



Universiteit  
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The Netherlands

## Why did Ireland's educational policy and the role of the Irish language evolve from c.1959 onwards?

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### Citation

Mac Stiofán, C. (2023). *Why did Ireland's educational policy and the role of the Irish language evolve from c.1959 onwards?*.

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

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Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3666192>

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# Title: Why did Ireland's educational policy and the role of the Irish language evolve from c.1959 onwards?

An analysis of educational policy changes towards the Irish language after c.1959 that resulted in a 62% decline in primary and post primary schools outside of the Gaeltacht regions teaching through the medium of Irish within c.20 years.

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Submission Date	09/08/2023
Word Count	15,762

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction & Literature Review

In 1959, approx. 12% of schools in the Republic of Ireland (26 counties) taught using the Irish language as the primary method of instruction, up from 4% in 1930. This was a huge source of national pride for a young state created under forty years previously whose language and culture had been impeded greatly pre-Independence. It had inherited a primary and post primary education system where English was the only method of instruction outside of the specific Gaeltacht regions (mainly western, coastal & specific geographic territories where Irish was the primary spoken language and emigration highest due to poor economic opportunities). And yet just 20 years later a massive decline by some 62% was noted. Gramsci famously defined hegemony as ideological, moral and cultural leadership of a group over allied and somewhat subaltern groups and has argued that hegemony can be achieved by consensus (Bates 1975). It has become clear from the available research that an “Irish language consensus” had been achieved in Dáil Éireann (Irish Parliament) post-independence which saw a concerted national effort and corresponding zeal to fully revive the national language (O Donoghue 1994). This Gramscian like “Irish language consensus” proved both a popular and perhaps a naïve assumption that the Irish language could be revived through the education system or public policy only. This consensus in the legislative chamber would be one of the primary drivers in attaining the aforementioned 12%. The Irish state/republic founders, who’d fought the British Empire to a standstill, then through a Civil War and into Dáil Éireann post the Treaty were clearly equipped with the revolutionary zeal of restoration of the Irish language. This staggering decline then from the 1950s onwards is a great change in the progress made via the revolutionary zeal of the restoration kicked off in the 1920s.

Such a great change requires greater explanation. Scholars to date have sought to account for it in a number of ways. To answer the question of why Ireland’s educational policy and the role of Irish (Gaeilge), an autochthonous language has evolved since 1959, this literature review focuses upon three pillars of scholarship. Firstly, the executive of government, via the complex nature of the Irish Civil Service with the **continued influence of British institutional/governance norms and values** that prevailed during this time particularly in the educational sphere, where it triumphed since the foundation of the Dept. Of Education in Ireland in 1831. Secondly, **economic explanations mixed with An Taoiseach Seán Lemass’s agency and influences upon them**. Finally, the third pillar were **bottom-up influences via public and sectoral interests**. These bottom-up influences manifested via wider civic society engagement and the groundswell of public interest within emergent grassroots movements in favour of reforming Irish language and Gaeltacht policy, particularly amongst parents,

and opposing post-colonial monoculturalism. I believe that the reaction within the Gaeltacht region and without via the Gaeilscoileanna (Irish language only schools outside of the Gaeltacht) movement have not been explored sufficiently to date for its enduring impact on education policy towards the Irish language since 1959 and thus can help me add greatly to the body of research on this topic to date. **The interdependence between these three pillars of literature has remained limited.** I will also outline the status of the Irish language leading up to this period to contextualise the enormity of the change that I will investigate from 1959 onwards.

To conclude, in terms of **methodology**, this is a traditional historical study which examines the evolution of government policy over time. In my historical approach to this thesis, I've engaged with primary sources to complement the secondary literature. Five rich primary sources for this thesis proved to be the Irish government National Archives where I read a copy of the cabinet minutes pre and post the Lemass government of 1959 through 1966 as well as the primary legislation enacted. Both were particularly useful in examining the economic decisions made by Lemass's government and the direction provided to the Irish civil service. I also interviewed the founder of the Gaeltacht movement Peadar Mac An Iomaire in his family home on June 4<sup>th</sup> 2023. Most interestingly, Mac An Iomaire agreed to the interview conducted in the Irish language so I was delighted to put my fluency skills to the test for this interview which provided the richest of information contained below. Another primary source used in my research were parliamentary debates from the Oireachtas (Irish houses of parliament), particularly the lower chamber known as Dáil Éireann. Lastly, I examined c. 160 circulars. The Dept. of Education in Ireland communicates with all staff in each primary and post primary school via written requests known as circulars.

- **Irish Civil Service with the continued influence of British institutional/governance norms and values**

Planter or colonial mindset accompanied instrument regni at the end of the Nine Years War in 1603 and both focused on the eradication of Gaelic culture and the Irish language by the state and the promotion of the English language and imperial culture. McCavitt, in his article, *"Good planets in their several spheres - the establishment of the assize circuits in early seventeenth century"*, in the Irish Jurist journal, noted 1603, two years post the end of the Nine Years War and the Gaelic Irish Ard Rí's defeat, as the year that colonial authorities could finally being in a position to "Anglicise the Irish polity" (McCavitt 1989). 1603 can thus be seen as the foundation of the civil service apparatus across the island of Ireland as all opponents had been conquered. Penal Laws were introduced in Ireland in the 1700s after the European War of the Three Kings that was fought mainly in Ireland with King William of Orange, of glorious revolution fame, emerging victorious from the Battle of the Boyne.

The Penal laws introduced banned the Irish language as it was central to Gaelic culture, resulting in a large gap in the language's literature and an insufficiency of books in the national language thereafter. For example, this was the period of Shakespeare in England, Ireland's equivalents having been driven underground (Deirg 1947). The Penal Laws ended with the Act of Union in 1800 yet as noted by Mackenzie, Engman et al. in the *Journal of Teaching in Higher Education*, instrument regni continued apace and in 1831 took the form of the introduction of Westminster's Education Act in Ireland which in terms of Gaelic culture could be seen as "annihilation of the culture via education". Ó hUallacháin commented in his 1994 book, *The Irish and Irish: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of the Relationship Between a People and Their Language*, that from the off, the officially accepted means in schools was to ban all use of Irish among the children and to punish infringement of the ban (Ó hUallacháin and Conlan 1994). Thus, the civil service for education in Ireland specifically under the Dept. of Education was founded with the introduction of this 1831 act. The depth of instrument regni was evident early on and best demonstrated by a mandatory poem printed in children's books and read aloud daily:

"I thank the goodness and the grace,  
Which on my birth have smiled,  
And made me in those Christian days,  
A happy English child" (MacKenzie, Engman, and McGurk 2022).

The Dept. of Education penalised teachers if they taught a child through the medium of Irish. It is worth noting here that a conservative estimate of circa 10% of the children attending school were monoglot Irish speakers. Ireland also had a population of circa 8 million at the time. Census data relating to the use of Irish was only first recorded circa 20 years later in 1851 when a post An Gorta Mór (Ireland's Great Hunger 1845-51) decimated population stood at 6,552,365. The population had decreased by approx. 20-25% or by 2 million people. Irish speakers across the island numbered 1,524,286 while Irish only speakers numbered 319,602, representing 4.9% of the total population (Punch 2008). To contextualise the regime of corporal punishment, it could be estimated conservatively that approx. 10% of children had to remain completely silent as they didn't understand English and if they spoke it, they'd be forcibly punished. One can now understand why the then prominent Catholic Archbishop Mc Hale described Westminster's new schools at the time as "graves of the national language" (Tom Walsh 2016). This type of policy appears to have operated in other subjugated colonies also including Scotland, Wales, Cyprus, and Malta. It could be purported that a central goal of the civil service in Ireland and the Dept. of Education from 1831 was to eradicate Gaelic culture. For an organisation set up with this culture, it was bewilderingly then

entrusted with executing the revival of Gaelic culture in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century via schooling when the new state's Dept. of Education was founded in 1924.

