelve year period: a time of greater collaboration with teachers where the Pied-Piper of Neo-liberalism plays pianissimo (2000-2003), a period of distancing from teachers where the Pied-Piper of Neo-liberalism begins to play mezzo-forte (2003-2009) and a period of tough public accountability where teachers become openly regarded as a cost to the state and the

objects of high levels of public mistrust and surveillance as the Pied-Piper of Neo-liberalism playing fortissimo (2009-2012).

The Pied-Piper of Neo-Liberalism Plays Pianissimo (2000-2003)

The period 2000 to 2003 may be regarded as a timeline of greater collaboration between the state and teachers. European funds had secured a number of full time state-of-the-art Education Centres and there were a large number of national support teams of teachers in place to support various curriculum reform and school development planning initiatives. At this time Ireland had a booming economy and many commentators noted the relationship between the ability to attract direct foreign investment and the high number of young highly educated graduates. Teachers used this success story as a lever for increased pay and conditions. In these early years of the millennium a lengthy and divisive national teacher strike ensued and was settled with payment for additional duties, for example, supervision duties, and new middle-management positions, for example, assistant principals. While the teacher strike largely secured the pay and improved conditions it cost teachers' public support. This loss was to have far-reaching consequences for the changing role of the teacher in the decade that followed.

Whole School Evaluation – The Results of the 1998/1999 Pilot Study

By 2000 a pilot study into the evaluation of schools had just concluded and the Ministry was seeking to implement a full scale evaluation scheme. The pilot study is a tried and tested device frequently used in education in Ireland for bringing in many government policies that would otherwise encounter serious levels of opposition. It is seen as a Trojan Horse for changing the system from the inside. Examples include the gap year programme between lower and upper secondary, Transition Year programme, a pilot study for over twenty years, and the National Induction Programme for newly qualified teachers, a pilot study for over a decade.

Previous to the pilot study on evaluation Ireland had a long history of an authoritarian school system. In the whole school evaluation (WSE) pilot study Department of Education and Skills (DES) inspectors worked in a consultative role with school principals and teachers. The study involved 35 schools - a mixture of primary and

secondary schools. It was regarded as heralding a ‘new paradigm for educational development’ (p. 40) and involved a ‘partnership and co-operative innovation’ (p.2.). While the report contains much of the terminology of the market place it is written in a spirit of collaboration and ownership:

The development of an effective, collaborative team spirit underpins quality in schools. The existence of a positive, professional relationship between the inspectorate and the school community is regarded as crucial to the success of the WSE process. Equally, introducing a new system of evaluation and creating a climate for its acceptance demands time (DES, 1999, p.14).

However this new discourse of partnership, collaboration and ownership did not last long and was soon replaced with the arrival of the Pied Piper of Neo-Liberalism. This began with the establishment of a legislative framework for all aspects of the education system and was quickly followed by a significant change in the operation of the Ministry. These two developments had profound consequences for the changing role of the teacher.

Getting the Legislative Framing in Place

The Education Act of 1998 was the first definitive piece of legislation defining the entire education system. It became the doorway for a tsunami of education legislation that followed and presented school principals and teachers with a relentless flow of edicts and regulations that set up all aspects, and every detail, of their work on a statutory basis. At this time teacher professional learning was regarded as both a right and a responsibility for experienced teachers. As the decade progressed the emphasis shifted to teachers’ own responsibility and the Ministry absolved itself from any moral imperative for the continuing education of teachers. In the years that followed this was to prove a substantial cost saving exercise to the state.

The passing of the Teaching Council Act, 2001 was an important step for the Ministry in delegating responsibility for the registration and regulation of teachers downwards. The Teaching Council, established as a self-regulating body, would have responsibility for registering teacher, heretofore been done by a Registration Council, and for defining and ensuring compliance with professional standards and codes of professional conduct. While the Teaching Council aimed to promote the teacher as a professional the detail of the Act shows a neo-liberal view of teaching defined as

‘knowledge, skills and competence’ (6ii). The act states that the purpose of the Council 7(3) a is to be a handmaiden of the Ministry and the European Communities. It defined the task of the Council as one of implementing ‘the policies relating to teacher education and training, probation, qualifications, professional conduct and standards of teaching as established by time to time by the Minister’ and doing its duty ‘to ensure compliance with minimum standards specified by institutions of European Communities’ (Section 40). Besides doing the Minister’s bidding the Teaching Council was responsible for such tasks as ‘promoting’, ‘registering’ ‘reviewing’ and ‘accrediting’ teacher education programmes. However its main firepower was its mandate to inquire into and de-register teachers who were in breach of the teacher’s professional code of conduct (7 (2) i). Was the Act written to elevate the role of the teacher as a professional in a knowledge world or was it more of an instrument to ensure control, cost-saving and compliance by a self-regulated teaching force?

