

IRELAND'S YEARBOOK OF EDUCATION

Mapping the past. Forging the future.

2017-2018

Edited by Brian Mooney

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The views expressed in this Yearbook are many, varied and sometimes contradictory. They are exclusively the views of our highly valued writers and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editor or of Education Matters.

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Foreword



Mary Mitchell O'Connor
Minister of State for Higher Education

I am delighted to be invited to write a foreword for *Ireland's Yearbook of Education 2017-2018*. I hope you enjoy the wealth of contributions in this latest edition which demonstrates the breadth of talent and depth of thought that we are fortunate to have in our educational theorists and practitioners.

Unfolding the powers of the mind

It starts as soon as a baby leaves the womb and continues throughout the lifespan. We are always learning. And as a society we guide and structure that learning from the first caregiver, through preschool, primary, secondary and tertiary education on into adult education and beyond. It is what sets us apart and enriches our experience. It is delivered by the battalions of committed and creative teachers, tutors, lecturers and professors who nurture our students in the country's educational institutions. Education does really matter.

Our challenge as parents, educators and policy makers is to help young people achieve their full potential. We must prepare them for the difficulties and demands that life will throw at them, make them ready to enter the workforce and able to take their place as active members of society when their formal education has finished. We must also be the gatekeepers of the quality of teaching and learning in all our institutions.

I am an educator by profession – I was a teacher – and so I have a deep understanding of the importance and value of education. I know that the mediocre teacher just *tells*, the good teacher *explains*, the superior teacher *demonstrates*, but the really great teacher *inspires*. Plutarch believed that the mind was not a vessel to be filled, but a fire to be kindled. The job of our educators is to inspire, to fire the imagination and curiosity of young people, to challenge them. We must teach them *how* to think rather than *what* to think. I have seen many of my former students' lives transformed because of the educational opportunities they have had.

This is made possible when education is supported, promoted, appreciated and valued highly both by the public at large and by your Government. Investment

in the teachers' delivery of programmes and in improving the craft of teaching will bring rich rewards. That is how we can ensure our teachers are truly inspirational educators. Now, after a long lean time, we are in a better position to give ballast to these initiatives.

The Department of Education embarked some years ago on a reform of the Junior Cycle to ensure that the learning experience in the first three years of post-primary education would best equip our students for their future. The new curriculum discourages rote learning and regurgitation, and emphasises instead engagement and participation, creativity and innovation. At every juncture we are encouraging our young people to be adaptable, flexible, creative and innovative. This reform ensures we are producing problem-solvers and better thinkers for the world ahead.

In our Republic of Opportunity, there are many paths to high achievement, both conventional and unconventional. For example, rather than going straight to college after the Leaving Certificate, a young person may enter a Further Education Institute to gain a diploma, and then move on to a Third Level Institute and progress through undergraduate study to post-graduate level and on to a doctorate. This does happen and I am keen to support all routes through our education system.

Education is the core of everything good we do as a society and an economy. It's the foundation stone that supports our cultural development and economic progress; it's the essential component to ensuring social cohesion and mobility; and it's our best weapon in the fight to ensure our workforce continues to be equipped for the challenges of the 21st century.

Education is not the concern of just one Government department: every policy and every initiative that is put forward to Government should be viewed through the prism of education. We need a voice that asks, "What impact will this have on our students and their ability to reach their full potential?" I'm proud to be representing Higher Education at the Cabinet table and I seek constantly to be that voice.

The New World

The Third Level landscape of 2017-2018 is in continual flux. With no certainties in employment anymore, I see my role as facilitating both Third Level Institutions and industry in navigating an ever-changing terrain. The world of work in all its aspects is changing at a pace unseen in human history and traditional concepts no longer apply. During the 20th century most workers held two or three jobs during their careers. It is now estimated that many graduates will hold more than 10 jobs before they are 40! We must prepare students for jobs that haven't yet been thought of. As legislators we must try to anticipate the world as it will be, and look forward, not back.

Some of the occupations now in greatest demand are Data Analytics, Supply Chain Management, Biomedical Engineering, Cloud Computing. These careers did not exist a short number of years ago. We can have little or no conception today of many of the high-quality employment opportunities of the future. Computing, robotics and artificial intelligence are changing the very nature of work and many employment opportunities available

today will be swept away by scientific progress and technology. We must not, however, see such change as a threat, but as a great opportunity.