From the onset of the Irish Republican revolution which spanned 1916 to 1922, the likes of Gen. Michael Collins and other early 20<sup>th</sup> century revolutionary founding fathers noted this continued influence of British institutional/governance norms and values of civil servants that permeated right across and throughout the civil service, not specific only to the Dept. of Education (Martin 2008). Significant efforts were made to counteract this by Collins and his compatriots. Collins, during his time as Finance Minister in the 1<sup>st</sup> Dáil (Ireland's first 32 county legislative assembly), 1918-21, endeavoured to hire Irish language proficient clerks as civil servants to his office. In the end, he had to settle for similar to existing civil servants i.e. monolingual English speakers yet efficient candidates (Martin 2008). The will was there to change the mindset, but it appears that other pressures took priority over that will, and the mindset has lasted by default rather than design. The change required for far deeper institutional change which would take a lot more time and effort to bring to life from strategy to reality. As noted by Goldman and Casey in the article, *"Building a culture that encourages strategic thinking"*, in the Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies, 2010, "Culture will eat strategy for breakfast". Whilst revolutionaries like Gen. Michael Collins began the change, it is evident though that a lot of change was required after instrument regni was embedded so deeply within the culture of Education since 1831, over 90 years at the time (Goldman 2010).

Martin, in his 2008 book, *The Civil Service and the Revolution in Ireland 1912–1938*, remarked that for founders like Collins taking over Dublin Castle in 1922, the transfer of State power was for them simply the first stage of a State-led transference of society from an old English to a future Gaelic way of life. The Civil War which caused Collins's untimely death could be seen as having distracted them from moving beyond the first stage or transference of society forward to a Gaelic way of life, particularly, for the growth of the language. This preliminary evidence appears to show that this revolutionary zeal never materialised to changing or overhauling the culture of the civil service, this will be investigated further down. White, in his article, *"Modelling the Origins and Evolution of Postcolonial Politics: The Case of Ireland"*, for the Journal of Postcolonial Text noted a key differentiating factor of Ireland as a colony to others. Kenya, for example, where like most of Africa, the colonial era was brief in comparison to Ireland with many seeing its effect to be less profound on African society in contrast to Irish society. Kenya's first postcolonial independent ruler, Jomo Kenyatta, was born prior to the British colonialism and ruled on after independence. There were no territory specific invasions or plantations of thousands of loyal subjects from Britain to Kenya. The same couldn't be said for Collins or other founders like De Valera. The Kenyan imperial episode was

so short, there was a much greater opportunity for the national culture to survive. The length of and extent of British colonialism in Ireland has had a longer lasting effect. Kenya endured 68 years from 1895 to 1963 whereas Ireland experienced it for over 4 centuries from 1603 through 1922, though some would venture further and say it was since 1169 and the time of Strongbow, the English King's knight who established the first region of English control on the island.

The renowned Irish academic scholar Ó hUallacháin, in his 1994 book, *"The Irish and Irish: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of the Relationship between a People and Their Language"*, for me helped bring to life to a certain extent the lack of change from the founding culture when Joseph Brennan, a senior civil servant at the time of the handover of power to the Irish Free State in 1921 who would go on to become Governor of the Irish Central Bank before his retirement in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, described seeing "no immediate disturbance of any fundamental kind in the daily work of the average Civil Servant" on the transference of power from colonial Britain to the new Irish Free State. (Ó hUallacháin and Conlan 1994). David Limond noted that nationalist expectations after the Civil War in the post-independence restoration period was for a swift rebuilding of Ireland's historic pre-1831 educational culture. Limond intimates that the opposite occurred in that, in reality, the tendency for post-1831 educational homogenisation had been exacerbated since independence mainly due to what he termed, post-colonial overhang, that had been an affliction of Irish policy-makers and bureaucrats in their educational policies and practices (Limond 2010). This post-colonial overhang meant that even when legislation was introduced to promote Gaelic culture officially, the linguistic colonialism foundation of the civil service ensured it was tolerated rather than encouraged in the official policy (MacKenzie, Engman, and McGurk 2022). Ó hUallacháin often accused the Dept. of Education in their attitude towards the language as employing overseas consultants on a continual basis to create "a master plan to do nothing" in terms of the Irish language (Ó hUallacháin, 1994).

- **Economic explanations mixed with An Taoiseach Seán Lemass's agency and influences upon them**

Fianna Fáil, the party which Lemass led from 1959-1966, was founded in 1926 and its constitution declared 7 founding aims according to the prominent Irish historian, Diarmaid Ferriter. The second was "to restore the Irish language as the spoken language of the people and to develop a distinctive national life in accordance with Irish traditions and ideals". This was second only to their first aim to secure the unity and independence of Ireland as a republic (Ferriter, 2014). The prominence of the Irish language then within the party's constitution and psyche cannot be underestimated as Fianna Fáil were founded during a time when Ireland was under dominion status of an empire it had fought

to free itself from. One of Ireland's leading historians, Ferriter, in his chapter, De Valera's Ireland, 1932–58, published within The Oxford Handbook of Modern Irish History, determines that Lemass from 1959 focused less on aims 1 and 2 but rather fully focussed on aim 4 which was "to make Ireland, as far as possible, economically self-contained and self-sufficient" (Ferriter 2014). Fianna Fáil, despite its founding principles, did not however set up a dedicated central government department for the Irish language and it was not established until 1956 despite the fact they'd been in near constant power since 1932 (J. Walsh 2022).

Previously, in the restoration period for the language under De Valera, the fervent zeal to re-establish the language was captured well during his speech in 1937, "we cannot fulfil our destiny as a nation unless we are an Irish nation – and we can only be truly that if we are an Irish-speaking nation." (Thomas Walsh 2021b). The focus of Irish language-rebuilding for the post-independence period between the 1920s and 1950s appeared to be very much twofold on education and government administration. In government administration, successes were achieved when Irish became compulsory in 1937 for entry into the Civil Service and the Garda Síochána (Irish police force). On the education side, the results of their endeavours were not bearing as much fruit though. By 1931, 38% of teachers had no formal qualifications in Irish, while only 30% were qualified to use Irish as a medium of instruction. After the Lemass era, the Civil service & Garda (Irish police force) Irish language requirement would end too (Oliver 2002). After coming to power in 1932, the party's primary and foundational aims mentioned above took legal effect in the 1937 Irish constitution known as Bunreacht na hÉireann. Articles 2 and 3 legalised the national unity aims which were subsequently removed as part of the international peace deal or Good Friday Agreement brokered by President Clinton's Special Envoy, Sen. George Mitchell. The recognition of the Irish language as the first national language of the State also enshrined in Bunreacht na hÉireann (constitution) under Article 8 sub section 1 (Ferriter 2014). In the same article 8 sub section 3, Ferriter noted that wording was inserted, and this has been used to minimise the use of Irish officially and promote English only, "Provision may, however, be made by law for the exclusive use of either of the said languages for any one or more official purposes, either throughout the State or in any part thereof". Sub section 3 left Irish in some ways open to abuse and a trend gathered apace that appears to have accelerated c. 1959, in the Lemass era, ignoring the need to publish anything in Irish by proceeding ahead with English versions (Ferriter, 2014). This Lemass era trend has continued apace until modern times, showing no signs of slowing. For example, planning permission signs even in Gaeltacht regions now can and do appear in English only.