Department of Education Review of Operations - The Cromien Report, 2000

In 2000 the DES commissioned Sean Cromien to review its staffing operations, systems and staffing needs. The Cromien Report published in October 2000 is possibly the most far-reaching education document in the history of the state. It contains a neo-liberal rationale for the splitting up of the Ministry and the movement of various functions upwards, sideways and downwards. It was written and compiled in three to four months (p. i). Given the radical nature of the change of direction it signaled it is curious that its contents were not publicly debated. In an Ireland where policy documents tend to gather dust this report was acted on immediately. In the decade that followed most of its recommendations were implemented. It may be no coincidence that the chief author of the report had served many years as a general secretary in the Department of Finance. The report made the argument that the Department of Education and Science was ‘overwhelmed’ by detailed day-to-day work where the urgent drove out the important (p. 2). It observed that policy evolved haphazardly with a ‘degree of dependence by its clients which is quite exceptional’ (p. 2). It noted the waste of time for the Minister for Education answering questions about the education system in the national parliament. Dáil Eireann. Something had to be done to shift the burden of responsibility elsewhere.

The net result of this report was the rapid outsourcing of a range of DES responsibilities including its examination section leading to increasing fragmentation in the education system. The DES had unburdened itself to make space for a new role: one of education policymaker and evaluator of schools and teachers:

A move to a devolved budgetary arrangement (probably within an overall total of teacher posts) whereby local areas and/or individual schools would have greater discretion over the utilization of their teaching resources and the Department's role would evolve to one of policy development, monitoring and evaluation (DES, 2000, p. 4).

By the end of this brief period it is clear from analysis of these policy documents that the DES had successfully removed itself from all kinds of engagement with schools and teachers and was by then positioning itself as the chief monitor in a hierarchical education system implemented by others. The Pied-Piper of Neo-Liberalism was beginning to play 'pianissimo' with quiet determination and using the logic of competitive individualism. Education as a public service was becoming gradually dismantled.

The Pied-Piper of Neo-Liberalism Plays Mezzo-Forte (2003-2009)

In the early 2000s whole school evaluation became national policy. Some time later this was followed by the inspector's external evaluation reports from schools being published as public pages on the DES web-site. New guidelines were issued to assist schools in the evaluation process which was perceived as a dual system with strong external evaluation being matched by equally strong internal evaluation (DES, LAOS, 2003). The LAOS, 2003 guidelines stated that the DES inspectorate's aim was to promote excellence, quality management and to give advice. According to the Chief Inspector the document would 'provide a clear framework within which external evaluation of schools and centres for education by the Inspectorate will be carried out' (DES, 2003, Foreword). The document presented five major areas for examination and these were expanded into components and almost 200 themes. For example, Teaching and Learning as an area was described as forty two themes.

Given the historical legacy of authoritarianism in the Irish education system and the absence of authentic dialogue and debate it is difficult to see how an elaborate checklist of this nature could facilitate discourse and authentic partnership between the

inspectorate and school administrators and teachers. The Neo-Liberal tune had strengthened in intensity and was playing whole school evaluation in one direction only, downwards.

During this period the Teaching Council became fully operational on a statutory basis. It set about drafting the Codes for Professional Conduct for Teachers (Teaching Council, 2006). These codes of conduct, set within an ethical framing, presented a picture of the teacher as a collaborative and compliant public servant. There was no space in the document for any mention of the autonomy of the teacher or the need for the teacher to be a thinking person, to hone their professional judgment or act as a public transformative or intellectual educator.