Steve Jobs said that, 'Innovation distinguishes between leaders and followers'. As a small island nation, we need to be at the forefront of innovation, creating the entrepreneurs of tomorrow. I want to preside over a purposeful, equitable Higher Education system that will prepare all students for such leadership. The Department of Education is initiating coherent well-supported policies that will enable our students to learn, create and invent for the new world they will enter.

It is my intention to continue constructive dialogue with employer representatives to ensure the closest possible alignment of our Higher Education programmes with their needs. In addition to meeting the needs of existing employers, we need to ensure that individuals have the skills and are appropriately supported to become the employers of the future. Entrepreneurship education is a vital component in delivering this objective, and work on an Entrepreneurship Education Policy Statement is due to be complete in 2018.

STEM v STEAM

There has been much talk in education circles about the importance of STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. Of course, promoting the STEM subjects is important, particularly for our female students. However, in the coming years, I want to lead the Department in exploring the intersection of the arts with STEM, to create STEAM – bringing the inherent creativity of the Arts to STEM. I believe that this synergy will enhance student engagement and learning, and unlock imaginative and creative thinking. Innovation is crucial to our future. STEAM will be a critical component of innovation. Through the Creative Ireland Programme, the Government has explicitly stated that creativity and innovation are key to our future as a society and as an economy – and indeed to the wellbeing of our people.

Gender Equality in our Higher Education Institutions

Higher Education institutions need to attract, retain and progress the most talented people, regardless of gender. We will only have achieved gender equality in Higher Education when the most talented women and men are employed at all levels, in both academic and non-academic roles.

The achievement of gender equality will require a genuine commitment on the part of the institutions, and this needs to be driven from the very top. The ultimate responsibility rests with the Presidents of the Institutions.

Gender inequality exists, not because of a lack of talent or ambition, but because of systemic barriers and a culture that means talent alone is not always enough to guarantee success.

I am providing funding to support greater gender equality in the Higher Education sector via the Gender Taskforce which I have established.

I acknowledge the impressive body of work accomplished by Máire Geoghegan-Quinn and her team in the *National Review of Gender Equality in*

Higher Education (2016). Although that report includes 66 recommendations for action, there was unfortunately no real driver to change within the institutions. Therefore I deemed it was necessary to use that report as a springboard to devise a clear and achievable road map and action plan on how we will change the culture within our Third Level Institutions.

I want to implement change that outlives me and my tenure within the Department of Education and Skills. I want the Department to preside over a new regime that is a legacy for all our young daughters, and granddaughters, to all the female students who haven't been born yet, who will aspire to a further education in fair and equitable institutions.

The Universities and Institutes of Technology have a legislative responsibility to promote gender equality. It is imperative that our institutions – that receive public monies – not only invest in gender equality, but also aim for gender balance of a minimum 40% representation of each gender on their key decision making bodies.

My Department is working with the HEA to consider how performance on achieving gender equality can be most appropriately monitored and reflected in accountability structures. In particular, consideration is being given as to how best the System Performance Framework, the Recurrent Grant Allocation Model, and the Flexible Cascade Model can be utilised to advance progress in this area.

I am pleased that Ireland has the opportunity to host the 10th European Conference on Gender Equality in Higher Education in August 2018, which is being supported by my Department and the Higher Education Authority.

Wellbeing

There is a huge gap between the culture and ethos of our Second and Third Level Institutions. Students often experience difficulty when they move from the pastoral care of Second Level to the self-management style of Third Level. I feel very strongly that we should be making a greater effort to help our students make the transition more successfully. We must always remember that there is more than one way of learning and some students may be more suited to apprenticeships or to starting their Third Level journey in an institute of Further Education. There is a route for all students and I intend to consider more solutions to ease the pathways from dependence to independence.

Budget 2018

The investment that has been announced both in Budget 2018 and the multi-annual capital programme recognises the immense importance of our Higher Education Institutions. It demonstrates that we understand the vital role that our Higher Education system plays in driving our economy and sustaining our society and that we value the opportunities for advancement that education brings to everyone from all walks of life. It is proof that we are willing to invest in those opportunities now and into the future.

After a very difficult decade, we can now begin to focus on some of the challenges facing the sector and also seek out new opportunities.