This outright dismissal of many ways of life in traditional Ireland was witnessed most poignantly via the Dept. of Education. The Dept. of Education communicates with all staff in each primary and post

primary school via written requests known as circulars. In 1960, within a year of Lemass assuming office, the previous policy of restoration appears to have been abandoned altogether in favour of preservation, when his Minister for Education, Patrick Hillary, would oversee the introduction of a Circular Letter 11/60 from the Dept. of Education that would have catastrophic effects on the language. See further results below following on from his closure of the Irish language preparatory colleges specifically founded to supply qualified teachers to restore the language to everyday use via education. This infamous circular was known as Circular 11/60 and other Lemass era circulars require particular attention that have only been focused upon within relatively few academic papers. Prior to this in 1934, within 2 years of De Valera assuming office, the Dept. of Education via a previous circular implemented an INTO Conference's Second National Program motion that all schools teach through the medium of Irish in infant classes as well as in the teaching of History, Geography, Music and Physical Education outside of Gaeltacht regions (Ó Ceallaigh and Dhonnabháin 2015). This legislation would be symptomatic of De Valera's rebuilding zeal representing the wider political hegemonic consensus towards education policy for the Irish language and its drive to re-establish it as an everyday language. Circular 11/60's impacts appear so catastrophic and require further investigation. Walsh in his 2021 article, *"Revival, or bilingualism? The impact of European nationalist thinking on Irish language curricular policy around the advent of political independence in Ireland"*, for *Paedagogica Historica*, detailed the impacts plainly.

- i. The total number of Irish language medium schools at both primary & post primary levels reduced by an astounding **62%** outside of the Gaeltacht.
- ii. The no. of Irish language medium schools at primary level outside of the Gaeltacht regions had reduced by a staggering **67%** from 420 Irish medium schools to 160.
- iii. The Irish medium post-primary schools reflected an even sharper decline of **83%**, only 22 schools remained using Irish as the medium of instruction in 1979, a drop of 110 since 1969. (Thomas Walsh 2021b).

By 1964, Lemass appears to have begun to move to a policy of preservation of the language with devastating effects for education. This policy of preservation was firstly mooted by Fine Gael leader James Dillon rather than restoration of the language as evidenced by the Irish Examiner article in 1964 entitled, *The Irish Language* (Examiner 1964).

I will further examine if it was down to this circular from the government or were other forces at play too, like the INTO (Irish National Teachers Organisation), influencing his his decision to implement the 1960 circular. It may have reflected a more general mood shift as it appears things began to change around the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, as evidenced in a newspaper article, *Irish Language:*

Great harm has been done, from February 9<sup>th</sup> 1958's Sunday Independent. The Irish Labour Party leader speaking at the party's National Conference, William Norton, former Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister) also remembered as a great moderniser, declared that there is room for some rethinking on the question of the Irish language. He strongly indicated that it was time to face facts as a society that the high hopes of a previous generation in the 1920s and 1930s had not been realised for the restoration of the Irish as a spoken language. He decried how relatively little progress had been made overall and how they'd patently failed in their objective. He singled out teaching in schools through compulsion as a primary causal factor for the lack of progress. Norton also pointed to a growing constituency and the difficulty that students from a fully English-speaking household encountered in the practice of being taught other subjects through Irish. He finished by recommending that love and respect of the language, not compulsion, were a firmer grounding for the revival of Irish (Norton 1958). It is interesting that the Labour party that Norton led would be seen as the party with the most of its members from trade unions. Thus, Norton could be said to be voicing a lot of the concerns of the INTO.

As White also noted in his article, *Modelling the Origins and Evolution of Postcolonial Politics: The Case of Ireland*, Lemass had a mission to modernise Ireland in every aspect away from the restoration period's quest for autarky of the Irish nation and towards an economy that was more integrated into the global economy that was shared across the political isle and island in general (White 2007). Limond noted that Lemass clearly identified the growing dissatisfaction amongst the wider people of the nation with the poverty that was too pervasive and inescapable in the Ireland of the 1950s, a result perhaps of the restoration years' quest for autarky (Limond 2010). This resulted in the 1950s becoming somewhat of a lost decade where a staggering 15% of its population emigrated, mainly to England and other English speaking economies like America, Australia and New Zealand (Scully 2015). Limond also showed in his 2010 article for the *Journal of Comparative Education*, "[An] historic culture ... rapidly, universally, and thoroughly restored"? British influence on Irish education since 1922" that Lemass's vision of modern Ireland made it necessary to ensure our education system was as like Britain's as possible as he believed Ireland's economic future at the time lay in competing in British markets both collectively as exporters as well as individually as migrant labourers (Limond, 2010). Thus, the 1960 circular and closure of teacher preparatory schools can be viewed as key to Lemass's economic vision. This, for me, hasn't been highlighted enough, the sacrifice of the language for the sake of making Ireland more English culturally, this was railing against his party's core founding aims.

America's influence on the Irish economy became of even greater importance during Lemass's premiership in conjunction with the prominent and visionary Secretary at the Dept. of Finance and future Governor of the Central Bank, T.K. Whitaker. Lemass's Irish export-oriented foreign direct investment (FDI) strategy led to the dismantling of protectionist trade barriers and the attraction of FDI into Ireland, particularly from America. Barry and O Mahony in their 2017 article, "*Regime Change in 1950s Ireland: The New Export-Oriented Foreign Investment Strategy*", in the *Journal of Irish Economic and Social History*, highlighted a facilitating factor being that the USA had overtaken Britain as the major global source of FDI in the post WWII world. FDI from America was much more favourably viewed by Fianna Fáil, Lemass's political party and their founding aims, many of their members had begun their political careers fighting to free Ireland from imperialism. Lemass's creation of an export processing zone in Shannon in the west of Ireland with an adjacent trans-Atlantic airport proved hugely attractive for American FDI. The visit of JFK in 1963 deepened Ireland's "special relationship" with the USA even further (Barry and O'Mahony 2017). Interestingly, Joseph E. O Connor, in his Oral History Interview with Seán Lemass in 1966, brought to light that an intriguing source of pressure on the Irish language also from the USA. During JFK's visit in 1963, the US President and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Irishman had expressed great disapproval surrounding the revival of the Irish language and how it was such a waste of national interest (O'Connor 1966). The Irish language and compulsory education policy appears to have been clearly identified as a blocker to this modern economic Ireland Lemass espoused and hence the introduction of the circular so soon into his premiership, perhaps Norton's words rang through for Lemass. Lemass came to power without openly abandoning this policy of autarky, still paying lip service to it whilst fully embracing modern Ireland and the need for closer integration with Britain whom he'd fought to free his nation from. Thus, Lemass's prime focus on ascending to office in 1959, like US President Bill Clinton in 1993, was the economy which as a policy was best summed up by Clinton's strategist James Carville, "It's the economy stupid" (Foroohar 2022) . This though came at an enormous cultural cost to our language most of all and the lip service continues to this day towards the language, a far cry from the revolutionary zeal of the founders.

