

“Outline the key developments in Irish secondary education since 1922 and discuss one of these developments in detail.”

In this essay, I will outline Ireland's key developments in Ireland's secondary education system since 1922 and discuss one key development in greater detail. For this essay I have researched along a range of sources, these include articles to novels. I will compare and contrast the difference in **education practices and principals** from 1924 to the 1990's. I will talk about how these eras affected and created different types of **societies** with different **educational philosophies, human rights principles** and how this overall affected the Irish secondary education of its era and shaped the education system that is in Ireland today. Ireland had numerous huge developments introduced into the education system from 1922 and onwards. I will outline two key developments and One crucial development I will discuss in detail is the introduction of multi-denominational schools and the decreasing Catholic/religious-based schools and show this through comparing that era of the 90's to the 20's.

In 1922 Ireland was going through a civil war between the pro treaty provisional state and the anti-treaty IRA. On February 1st 1922, the state took control of education and the department of education came into being in June 1924. That same year the 'Intermediate Education Act' came into effect. This act established the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate examinations. The Leaving Certificate is a system where students take a minimum of six subjects. This act also included the forward-looking proposals of the Dail Commission which incorporated emphasis on Irish history and as **stated by John O'Callaghan in his novel 'History teaching in Irish secondary schools in 1922-1970'** 'the teaching of history in Ireland has led to the development of Irish identity' and the freedom to choose biased texts. Tom Walsh discusses in his book 'The National system of education' that "the threat of the omnipresent English language and culture threatened the policy idea of a return to a Gaelic Ireland that was being propagated through the education system"(Ch.2 pg16). This point is shown as the Civil War left Irish society hugely divided and provoked schools in the Republic to be heavily influenced by the Catholic Church determined to maintain Irish identity. Corruption of the Irish government and a lack of wealth as a result of the Civil War, resulted in the government not being able to financially support the education system and permitting religious bodies to continue in their Catholic teaching practices. This resulted in wider use of Irish and it later became a mandatory subject due to the pressure of the Gaelic League on the Irish government. As stated previously governments had less involvement with schools and management within individual schools had more control over their own affairs. The government's new influence within education resulted in a wider influence of the Catholic Church.

The Catholic philosophy that was brought into education at this time had a lot of theories included for example as stated by **Thomas C in his book 'handbook of research on Catholic education' Thesis XIII was the theory that 'The Body' was divided into two classes, the living and the dead**, which is another influence from the religious bodies in charge as it represents the substantial form, the soul which is one of the main elements in practicing the Catholic religion. Also as **Tom Walsh states in his text that 'Dr. Starkie was hugely influential in this era and her way of teaching was that teachers had no opportunity "of acquiring a liberal culture' and its more important to have knowledge within "human nature a life'(Ch. 2, p.20).** These are both prime examples as to how society of this time was heavily influenced with the Christian religion and people had no

freedom from the social norms in this era. Catholicism was heavily emphasised within schools. These practices included prayer, mass ceremonies, commemorating Catholic holy days like “Ash Wednesday” and placing votive images or statues around the school and in classrooms. The relationship between the State and the Catholic church was mutually beneficial as they worked as alliances to receive hierarchy and money from the society of the time.

Females in this era rarely would make it past primary school leaving a higher rate of male. In Female’s 47% of the 94 girls had left from fifth class and 9% from third class. As stated by Margaret Tobin in her article on RTE news, females traditionally left school young and played the traditional ‘domestic role’ in society.

However, only until recent times many schools were still under management of religious bodies. In the 21st century Catholic schools in Ireland are still very dominant and 90% of primary schools are under Catholic patronage. However, Secondary schools in Ireland are only now 50% religiously-run Catholic schools. There are now some schools that are not run by a religious order in Ireland today like the “Educate Together” schools. The number of non-religious secondary schools has been gradually rising for the last number of years, increasing from a low of 700 in 2013 to 723 in 2019. The establishment of multi-denominational schools has increased by 9.7 per cent in the last 10 years from 321 in 2009 to 352 in 2019. In the same period the number of Catholic schools has decreased by 4.7 per cent, from 361 to 344. This is heavily influenced by the 1990’s when more immigration rather than emigration was happening in Ireland.