We are providing substantial increases in funding to address national skills shortages and the priority needs identified by employers, to facilitate an expansion of apprenticeship programmes, and to provide a greater focus on in-employment training and up-skilling. We are also providing funding for 2,000 additional student places in higher education so that the system can continue to respond to changing demographics and provide a place for every student.

Increased funding is being provided within a changing funding model and a new System Performance Framework. A funding reform package will incentivise institutions to respond to national strategic priorities as well as strengthening the transparency and consistency of the method by which our higher education institutions are funded. The Department of Education is creating a new Performance and Innovation fund to encourage capacity building and reward exceptional performances.

The increased funding for Higher and Further Education from the National Training Fund is a key strategic element of the overall funding increases in education. I recognise and welcome that further reforms are required to give employers a greater role in determining the priorities and direction of the Fund.

In my former role as Minister for Jobs, I met with many employers, from indigenous SMEs to multinationals in every sector of the economy. I have seen first-hand how collaboration and engagement with higher education benefits companies by meeting their skills needs and providing access to research and innovation partnerships. It is my intention to continue constructive dialogue with employer representatives to ensure the closest possible alignment of their needs with our Higher Education programmes.

Working together we can plan and provide for the education and training that will enhance the lives of our young people and add to our economic performance, building a productive future for all of us.

Turning to capital funding, I am delighted to have been able to give the green light in Budget 2018 to eleven new PPP projects which, when completed, will significantly increase capacity and support skills development across a range of disciplines including STEM, design, entrepreneurship and culinary arts.

I saw at first hand over the summer, when I visited the institutions concerned, how infrastructure needs to be updated to keep our students to the forefront of learning. These eleven projects will contribute significantly to regional development, providing more opportunities for learners and enterprise to engage with our Higher Education institutions.

Technological Universities

The new investment will also support the development of Technological Universities across the country. Our work towards creating Technological Universities will, I believe, transform the education landscape. Technological Universities will mark a step-change in scale, impact and influence. They have the ability to transform rural Ireland, enriching the lives of students, families and communities.

I have engaged with many Institutions on their aspirations for Technological University status and have seen the excellent work already undertaken by the consortia towards that aim. Many expressed concern around the quality of existing infrastructure, fearing it might impede those aspirations. I listened to and have responded decisively to the concerns of the consortia. The delivery of state-of-the-art infrastructure will directly support and advance the ambitions of the consortia of Institutes of Technology that are working to achieve technological university status.

The PPP announcement represents a phase of mammoth growth and development for the participating institutions. It means they will be able to showcase state of the art facilities to prospective students – not just from their regions, but from around the world. Indeed, I know that an enhanced capacity to attract and cater for international students will also be a key result of these new investments.

Internationalisation of Education

Internationalisation of education brings direct economic benefits to Ireland. By 2020, our aim is for the total economic output value of international education to be worth €2.1bn. Internationalisation also creates links and relationships between Ireland and many partners at individual, institution and country level that will bring further engagement and economic activity in the future. Today's international students are tomorrow's entrepreneurs, investors and decision-makers. Bringing them to Ireland to study will give us the opportunity to demonstrate to them that Ireland can be a great place in which to invest and do business when they are in a position to do so in their future businesses and careers.

We are now in a position to increase investment substantially over the period 2018–2021, to fund significant infrastructure upgrades and replacement programmes. In addition to supporting a small number of new-build flagship projects, it will provide additional funding to support the continued development of the pipeline of researchers in our institutions.

We have a vision for Education, and indeed for this country. We want to ensure that we have equality of access and equality of opportunity, that regardless of background, geographical area, or social circumstance, every one of our young population has a clear path to fulfilment. Education is the key to achieving this vision.

Access to Education

I have always been a strong advocate of making Higher Education Institutions more accessible for students from disadvantaged communities and we are continuing to invest substantially in broadening access by way of additional grants funding, support to lone parents, a new 1916 centenary bursary scheme that will be targeted at groups currently under-represented in higher education, and funding to incentivise higher education institutions to attract more students from disadvantaged communities. The budget also allows for the expansion of maintenance supports for the most disadvantaged postgraduate students. I will be overseeing a review of the National Access Plan starting in early 2018

to take stock of progress and identify new targets and indicators for the future.

Conclusion

This is an exciting time to be Minister for Higher Education. I am ambitious for what we can achieve in the coming years to benefit our learners, our society and our economy. I am determined that in the years ahead we will see excellent outcomes for our students, our educators and Ireland Inc. from these wise investments.