- **Bottom-up influences via public and sectoral interests**

In order to understand public interest towards the language and culture at the time, it is important to contextualise it. Slatinská and Pecnikova in their 2017 article, "*The Role of Irish Language Teaching: Cultural Identity Formation or Language Revitalization*", in the *European Journal of Contemporary Education*, remind us that Irish, or Celtic as it was known by the imperialist Dept. of Education in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was not even taught in 1831 under the Westminster Education Act

(Slatinská and Pecnikova 2017). This policy was continued well into the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The article explains that the national system of education founded in 1831 actively disregarded any distinctive elements of Celtic or Irish culture within the schools and most notably of all, the Irish language until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, post great agitation. According to O Donoghue in his 1994 article for the Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development entitled, Bilingual education at the beginning of the twentieth century: The bilingual programme of instruction in Ireland 1904-1922, this neglect of Irish language and gaelic culture gained tacit approval and acceptance via the dominant parties in the education system and civic society at the time. Post the Act of Union in 1801, the dominant parties in Irish society included parents, political activists like Daniel O Connell MP and the Catholic Church after the mid-19<sup>th</sup> (O Donoghue 1994). There appeared to be little groundswell against the policy from a review of available sources at the time, which is understandable given the population were dealing with such a catastrophe that was An Gorta Mór (Irish famine). One may also consider how this opposition to the policy would be reported given that many imperialist papers were likely to have been reticent to publish such opposition. The majority of opposition to the imperialist state in Ireland in the past and particularly at the time as noted in Hughes and MacRaild's 6<sup>th</sup> chapter, Ribbonmen in their Urban Communities during the 1850s in their book, "*Ribbon Societies in Nineteenth-Century Ireland and its Diaspora: The Persistence of Tradition*", tended to emerge initially from the grassroots or the people of Ireland themselves sporadically in pockets throughout the land rather than as a precursor to a national movement. For example, 19<sup>th</sup> century Ribbonmen who committed acts of agrarian agitation against imperialist landowners and their agents emerged and organised sporadically until they were unified by Michael Davitt MP and Charles Stewart Parnell MP the Irish Party leader in the House of Commons in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Hughes et al. 2018).

Conradh na Gaeilge (The Gaelic League) was founded in 1893 by Eoin MacNeill who would go on to serve as Minister for Education from 1922 through 1925. Dubhghlás de hÍde served as its first President, the son of an Anglican Rector who'd become the first Uachtarán na hÉireann in 1937. Conradh na Gaeilge followed a similar evolution from more niche societies, such as the Belfast Harp Society who taught both harp and the Irish language and the Gaelic Union who enjoyed some successes in securing changes to the 1831 act, into a national movement in 1893 (Lanier 1999). Amongst other famous members, Pádraig Mac Piarais, Fianna Fáil founder Éamonn De Valera & Gen. Michael Collins, played key roles and represented those who'd been attracted into the revival movement. Unfortunately for the language, a split emerged in 1916 when Conradh na Gaeilge voted to become a political vehicle who then advocated for participating in armed rebellion against the imperialists. This pivotal move caused the resignation of its first President, Dubhghlás de hÍde.

Conradh na Gaeilge has since voted to become a non-political organisation again. Walsh's article in *Paedagogica Historica*, *Schooling, the Gaelic League, and the Irish Language Revival in Ireland 1831–1922*, noted that in terms of grassroots movements, the organisation can rightly be viewed as the primary and most successful representative ever of the groundswell of public interest towards bilingualism and equal treatment of Irish with English. It was so successful that it once outnumbered the Gaelic Athletic Association in Ireland and even helped prevent Ireland's largest and national sporting body, the GAA, from going out of existence (Moore 2012). After a successful lobbying campaign by previous grassroots movements, 1878 marked the first legislative change when An Ghaeilge was introduced into the Intermediate school curriculum, albeit with lower points than all other languages, particularly English. 1000 examination points were allocated to English, Greek & Latin with French & German allocated only 700 points. Conradh na Gaeilge would go on to enjoy even bigger successes in changing the 1831 act. An interesting impact of this change in the curriculum, that persists to the present day, after Conradh na Gaeilge and Pádraig Mac Piarais's lobbying for increased usage of Irish at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was such that the increasing popularity of the subject jeopardised its success as the Treasury became reluctant to continue funding for it (B. Walsh 2021a).

Limond in his 2010 article for the *Journal of Comparative Education*, "*[An] historic culture ... rapidly, universally, and thoroughly restored?* British influence on Irish education since 1922", helped describe a compact between politicians and a certain proportion of the electorate that appears to have come into existence that allowed the wholesale importation of British/English practices and policies as the price of maintaining modernity and prosperity (Limond 2010). Limond's assertion would be backed up by the emergence of an organisation known as the LFM, Language Freedom Movement. Interestingly, this grassroots movement that emerged in 1966 to rebel against the government's policies on the Irish language believed that Lemass's 1960 circular did not go far enough, with more needed to be done to overturn the restoration era policies. One of its demands was the call for a removal of the need for Irish to join the civil service. As Crowley noted in his 2005 book, "*Wars of Words: The Politics of Language in Ireland 1537-2004*", LFM was short lived yet ultimately successful. Walsh's article in *Paedagogica Historica*, "*Schooling, the Gaelic League, and the Irish Language Revival in Ireland 1831–1922*", previously highlighted a tacit approval from Irish society i.e., parents, political activists like Daniel O Connell and the Catholic church for the 1831 act and eradication of the Irish language (B. Walsh 2021a). The Language Freedom Movement can be seen in a similar light to this. This consensus didn't last long though as resistance to Lemass's abandonment of the restoration policy began to emerge, markedly in the aftermath of the Lemass era ending in 1966 when the impact of his government decisions really took hold. The detailing of

these agrarian type movements is important to contextualise what would come next in terms of public sector groups lobbying for change.

As per the great WB Yeats quote, “All change, changed utterly”, though in the aftermath of the Lemass era an about turn amongst parents occurred whilst wider society such as Catholic church and politicians remained relatively silent (Quinn 2008). The previous tacit approval had been challenged in huge contrast to the 19<sup>th</sup> century attitude of parents who were chiefly supportive of English proficiency for their children as they were mindful of both the social and global economic advantages offered by its knowledge (Thomas Walsh 2021b). A groundswell of public interest that sprung up in the form of the Gaeilscoileanna movement outside of the Gaeltacht regions almost as a direct reaction to the circular as its impact became clearer. Within the Gaeltacht regions, Gluaiseacht Cearta Sibhialta na Gaeltachta (The Gaeltacht Civil Rights Movement) also emerged. This time it was different because a large proportion of the electorate, specifically parents, unlike in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, began agitating for change. The goodwill of parents towards Irish language medium education and to bilingual education overall was strongly witnessed from the late 1960s into the 1970s which saw the growth and development of Irish language medium schools in pockets around the country outside of the Gaeltacht regions via local activism, pressure on the government and department from parents. These schools have become known as Gaeilscoileanna.

## **Conclusion**

Lemass’s new generation of ministers who had replaced the old guard of ministers that withdrew from cabinet life when De Valera almost retired to the Presidency of Ireland embraced the free market and Anglo-spheric economic market influences are a useful pillar to understand the reasons why and the overall context for the changes to the workings of educational policy towards the Irish language during his tenure as Taoiseach. The Irish civil service’s or “official Ireland’s” post-colonial overhang combined with the policy shift from the revolutionary zeal of restoration to the reality of preservation ensured ruthless efficiency in the execution of this via circular 11/60. Previous implementation of more restorative era circulars appeared to not meet with such steadfast execution. The 1960 circular resulted in a 62% decline, why was this implemented so effectively versus restoration-era circulars? The literature on the impact and importance of the grassroots reaction or groundswell of public reaction against this circular and economic precedence over educational policy towards the Irish language is somewhat substantial. The interdependence between these three pillars of literature has remained limited though. The crucial role of the third pillar such as parents and the people of Ireland, in keeping the language alive against the first pillar in government who’d abandoned it in favour of economic expansion and finally, against the second

pillar i.e. Department of Education in Ireland in its circa 140 years of existence since 1831 had only seen it prioritised for less than 37 years or 27%.