In the early 1990’s, Ireland was a relatively poor country with high poverty and low employment rates but in the mid-1990’s Ireland’s economy expanded by 9.4% between 1995-2000. This was referred to as the “Celtic Tiger era” and “The boom” in the Irish Economic system. Ireland went from one of the poorest countries to one of the wealthiest countries in Europe in a relatively short period of time. This was due to many factors such as, increased participation of women in the labour workforce and a low corporation tax attracting many large corporations into the country such as ‘Google’. This increased immigration into Ireland and resulted in a huge increase in asylum applications. This had a huge influence and impact on the education system in Ireland. For example, the ‘Programme for Action in Education’ was introduced in the late 1980’s by Fine Gael Minister for Education, Gemma Hussey. This act led to more social justice in the Mid 1990’s within the Irish secondary education system by drawing attention to the ‘participation of women’ and noting that ‘all aspects of education must be available to both sexes’ in comparison to the 1920’s.

In 1995, the ‘White Paper Act’ built on the previous ‘Programme for Action in Education’. It recognised the need for “philosophical rationale’ in educational policy. The paper set out five key factors upon which future policy and provision was to be based. These were Pluralism, Equality, Partnership, Quality and Accountability. A key philosophy was that of Equality, as in **Brendan Walsh’s text ‘education studies in Ireland’ it explains that the introduction of equality stands for ‘the education system should embrace all’**(pg.63) and ‘equal opportunities for

educational advancements'(pg58) for all citizens not discriminate against someone based on their physical, social, economic or mental factors, which is what Ireland has developed its system into since the 90's examples of this would be the increase of female's attending secondary level education and also bringing in the allowance for 'children of foreign diplomatic or consular representatives in Ireland'(citizensinformation.ie) to be exempt from having to take Irish as a compulsory subject. Both these examples show huge developments from the 1920 to the 1990's by including equality within the principles of the Irish secondary education system.

Comparing the equality of human rights and philosophies taught in the Irish education system back in 1924 with a higher male to female dominance attending second level education and its catholic philosophies demonstrates huge developments have been made in making education accessible to all due to the introduction of the 'White Paper Act' and its principles of equality to all students . I agree with Brendan Walsh's statement and the white paper act as they both recognise the change in society due to immigration from the 1990's rising in 4,723 immigrants since the 80's and are accommodating to new cultures within schooling.

Other key developments happened in both 1950's-late 60's and 90's. As shown in 1950's Ireland vast emigration occurred due to a poorly educated youth leading to a late but pivotal development in the Irish secondary education system. Free education was introduced into Northern Ireland in 1948. On Saturday, the 10th of September 1966 one of the most significant developments in the Irish secondary education system occurred. Donogh O'Malley, Minister of Education announced the idea of free secondary education and it was then eventually introduced in 1967. At this time of the announcement about a third of students, which was approximately 17,000 students, were dropping out of education after primary school education and going straight into the workforce. At the age of 15 around 50% of students remained in education and by 16 years old that percentage dropped to 36%. This left a very poorly educated youth in Ireland at this time of the 1950's-late 60's and this act granted greater access to education for children and adults from all different financial backgrounds and, as **Tom O'Donoghue, states this book 'secondary school education in Ireland' that this created a great rise in the attendance at secondary schools all over the country'**, as up until, then most students ended their education after or even during primary school as Margaret Tobin states that annual reports from the department of education show in 'the average attendance rates show below 80%' from 1922-1927 meaning at least 100,000 children were not attending school in those years.

As attendance grew in the 1990s and early 00s and as John Fitzgerald stated on 'The Irish Times' 'free education has more than proved its worth", two significant programmes were introduced into Irish secondary education. In 1995 the LCA (Leaving Cert-Applied) programme was introduced to give a suitable examination for students who wish to follow a more practical rather than academic programme in school. In addition, in 1996 the LCVP (Leaving Certificate Vocational programme) programme was introduced. This is a senior cycle designed to give a strong vocational dimension to the Leaving Certificate. This is a dynamic focus on self directed learning, enterprise and the community. In Tom Walsh's book we see In 2001 the teaching council act was another huge development in the Irish

education system, it was an act to promote teaching as a profession and improve the quality of teaching. From Walsh's text we see the council 'promoted the maintenance and standards of programmes for teacher education' and by having teachers auditing in interviews with proof of degrees from colleges and universities. This had a huge beneficial effect on the ways and standards of teaching within Irish secondary education.

It is evident that the development of philosophies from 1924 to the 1990's played a key role in shaping the more accepting education system we see in Ireland today. From the points made throughout my essay it is clear that the removal of the catholic philosophy in 1924 and replacing it with social justice and equality introduced in the 1990's have greatly influenced the growth in all aspects of education from attendance to higher quality education. It is also evident from the addition of the white paper act and the principles it brought into the education system along with many other acts, that the education system is much more highly diverse and easily accessible to students all over Ireland.

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