Educational disadvantage at this time became classified as special types of schools who could provide evidence that they had a sufficient number of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. These designated disadvantage schools, called DEIS schools, received additional remuneration and staffing levels (DEIS, 2005). The DES was gradually removing any moral obligation it might have had heretofore to provide for educational disadvantage gaps in the remainder of the education system. This categorization made it easier to classify disadvantage. It provided a neat solution to a most complex problem.

At the end of this period the Pied Piper of Neo-Liberalism was playing a far more intense tune. The DES was behaving as a controller/monitor and the Teaching Council was stating the type of teacher that was going to be acceptable to its membership. This tune had decidedly become mezzo-forte by the time of Ireland's financial and banking crisis.

The Pied-Piper of Neo-Liberalism Plays Fortissimo (2009-2012)

In November 2010 Ireland found itself in the middle of a financial crisis due to light touch national regulation, large scale speculative borrowing by builders and reckless lending by banks. A financial bailout agreement was reached between the Irish government and the EU, ECB and the IMF. Almost overnight the Pied Piper of Neo-Liberalism started to play at fortissimo. There was a rapid change in the relationship between the state and the public sector, including all teachers.

School evaluations changed and the codes of professional conduct for teachers were redrafted, this time to reflect a much tougher stance. By May 2012 a public lecture by the Chief Inspector in the Ministry presented the rationale for this radical departure and explained the DES focus as a value-for-money agenda.

Incidental Inspections of Teachers

A new type of external evaluation of classrooms was implemented. These were called incidental (unannounced) inspections. There would be no telephone call to the school and no letter informing the school principal that an inspector was calling. The school community was to be afforded no such courtesy. Inspectors from the Ministry would call to the schools at any time and would visit any classroom. They would advise and make recommendations on the 'quality' of teaching and learning. There was no mention of the teacher as a knowledgeable professional and no need for dialogue or partnership.

A report on the findings from incidental (unannounced) inspections on Teaching and Learning of English and Mathematics in Primary Schools by the DES was published in 2010. It was based on 500 incidental (unannounced) inspections of mathematics lessons and 800 incidental (unannounced) inspections of English lessons. The DES stated that its aims were to provide oral feedback and advice about 'best practice' to the principal and teachers involved. The danger of seeking to define 'best practice' or even 'good practice' is argued by Lipman (2004, p. 13) as a device to control and constrain:

The construction and consumption of images of 'good education' works to discipline students, teachers, and the general public to certain sets of education practices and to obscure the complexity and socio-cultural and historically situated nature of actual teaching and learning, privileging how the school looks on standardized measures over what is really going on there (Lipman, 2004, p. 13).

The inspectors checked the preparation of lessons, the teaching approaches used and the quality of assessment practices. The report explained that the inspector focus was on giving 'advice and/or recommendations' (DES, 2010, p.2).

The findings for mathematics showed that appropriate teaching approaches were not used in 17.3% of lessons, appropriate learning activities were not provided for the

pupils in 17.8% of lessons, learning was not consolidated in 15.8% of lessons, and pupils in 18.9% of the lessons were not provided with opportunities to learn through talk and discussion. Pupils in less than half of the lessons observed were enabled to work collaboratively while in 22.8% of lessons resources were not used effectively.

Within this authoritarian inspection regime it would be delusional to imagine that the teacher is regarded by the DES as a professional, a thinking person doing a complex task, based on a specialist knowledge base and making and justifying decisions about pupil learning through a reflective collaborative inquiry. This approach to inspection speaks to teachers as functionaries of the system. The language used is one of ‘knowers’ of teaching (DES inspectors) and ‘not knowers’ of teaching (the experienced teachers) who will be given advice and recommendations. This regime of incidental unannounced inspections lacks credibility with the international literature on the teacher as a professional, shows no recognition of the complexity of teaching or the need to engage in a dialogue of equals in improvement in pupil learning (Darling-Hammond and Bransford, 2005). This top-down approach diminishes the status of teachers and school administrators and uses an authoritarian low trust approach to public accountability.