## Chapter 2

### **Irish Civil Service with the continued influence of British institutional/governance norms and values**

To fully appreciate Lemass's change to more Anglo-spheric economically driven government decisions executed by the Irish Civil Service, the prior context is key. To fully understand the machinations and fundamental culture of the Irish republic's civil service, one must appreciate its origin story as an appendage of the British civil service and colonial empire. Since Tudor-times in Ireland and particularly from the end of the Nine Years War in 1603 with the defeat of the Gaelic Irish Ard Rí (Emperor or High King) Aodh Mór Ó Néill and heir apparent Aodh Rua Ó Domhnaill, soon began the instrument regni. It can be described as a long succession of interventions and charitable undertakings sought to proselytise the Irish from London that proved difficult to change with the creation of the Irish Free State in the 1920s. Central to this proselytising and instrument regni was the promotion establishment of the English language as the primary language of the island. Four separate plantations or territory-specific invasions commenced, Leix-Offaly, Munster, Ulster and finally, Cromwellian. The final two were certainly more successful and in particular Ulster with the English Crown sponsoring the influx of lowland Scottish Presbyterians and Anglicans from northern England (Tom Walsh 2016). The descendants of the Ulster expedition to this day exert an influence that is holding up the adoption of the Windsor Framework and the restoration of democratic institutions under the Good Friday Agreement.

The aforementioned Gramscian esque "Irish language consensus" amongst legislators began as the primary policy of the Cumann na nGaedheal government of 1922 to 1932, even prior to Fianna Fáil's election which saw them dominate thereafter. My review of the Cabinet minutes in the National Archives helped unearth another Lemass era policy decision c.1959 that would occur concerning the preparatory colleges which were founded near the end of 1927 to train highly proficient teachers to execute this revival of the Irish language via education (Johnson 1992). The Gramscian like consensus did succeed to a certain extent and reached its zenith in the 1940s when the number of national schools where Irish was the medium of instruction grew from 4% in 1930 to 12% in 1940 (Duibhir 2018). From 1927 to 1961, these preparatory colleges were the major recruitment source for primary teachers for the new state and government. The decision to open these preparatory colleges was taken by a newly appointed Minister for Education, Prof. John Marcus O Sullivan and was seen as one of the most important changes in education of the new state since 1922.

At the preparatory colleges' core was the ideal of the then Minister for Finance, Orangeman and Church of Ireland Irish language activist, Ernán de Blaghd who said, "The strengthening of the national fibre by giving the language, history, music and tradition of Ireland their natural place in Irish schools" (O.i. Committee 1927). The creation of the Irish language preparatory colleges was a significant step towards alleviating the shortage of student teachers with Irish fluency. These colleges were residential or boarding second level colleges in which candidates for a career in teaching career would receive a thoroughly sound secondary education, combined with the advantages of a collective school life lived in an atmosphere of Gaelic speech and tradition. Half the vacancies in each college were to be reserved for candidates who obtained not less than 85% for oral Irish at the entrance test and 50% of these in turn were reserved for native speakers of Irish from the Gaeltacht regions e.g. Conamara in Galway. These colleges were established and funded by the state and placed under the control of both the Catholic religious orders and the Church of Ireland authorities on a school per school basis. A scholarship system was introduced covering both fees and expenses for Gaeltacht students and it was innocently hoped that this would lead to an increased standard of teaching in primary schools in the Gaeltacht (O.i. Committee 1931). The system comprised of up to seven schools in total, mainly situated in the Gaeltacht, three for boys, three for girls, and one co-educational school for Protestant students.

They were founded in 1927 during the Gramscian "Irish language consensus" that prevailed amongst the founders, the preparatory colleges though enjoyed only lukewarm support from the civil service. The Dept. of Finance only granted pupils £40 per annum to fund their education, which would work out at circa £2,500 today. The growth and popularity of Irish in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century also drew the chagrin of the Dept. of Finance given its financial impact. Interestingly, this "Irish language consensus" didn't receive a warm reception within the civil service from other departments too. This was illuminated from 1923 when a scheme for a university degree course in Trinity College Dublin for primary teachers was not proceeded with a year later because of opposition from the new Department of Education, formally established in 1924. Instead, both the National University and Trinity College extended some credits to academic subjects in the training or preparatory colleges. Other than these arrangements, no liaison was established between the training colleges and the universities, and they grew apart from one another. The Dept. of Education, from the off, could be seen as at odds with the primary educational aim of the new State which was the preservation and revival of the Irish language as a living language (Coolahan 2004). A heavy burden was placed upon schools and these colleges in preparing teachers for schools to actualise that aim. Here we see two departments, Finance and Education, that were both originally created in colonial times reacting strongly against the zeal of the former revolutionaries now in government.

Johnson, in her article for the Journal of Political Geography 1993, "*Nation-building, language and education: The geography of teacher recruitment in Ireland, 1925–55*" rightly concluded that this national educational policy often attracted the brightest minds of Ireland's Gaeltacht regions. Boys and girls finishing primary school in the Gaeltacht appeared to grasp both the educational and financial opportunity the central national policy of language revival via the national education policy offered (Johnson 1992). This is understandable given the sheer lack of economic opportunities for most Gaeltacht inhabitants. The converse impact of prioritising this national educational policy via preparatory colleges over regional socio-economic objectives was that the government's policy of pursuing a national cultural vision instead of an effective socio-economic policy could have ensured the preservation of Gaeltacht regions. It could also have brought about the extension of the Gaeltacht as a financially sustainable cultural region. On an even more micro level, a lot of the intelligent people from the Gaeltacht regions were thus lost to these localities along with their peers who had emigrated too. The emigrant ship may have been the plight for a lot of these intelligent people within the Gaeltacht regions without these (Johnson 1992). This national policy could have been replaced by a policy like that of Sir Horace Plunkett and Roger via their work in the Gaelic Irish Co-Operative Home Industries' Society which helped foster more wealth via cooperative movements in the Gaeltacht areas. Thus, creating local jobs for local people in the Gaeltacht would have meant that the brightest talent in those areas could avoid both emigration overseas or internal migration from their region to teach elsewhere and, in turn, damage the language in their native Gaeltacht regions (O Sullivan 2010).