I am pleased to know that the economic landscape into which this thought-provoking *Yearbook of Education* emerges bodes well for the future of education.



Pictured at Zeminar, an event for Generation Z which took place in the RDS in Dublin on 10-12 October 2017: Ian Fitzpatrick and Damien Clarke, co-founders of Zeminar, with Mary Mitchell O'Connor TD, Minister of State for Higher Education.

Zeminar is an education, empowerment and well-being movement aimed at 15-20 year olds along with their teachers, parents and youth leaders. The event in the RDS attracted over 16,000 young people from across Ireland over the three days. It included talks by influential speakers, essential resources, and fun activities. The aim was that attendees would leave with new knowledge to help them live happier, safer, and more fulfilling lives.

Editorial



Brian Mooney

Editor, Ireland's Yearbook of Education

'Education has been central to Ireland's transformation over recent decades. It will be central to our ambitions as a nation (economic, cultural and social) over the coming decades. It will allow us to lead on innovation. It will help us to achieve social inclusion. In my view, this is the spirit that should prevail, not based on wishful thinking, but on hard evidence of achievement, and the sustained, combined efforts of key stakeholders. Let us go forward as one of the highest achievers in education of the most developed countries.' — John Coolahan.

It was an immense privilege to be present this year, along with representatives of every strand of Ireland's education community, to hear Professor John Coolahan speak these words at the launch of *Towards the Era of Lifelong Learning*, his updated history of Irish education 1800–2016. Since I entered the education system in 1958, I have experienced as both student and teacher some of the enormous strides made during the past sixty years, described by John in his book.

In Ireland, we value what high-quality education contributes to who we are and what we can become in an ever-changing world. Consequentially, we seem to have the capacity to overcome what may seem at first glance the almost insurmountable obstacles facing our education system today.

As a nation on the verge of bankruptcy in 2011, which led to education budgets being slashed across the board, we have managed to sustain a very high quality of service to students despite seemingly insurmountable challenges. Many of those cuts are still in place and will shape our education system negatively, unless we find ways to overcome them.

At third level, State funding has been cut from €2 billion to €1.3 billion, and staff numbers in our Universities and Institutes of Technology have been slashed as student numbers have ballooned – particularly in the IOT sector, which admitted an additional 34,000 students to raise much-needed revenues. Sadly, many of these students were not ready for the challenges of independent learning which is the norm at third level and dropped out in large numbers.

Apart from scarring many of these young people for life, it also robbed the further education (FE) sector of many of these students. If they had not received that highly valued CAO offer, they may have had a more gradual immersion into independent learning and progressed successfully through third level, a year or more after finishing second-level education.

The Cassells report is under consideration by the Education Committee in Dáil Éireann. The hard political reality is that, notwithstanding recommendations in the report, there will be no substantial further increase in student fees in Ireland. Circumstances have changed, as the youth vote in the recent UK general election proved, and Cassells' recommendations are dead in the water awaiting a decent burial.

Post-Brexit we will be the most expensive country in the EU in terms of third level fees both at undergraduate and particularly at postgraduate level. Dutch universities are the next highest, at €2,000 a year, and in the past four years the number of Irish students studying in their universities has grown from zero to over a thousand. Most of the rest of Europe regard third-level access as an entitlement and charge no fees whatsoever. If we were to consider going down the UK route of sharply increasing fees and bringing in a student loan scheme to fund it, we would simply be encouraging our brightest and best to look to the Continent for their higher education.

Brexit may in fact offer a partial solution to our higher-education funding dilemma. Apart from tiny Malta, Ireland will be the only English-speaking country in the EU. The international market for English-speaking universities in the EU from the billion-plus citizens of China and India and the rest of the developing world is enormous. As the UK attempts to limit the number of foreign nationals entering, which triggered the Brexit process in the first place, we in Ireland are ideally placed to offer our third-level institutions as destinations for tens of thousands of international students.

We can also keep encouraging our diaspora to continue their hugely generous philanthropic support for our education system, which has been central to most capital development projects in the past twenty years. Potential employers of our graduates also have a self-interested role in investing in the development of their future employees, and recent moves to increase that support are to be welcomed.

A further consequence of the slashing of government spending in 2011 was the cuts imposed in the pay of all public servants, including teachers and lecturing staff. These cuts were targeted unfairly at new entrants but were imposed, it must be said, with the acquiescence of the trade unions representing teachers and lecturers. Their role after all is to protect the terms and conditions of employment of their existing members.