The Teaching Council Codes of Professional Conduct, 2012

As the Pied-Piper of Neo-Liberalism is playing fortissimo throughout the DES evaluations the Teaching Council decides it is time to get equally tough with teachers. A second edition of the Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers, 2012 is produced. The second edition begins with a reminder that the purpose of the codes is ‘to regulate the teaching profession and the professional conduct of teachers’ (ibid, p.1) and ‘it has an important legal standing and will be used by the Council as a reference point in exercising its investigative and disciplinary functions under Part 5 of the Teaching Council Act, 2001, dealing with fitness to teach’ (ibid, p.3). This new tune sounds closer to the discourse of the teacher as a functionary of the system than it does to the teacher as a professional. In a climate of harsh cutbacks to the education system it carries a strong message of fear and insecurity for teacher’s future employment. Was the real aim of the Teaching Council all along to reframe towards registering,

regulating and restraining teachers in preference to its stated public educator role of promoting and advocating for the role of the teacher as a profession?

The Chief Inspector Goes Public

On Wednesday, 2nd May 2012 at 6.30pm the Chief Inspector of the DES, Dr. Harold Hislop gave the Professor Seamus O'Suilleabhain Memorial Lecture entitled *The Quality Assurance of Irish Schools and the Role of Evaluation: Current and Future Trends*. In this public lecture, posted on the website of the DES, the Chief Inspector outlined the focus of the Ministry and explained the rationale behind moving to a system of incidental (unannounced) inspections. The Chief Inspector explained that the focus of the Ministry was on quality assurance done through a process of intense scrutiny of the work of schools and teachers. The Ministry believes that the primary and secondary education system is now robust enough to require no major additional investment and energies can now focus on outcomes and monitoring:

Much of the 'heavy lifting' in terms of provision is in place at primary and secondary levels. So, since the late 1990s, like other developed countries, we have the opportunity to concentrate on the quality and effectiveness of that provision: we have turned naturally to asking ourselves whether our efforts have achieved the objectives we desired, particularly regarding equality of opportunity and the effectiveness of interventions to address educational disadvantage. We have been able to move from a focus on inputs and supply to a focus on outcomes and achievement (DES, 2012, p.4).

The Chief Inspector went on to explain that the Ministry was involved in a drive for 'value for money' and playing its part in a national bid to attract 'high-end' and 'knowledge-based' global investment and to provide more 'customer-focused services' (ibid, p. 5).

The Chief Inspector stated that WSE was highly collaborative and as such was too elaborate and time-consuming and that a radical departure was needed in the type of school inspections required. The DES had developed a resistance to engaging with schools and teachers within a participatory democratic framing of evaluation:

The models were children of their time: they had been developed in a highly collaborative manner (in order to secure their acceptance), they incorporated and included many non-essential features, and they proved to be elaborate and time-consuming. They also suggested that evaluations were only valid where every element of the work was examined and reported upon in exhaustive detail. They left little flexibility to inspection teams to judge what was, and was not, likely to

be important, and they resulted in overly long and overly complex reports (DES, 2012, p.14-15)

The text of this lecture gives a rare insight into the rationale of the Ministry. The strength of the Pied Piper of Neo-Liberalism is all too obvious in the focus on quality assurance and the unannounced monitoring of schools and teachers. The one 'doorway of hope' in the text is a request for the education research community to seriously engage in a critique of PISA and its' research methodology. The Chief Inspector questions the backwash effect of PISA on all Irish education policy decisions. This is a very significant call and needs to be engaged with by the education research community. PISA has become a key driver behind much of today's education policy direction and across all OECD countries. There are many examples of changes being made rapidly on the basis of Ireland's decreasing PISA scores including, for example, reducing the lower secondary school curriculum and focusing both primary and secondary education to a three R's of Reading and Writing Literacy in English, Mathematics and Science.

Discussion and Implications - The Pied Piper Of Neo-Liberalism Calls the Tune

In this article I analysed education policy texts through the lenses of two discourses describing the role of the teacher in 21st century Ireland. The rhetoric of these policy texts have been drawn from legislation, from DES policy documents and the Teaching Council Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers, 2012. The documents show a changing tune of neo-liberalism being played from soft to medium to loud over the timeline of the study. Looking back the decision to outsource responsibilities from the Ministry in 2000 and move them upwards, sideways and downwards was a key stepping stone in strengthening a neo-liberal rationale for educational change. All these developments benefit politicians and policymakers who gain credibility through presenting a tough decision-making approach to the handling of scarce public funds, to making public sector workers behave according to their guidelines, rubrics and codes and, at the same time, to satisfy their European bosses.