Another group who became vehement opponents to the preparatory colleges that Lemass closed were the teachers' union or INTO. Lemass knew that they were problematic too as the over supply of teachers at certain times and specifically Minister of Education Derrig, who took over in the role from 1932, had become known for an inability to appropriately estimate the number of teachers required which resulted in over supply (Jones. 2000). It was purported that the "*marriage ban*" introduced in 1933 which precluded female teachers from continuing in their roles after marriage was really introduced to alleviate or reduce the supply of teachers. The root cause of the oversupply was more likely with by Minister Derrig and his department's failure to estimate appropriately (McCormick 1996). The INTO had key objections to the policy also which proved fatal and Lemass acted upon these objections. The 1950s would see an increase in population after World War II and a subsequent increase school going numbers. It would also see an increased lens upon the national system of teacher recruitment (Raifeartaigh 1983). Firstly, the INTO feared that government was exerting too much pressure on the teachers to revive the language and thus overtaxing the teachers' abilities to succeed with the program. Furthermore, they were not in favour of positive

discrimination of teacher recruitment from the Gaeltacht. It is unfortunate that the INTO had never been engaged correctly on the “how” of the revival through education by those who were so convinced of the “why” of reviving the Irish language through education. It was pointed out by the former General Secretary of the INTO and member of the Irish parliament’s upper house, Senator Joe O Toole, that in 1919 a Minister for the Gaeltacht or the Irish language had been appointed prior to the appointment even of a Minister for Education, furthermore with zero engagement from government with the INTO. From around 1920, Conradh na Gaeilge attempted to compel teachers to enforce an Irish language program of revival drawn up by Conradh na Gaeilge again without any consultation whatsoever with teachers. This lack of engagement was the Achilles heel to the policy from the off (McCormick 1996).

Continued impacts of this influence of British institutional/governance norms and values remain present in the 21st century also with two key examples. Firstly, impacts of this mindset were felt when the Irish Government did not request Irish as an official language upon accession in 1973 even though it was recognised in our 1937 Constitution as the national of the state. Irish only became a language of the European Union when Malta made Maltese a prerequisite for accession in 2004. The Irish government on receipt of information from the European Commission in the early 2000s that Maltese would become an official EU language almost reluctantly agreed to Irish becoming an official EU in 2007. Secondly, the removal of funding in 2003 for the Linguistics Institute of Ireland in Gormanstown which had been set up after great lobbying from language activists like Ó hUallacháin. The institute was founded to provide expert research for linguistics internationally and for the Irish language on the home front and sharing that expertise internationally. Ó hUallacháin was dismissed as its director one month after it was founded in 1973 after publicly calling the Dept. of Education out on their lack of resources and funding that they’d promised to provide the institute which became a great struggle to materialise. International linguistics academics from the Oxford University, Bar-Illan University in Israel, Yeshiva University New York to name only a few bemoaned the government’s decision in the Irish Times in December 2003 (Romaine 2003). Lemass thus may have realised the strength of opposition he faced with the civil service when it came to Irish and likely chose his battles, the economic ones.

### Chapter 3

#### **Economic explanations mixed with An Taoiseach Lemass's agency and influences upon them.**

To understand and appreciate the background and political landscape in terms of Irish during the Lemass era, WB Yeats' quote is again apt, "*All change, changed utterly, a terrible beauty was born*" (Quinn 2008). That terrible beauty would become the type of inconsiderate economic progress that brought about great cultural decay particularly in terms of language, the same inconsiderate economic progress has helped create the global sustainability challenge today. A famous Irish poet, Michael Hartnett, commented of Lemass's time in power which began on June 23<sup>rd</sup> 1959, rather accurately, that his reign led to an outright dismissal of many ways of life in traditional Ireland. Those included the way of life of the small farmer, the small shop, and the Irish language. For Lemass, these were perceived as signals of a backward atavism that the country wished to abandon in favour of free market economics (Quinn 2008).

Upon review in the National Archives of Ireland and Lemass's government's cabinet minutes, 15<sup>th</sup> December 1959 would mark a precursor to the infamous Dept. of Education circular 11/60 (Cabinet Minutes 1959-1973). A Dept. of Education proposal for approval was presented to cabinet following consideration of a memorandum dated November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1959, on the question of discontinuance of the aforementioned preparatory colleges. No objections were noted in the minutes and discontinuance of five preparatory colleges for Catholic and Protestant students was approved. The Minister was also authorized to investigate the possibility of arranging for the continued use of those colleges for education purposes as regular secondary schools. Lemass's cabinet had a "lip service" type wish, "That the buildings concerned should be used for purposes connected with the advancement of Irish language – including, where possible, Class A secondary schools" (Cabinet Minutes 1959-1973). This legislative act would drastically reduce the supply of teachers qualified to teach through the medium of Irish in national schools. It was the first move of the Lemass era in a strategic play away from the earlier 1920's zeal to restore Irish as a living language of the Irish people in all aspects. The inevitable question of why these colleges were discontinued arises. Their closure can be seen as a key legislative milestone from the government that moved the state's aim to the preservation rather than the revival of the Irish language. Their closure marked the end of what Harford summarised as the reversal of the cultural assimilation and socialisation policies witnessed under British rule, whilst keeping education under control of the religious institutions (Harford, Fleming, and Hyland 2023). The discontinuance of the preparatory colleges can be seen as a pivotal change in the evolvement of Ireland's educational policy and the role of the Irish language.

Lobbying from the INTO was one of the key drivers of change in Irish language education policy right from 1922 onwards as seen with the INTO Conference's Second National Program Implementation by De Valera and with the closure of the preparatory colleges. The prevailing attitude towards the language in 1959 when Lemass assumed power was best described by a Dáil debate from 4<sup>th</sup> June 1959. It provides us with great insight into Lemass's attitude towards the Irish language when the leader of the opposition Labour party, Brendan Corish, commented on an incident which saw the nomination and seconding of the former Taoiseach, Éamonn de Valera, "There are some in this chamber who have done nothing but bring the language into disrepute. I heard the Taoiseach being proposed here after the last election. He was proposed by one Deputy who uttered just two sentences in Irish. I am perfectly certain that Deputy did not know what he was saying. He had not a clue. He said them parrot-like" (Oireachtas.ie 1959). Corish went on to detail how Lemass, the proposing Deputy, didn't set a good example to the country here, instead, branding it a puerile attempt on his part as a member of Fianna Fáil to represent to the country, as far as the Irish language was concerned, that they were the saviours of the language. Corish went on to accuse Lemass of simply paying the language "lip service" (Oireachtas.ie 1959). This illuminates in a short story the underlying attitude of An Taoiseach, towards the Irish language and provides great context to what was to come from Lemass's government in terms of legislation which greatly accelerated what Hartnett had termed, "An outright dismissal of many ways of life in traditional Ireland including the small farmer, the small shop, and the Irish language" (Ferriter 2014). Corish showed how little Lemass cared for the language and thus one can see that unlike De Valera, he gave into pressure on the policy more easily.

One step further from dismissal to obliteration appears apt in terms of Lemass's subsequent legislation following on from the closure of the preparatory colleges. This obliteration approach surrounding the Irish language emerged post review of the National Archives of Ireland primarily, Dáil debates and primary legislation. In an interview after his career in public life ended, Lemass's great economic advisor, fluent Irish language speaker, civil servant and later Senator, T.K. Whitaker indicated his central role in helping Lemass abandon the conservation or revanchist approach of his predecessor De Valera and the subsequent embrace of free trade and investment from abroad (Whitaker 2019). T. K. Whitaker saw De Valera's previous policy as a "faulty approach" and prided himself for his role in its abandonment. Whitaker reiterated that leaders from across society were in support of this change or increased alignment with the free market and foreign investment by the time Lemass became Taoiseach in 1959. It appears that the Irish language was not seen as majorly aligned with free market policies.