Six years on, there is a deeply held belief among the teaching profession that a great injustice has been done to young teachers and lecturers, many of whom subsist on part-time temporary contracts. It led to all three teaching unions voting against the recently ratified National Agreement.

Resolution of this issue is not just a matter of natural justice, it is also critical to maintaining a high-quality education system. In a strong recovering labour market, the opportunities open to graduates of all disciplines are growing daily. The teaching profession, like all others, is ultimately a market. Currently there are huge shortfalls in graduates of

STEM, Languages both Continental and Gaeilge, Home Economics, and so on, contemplating a career in teaching.

Many of those who qualify as teachers decide, as Kate McDonald describes in her article in this Yearbook, to travel abroad, where high salaries and tax-free benefits are freely available to Irish teachers. They will not return under the terms and conditions of employment currently on offer from the Irish State.

Solving the crisis in teacher supply in Irish schools and third-level institutions will not be just a matter of natural justice. It is the simple reality of sourcing any qualified teachers across a huge range of subjects, thus realising Minister Bruton's vision of creating 'the best education system in Europe'.

But all is not gloom, as John Coolahan rightly reminds us.

One of the most challenging goals within Irish education is to continue to expand its reach beyond the traditional communities where it has universal support. Over many years, Dr. Patrick Clancy has highlighted the low third level participation rates in various Dublin postal districts. Many families are being raised by parents who have themselves had poor education outcomes, but who are hugely receptive to improving the educational experience of their children. The work in Dublin's north inner city by Josephine Bleach and her team based in National College of Ireland, and the work of Dr Gerry Boland and his colleagues in the Limerick Enterprise Development Partnership, are but two examples of interventions with families at an early stage to offer transformational support, which will in time break the cycle of educational disadvantage.

Another initiative which is bringing about transformational change for less well off students is the JP Mc Manus All Ireland Scholarship Awards. This programme, now in its tenth year and operating in partnership with the Departments of Education in Dublin and Belfast, has awarded €6,750 per year to over 1400 students whose families hold medical cards, and who are educated in non-fee-paying schools in all thirty-two counties of Ireland, based on their Leaving Cert and A Level results. Sitting each year in a UL lecture theatre, observing each student going forward to accept an award from JP McManus, is to observe educational transformation in action. These awards are based solely on exam results. An amazing aspect of the programme is the growing number of new Irish of all cultures and races who are achieving 600 points in the Leaving Cert within a few short years of their arrival in Ireland. As graduates, these students will inspire many others from their communities to realise that they too can use education to reach for the stars.

Within every level of our education system there were positive developments in 2017.

The early-childhood sector is expanding and getting stronger every day, although we have yet to figure out how to pay its teachers appropriate salaries. Many of them are abandoning the sector shortly after graduation

and taking conversion programmes available to them to qualify as primary school teachers.

The experiment of the new Junior Cycle programme is finally under way, after the collapse of the futile last stand of the ASTI against its introduction following June's vote to suspend all industrial action.

The curriculum at Leaving Cert level continues to grow, with the planned introduction on a pilot basis of Computer Science in September 2018. The only problem is that nobody has figured out where the teachers to teach it are to be sourced.

The further education sector is rapidly developing links and relationships with third-level faculties across all disciplines, providing an alternative route into college for tens of thousands of our young and not-so-young people. The review of the FE sector is about to be published, and hopefully it will give further impetus to the improvement in opportunities available to all learners.

Finally, the most exciting development by far in 2017 has been the expansion of the apprenticeship model across a wide range of industry sectors, in cooperation with our FE and IT sectors. Hopefully our universities will overcome their reluctance to develop links with this exciting new model of learning in Ireland.

We face huge challenges in driving forward the development of Irish education, but working together we are up for that challenge, and we will in time realise John Coolahan's vision of becoming 'one of the highest achievers in education of the most developed countries'.

All Ireland scholarship awards 2017



Pictured at the JP McManus All Ireland Scholarship (AIS) Awards in the University of Limerick in November 2017
l-r: Gerry Boland AIS Trustee, Brian Mooney Editor *Ireland's Yearbook of Education*, Michael D Higgins President of Ireland, JP McManus Philanthropist, Roger Downer AIS Trustee, Pat Dowling AIS Trustee.