However the approaches taken in this analysis are highly problematic for developing the teacher as a professional playing a key role in the development of education as a public service for pupil learning and not a 'competitive individual' service for

customer-care. Clearly the development of autonomy and professionalism of teachers will have a significant bearing on the education of young people into the future. The ideology of the Pied-Piper of Neo-Liberalism with its emphasis on education as an ‘individual good’ and a ‘product’ to be traded offers simplistic answers to complex education questions. This reductionist framing is an attack on democracy, the teacher and teaching.

Over the twelve year period of this study the official education policy documents changed to reflect a tough stance with teachers and schools in a neo-liberal Ireland that perceives education as more of a ‘private good’ than a ‘public good’ and operates a value-for-money ethic of education as economy. Recent calls in Ireland and in the Ministry for pupils developing ‘critical thinking’ will never be attainable in an education system dominated by high-handed accountability practices that are premised on high control and low trust. Lipman (2004) argues that education policy is an arena of ideological struggle and an accountability process is fuelled by the manufacture of fear and the suppression of democracy and civil liberties:

School accountability practices normalize surveillance, punishment and obedience to authority; limit what can be said; undermine critical thought; and erode social solidarity (Lipman, 2004, p. 2).

With few ‘public spaces’ for any type of politics of moral engagement with these issues, no contestation or alternative viewpoint is considered in a hierarchical system that operates downwards with evangelical certainty. The rhetoric of education policy in Ireland is that it knows about what to teach, how to teach and how to assess teaching for the next generation of young Irish people in an uncertain knowledge world. This logical reasoning might be truly believable if it were not for the fact that the Pied-Piper of Neo-Liberalism is currently leading our young educated graduates out of the country, in their 1000s, away to distant lands in a futile search for a promised land, called the ‘knowledge world’.

A Doorway of Celtic Hope

How might we deal differently with the Neo-Liberal wind of change that is a relentless de (humanising) dessert storm with frequent gusts of ‘reform measures’ and

endless ‘measurement’ ‘monitoring’ and ‘mistrust’? How might we find a way to dance with what Hederman (2011) calls these dinosaurs? At the start of this article I recalled our long national tradition of producing writers, thinkers and scholars. We now urgently need our artistic community and thinkers to shape a new Celtic doorway of hope for a different type of world order. Education as a ‘public good’ for liberation, freedom from oppression and the right to participatory democracy needs to be contested and presented as a strong counter-weight to the current international neo-liberal agenda for education. Mc Laren (1994, p.218) argues that this calls for the shaping of a new vision of education:

We need to develop a praxis that gives encouragement to those who, instead of being content with visiting history as curators or custodians of memory, choose to live in the furnace of history where memory is molten and can be bent into the contours of a dream and perhaps even acquire the immanent force of a vision.

The neo-liberal emphasis on the teacher as a compliant worker who teaches by prescription and is strictly monitored will never assist Ireland in becoming any type of serious player in a mythical knowledge world. All education stakeholders, policymakers, school administrators, teacher educators and others, need to work in egalitarian ways alongside teachers in a process of co-inquiry and co-education. Michael Apple in his revision of *Education and Power, 2012* argues for findings these new ways of working together as co-educators:

educators can educate these groups, at the same time that they (the educators) are being educated themselves. After all, it is somewhat silly to deny the fact that teachers do know things that tend to work in classrooms. In this way, by working in concert with others, the practice of developing our methods and content will also embody the social commitments we articulate (Apple, 2012, p. 158).

In 1895 George Bernard Shaw and the Fabian Society mounted a Five E’s Campaign to supported intellectual development and collectivism (Mc Kernan, 2004, p.3). Their Five E’s Campaign at that time was driven by the slogan “Educate, Agitate and Organise”. Over one hundred years later we clearly need to reconnect to the spirit of these times and reframe a new Five E’s Campaign to restore the vital and lost connection between Education, Ethics, Equity, Economy and the Environment. It is only by becoming activist professionals, academics and public educators that we can collectively reveal the oftentimes hidden assumptions of the current neo-liberal world order and seek to frame anew the role of the teacher, teaching and democracy in a society and global world that has lost its way. Education is after all charged with the

task of mediating the world for the next generation of young people. This needs to be done for the future of humanity and the sustainability of the planet.

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