Several language policy decisions made by Ministers for Education Mr Jack Lynch [1957-59] such as Circular 16/59 and Minister Patrick Hillery [1959-65] influenced the direction of Irish language teaching policies. Critics of these choices foresaw an erosion of teachers' and pupils' competence through reduced pupil exposure to and engagement with the language and, more fundamentally, the substitution of a bilingual restoration rationale for a language revival policy (Herron 2020). The various governments had continued to emphasise the importance of the Irish language in the education system from independence in the early 1920s until the late 1950s when teachers were granted permission to spend more time on oral Irish instead of teaching through the medium of Irish. Circular 11/60 which was issued in January 1960 explained to teachers that they had permission to implement this change if they considered that it would be more beneficial for their students. This was a key and fundamental twist or significant change of direction in language policy since the foundation of the Free State in 1922. The number of schools that were teaching through Irish fell drastically in the 1960s to the point there were only 11 primary schools and 5 post-primary schools teaching through the medium of Irish outside of the Irish speaking regions at the beginning of the 1970s.

Having examined over 160 circulars relating to the Irish language in the Irish education system since 1922, Circular 11/60 stands out amongst them all due to its potent impact and its text is worth highlighting for its lack of clear direction and reliance on what is not said. It referenced and superseded a previous Circular 16/59 during Minister of Education Jack Lynch's tenure. Circular 11/60's impact was so potent because it decoupled oral Irish proficiency amongst students from how a teacher was graded by an inspector. This decoupling then meant that a teacher was no longer measured or examined on their student's proficiency in oral Irish and thus, the Irish language became of little importance in the Irish education system as it was no longer being quantified as it was previously along with English and Arithmetic. The circular text didn't clearly state that though, it was by no means in anyway explicit in its language and perhaps deliberately so (Raifeartaigh 1960). The specific text of the Circular 11/60 is worth highlighting for how it changed the teaching of Irish and the grading of same, "With reference to the attached copy of Circular No. 16/59 relating to inspection, the Minister for Education desires to call special attention to the fact that in future a teacher's work in the teaching of Irish will be assessed as a whole and that there will not be separate assessments of Oral Irish and Written Irish" (Raifeartaigh 1960). This separation had been a seismic departure for measuring teacher's success with students. Clearly teachers in Ireland at the time had a fear of Inspectors, as for a no. of years previous, a teacher's pay had been performance based and their salary was dependant on how well the Inspector had graded them. Thus, 11/60 can be seen as an acceleration of the precedent set in 16/59 and a move away from restoration and towards

preservation. 11/60 states that, *“Teachers should make every effort to advance as far as possible and as quickly as possible the speaking of Irish amongst their pupils”* (Raifeartaigh 1960). This line is very strong in favour of the language yet the same circular then gives more power to teachers and would lead to such a decline in Irish being taught in schools. *“If (in the teacher’s judgement) a student were likely to make more progress in Oral Irish by transferring the emphasis from teaching through Irish to the teaching of Irish conversation, then such teacher will be free to act accordingly”* (Raifeartaigh 1960). This rather verbose statement deliberately used a lot of words, almost speaking in code. A teacher was now free to no longer teach in the medium of Irish but to teach Irish through the medium of English. This line allowed teachers to exercise their judgement in using either English or Irish as the medium of instruction and the teachers overwhelmingly used this new power to move away from Irish language medium of educational instruction. **This decentralisation of power in choosing the primary medium of instruction away from central government to the classroom of the teacher can be seen as the primary lever in the massive decline. Circular 11/60 was most definitely an accelerator or the vehicle for how the decline in the number of Irish medium primary schools in English speaking areas would be realised.**

Circular 11/60 superseded Circular 16/59 and Lemass acting alone in attacking the Irish language as evidenced by the teachers’ willingness to abandon it without much objection too. Implementation from the Dept. of Education was swift. As noted in Table 1, a decline in schools teaching through the medium of Irish had begun somewhat over two decades previously with 255 schools in the early 1940s. When Circular 11/60 was released, this figure had dropped to 183 from 255 or by 28%. The direct impact of the Circular 11/60 can be seen with a drop from 183 to 28 circa 10 years later, an 87% drop. This 87% drop can be seen as a direct result of 11/60 which again decentralised the power to choose the medium of instruction from central government to the teacher alone.

Parental demand or lack thereof, is noted as the main cause of this decline with a reaction against the rote learning type methods and the apparent heavy focus on grammar. The previous circular 16/59 cited in 11/60 from the department focused heavily on the role of the teaching inspector with teachers and school principals or managers. Circular 16/59 in 1959 would also bring about the decoupling of the oral Irish standard from a teacher’s grading. The “not satisfactory” grading from an inspector was gravely feared by a teacher. The 3 core subjects were clarified as Irish, English, and Arithmetic. Circular 16/59 paragraph (iv) sub section (2a) stated, “Weakness in oral Irish alone should not, however, deprive the teacher of a satisfactory rating unless the weakness is a result of negligence on his part” (Raifeartaigh 1959). This was another official step from the Dept. of Education in abandoning the post-independence quest for restoration. By moving the focus away from oral Irish, it would have grave consequences for students of the language and their oral

proficiency. This would have the impact of having Irish become more an academic subject than a living language. The persistent culture of instrument regni that formed such a key part of the Irish Education Act in 1831 post the Act of Union in 1801 meant that any INTO type complaints or feedback of that nature from teachers met with little resistance from the Dept. of Education and instead led to an increased number of circulars again diluting the importance of Irish in a teacher's grade. This combined with Lemass and Whitaker's drive to modernise Ireland by orientating our education towards that of our nearest neighbour to make Irish workers more aligned to Anglo-US markets, meant that the Irish language was left behind.

27<sup>th</sup> July 1962 would mark the next relevant Cabinet decision post Circular 11/60 designed to align the Irish education system more to the needs of the global markets, specifically Britain and beyond to America via Circular 9/63. This memo or circular would again move along a similar path moving more towards the neo-liberal economic needs and away from provision for the Irish language which has become clear was viewed by Lemass as abhorrent to preparing Irish people for competing in a more global market. Textbooks and examination papers in Irish were now moved from the Irish typeface based on the script devised by the Irish monks over fifteen hundred years ago to Roman script. The cabinet brought this into force following on from another memorandum from the Dept. of Education. TK Whitaker also highlighted the reality of the lack of availability of Irish typeface typewrites for official use as another driving factor to adapt to the Roman script. The legislative zeal extended beyond Education also to the Dept. of Justice. In 1960, An Garda Síochána (the Irish police force) Promotion Regulations introduced a requirement of passing an Irish proficiency test as a qualification for promotion. Following the consideration of a memorandum dated the 20th of March 1962, submitted by the Minister of Justice relative to the Irish Proficiency test, the Minister was authorized by Lemass's cabinet to have regulations prepared amending the Garda Síochána regulations to exempt members who had joined the force prior to 1960 (Cabinet Minutes 1959-1973). The government's continued legislative zeal extended against Irish also to the civil service who were undergoing negotiations as part of Ireland's candidacy to join the European Economic Community. Lemass rightly noted French as the prevailing language of the European Economic Community at the time. Thus, in the cabinet records, it was noted that several senior civil servants were granted special assistance to upskill in their fluency of the French language whereas, no such scheme was developed for a civil servant's proficiency in the Irish language (Cabinet Minutes 1959-1973). Lemass's Anglo spheric economic zeal saw to Irish being side-lined in the education system.

Table 1 - Number of Irish-medium primary schools		
School year	Number of Irish-medium primary schools in English speaking areas	Irish medium primary schools in English speaking areas as a % of total primary schools in Ireland
1940-1941	255	4.9
1950-1951	200	4.2
1960-1961	183	3.9
1970-1971	24	0.6

Table 2 - Number of primary level Gaeilscoileanna in the Republic of Ireland, 1975-2000 (data: Gaeilscoileanna, 2001; Department of Education and Science, 2001).		
School year	Number of Irish-medium primary schools or Gaeilscoileanna	Irish medium primary schools or Gaeilscoileanna as % of total primary schools in Ireland
1975-1976	14	0.4
1980-1981	20	0.6
1985-1986	46	1.4
1990-1991	64	2.0
1995-1996	91	2.8
1999-2000	114	3.6

## Chapter 4

### Bottom-up influences via public and sectoral interests

Gluaiseacht Cearta Sibhialta na Gaeltachta or "The Gaeltacht Civil Rights Movement", known as Gluaiseacht, was founded in Indreabhán, Conamara, Co. Galway in 1966 following a protest locally in Na Forbacha in which over 100 local people turned up to convey their objection to the national broadcaster's showcase of an English language program in the Gaeltacht (Iomaire 2023). It was founded with the aim as per its first electoral candidate, Peadar Mac An Iomaire, to help Gaeltacht communities to help themselves. It was formed to stave off and highlight the decline of the Irish language and to campaign for greater rights for Irish speaking areas across three key pillars, firstly access to services, secondly, broadcasting and thirdly an elected assembly of their own. Even more basic needs were agitated for such as running water in people's homes and roads that didn't severely damage a car. Gluaiseacht would become a catalyst for many major changes in government policy towards Gaeltacht areas. The movement did spread to other Gaeltacht regions in Kerry, Cork, Rath Carn in Meath. It enjoyed little support further north in the Gaeltachtaí of Tír Chónaill or Donegal. Among their many aims throughout their heyday was to make an "Israel in West Connacht", drawing inspiration from the work of the Israeli government in reviving their native language and attracting those who had emigrated and their descendants home to Israel. This was spearheaded by one of their founding members Deasún Fennell (Iomaire 2023). Its first national election candidate, Peadar Mac An Iomaire, stood in the 1969 national election gaining over 6.42% of the vote. Though failing to win a seat, he did outpoll our current Uachtarán na hÉireann, Michael D. Higgins. Mac an Iomaire, a primary school teacher, was a great example of a new generation in Conamara inspired by the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association of John Hume and Martin Luther King in the USA. Mac An Iomaire's vote was even more sizeable considering the electoral make-up of the area of Conamara. Fianna Fáil had consistently polled over 75% in this area "with a Cumann (or local branch) in every half-parish from Barna to Carna". (Ó hÉallaithe 2019). Nowadays, it would be the equivalent of taking on the Tories in England in their safest constituency of Chelsea. The local Fianna Fáil TD (national parliament elected representative) hailed from Carna in Conamara. The village didn't even have a local doctor or running water at the time despite the fact it had a government TD. It was also said that Fianna Fáil's role in Conamara and popularity up until then in 1960s could only be compared to the role and popularity of the Communist party in Russia (Ó hÉallaithe 2019). Mac An Iomaire explained during our interview, "That the shadow of the Civil War loomed large as it had only ended over 30 years ago". Local people's voting intentions were largely still swayed by the Civil War (Iomaire 2023).

Gluaiseacht would become a shining example of local agrarian activism leading to a change on a national scale as a reaction to the Lemass era neglect of the language. This movement would mirror in many ways Ireland's most famous and most successful agrarian movement, Conradh na Talún or The Land League which had become a national movement as The Irish National Land League which led to the democratisation of land holdings in Ireland (MacRaild 2017). It led to the greatest social change for Ireland in that a tenant farmer could purchase their land that had been previously rented to a foreign landowner. A similar movement never gained momentum in Scotland to which this day means that land ownership, in the main, sits with the upper echelons of society i.e. at least half of the country's rural land or highlands is owned by only 432 landowners (H.o.C.S.A. Committee). Scotland did not benefit from the agrarian agitation culture of their brethren on the island of Ireland. The example set by the success of this agrarian agitation culture of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century along with that of John Hume in Ulster around the same time were of huge inspiration to the founders of Gluaiseacht Cearta Sibhialta na Gaeltachta (Iomaire 2023).

Education also became a focus of the movement too particularly in the early 1970s. Many of its members benefited also from the government's decision in 1966 to make both primary and post primary education free for all citizens under the then Minister for Education, Donogh O Malley (J. Walsh 2014). Mac An Iomaire admitted in a 2012 interview that he only ran to draw attention to the cause of Gluaiseacht as the life of a Teachta Dála or member of parliament never appealed to him. He went on to also say that the aims of Gluaiseacht were all achieved within twenty years through the support of the state. In 1973, Mac An Iomaire went on to work with the National University of Ireland Galway in his role of Director of Oifig na Gaeilge Labhartha (Spoken Irish office). In this role, one of his stellar achievements was to bring the university to the Gaeltacht with the establishment of a campus of in An Cheathrú Rua. The university students were given the opportunity to learn Irish amongst native daily speakers of the language. It wasn't long until the students began to also agitate for language rights which saw the Student's Union support and approve that Irish would be recognised by the university with the same status as English, similar to the Irish Constitution (Iomaire 2012). Mac An Iomaire also oversaw the establishment of an tAcadamh or The Academy, a structure within the university, which was solely responsible for the development of Irish language medium university education. One could see An tAcadamh which has circa one thousand students per annum as an Irish language medium university within the university.

By 1970, the direct result of this local agrarian activism by Gluaiseacht in Conamara, the likes of which not seen since the days of Davitt, would lead to the formation a pirate radio station in Ros Muc. "Saor Raidió Conamara" eventually led to the foundation of RnaG or Raidió na Gaeltachta, a dedicated Irish language national radio station in 1972 in Casla Conamara bringing great economic

employment for this rural area too (Iomaire 2012). It was without question a key precursor to the 1996 launch of an Irish language free-to-air public broadcast television channel, TG4 or Teilifís na Gaeilge 4. Interestingly, the Welsh language free to air public broadcast channel, SC4, was launched 14 years earlier in 1982. This highlights an intriguing point of how the English civil service appeared more open to the development of the Cymru language than their Irish equivalent (Kinsella Nov 2020). By 1971, Lemass had been succeeded by the former Minister for Education, Jack Lynch, author of 11/59. Gluaiseacht enjoyed another demonstrable success when Lynch's government decided to cut the social welfare for single men under the age of 50 with no dependants. This decision disproportionately impacted the men of Conamara. It led to a protest and sit by Gluaiseacht at the Dept. of Social Welfare offices in Galway city and the eventual reversal of this decision. Mac An Iomaire noted that the sit in protest embarrassed the local Minister, Bobby Molloy, who realised the impact to his core vote that it could have. It would be reversed quickly by Minister Molloy at cabinet table (Iomaire 2023). Social welfare or the "dole" would be a critical income source for the region of Conamara in its entirety. Seosamh Ó Cuaig of Gluaiseacht was quoted in describing the Dublin government's attitude to the west of Ireland in general, "Clear the local people out of the west and keep it for tourists". (Kinsella Nov 2020).

As a movement, it banned members of political parties from being members simultaneously of Gluaiseacht. This could be viewed in hindsight as a weakness of the movement in Conamara which was as stated akin to the Communist Party in Russia with its widespread membership and control. Like many Irish organisations, after its embryonic and break out success starting with securing the funding for a pier in Ros a Mhíl, an influx of republicans caused a split with the founders, Peadar Mac An Iomaire in particular. Gluaiseacht shared so many similar values with republicanism in Ireland, it was understandable that such an influx would occur. It was this later more republican version's aims that moved towards increased control of local education also on top of the embryonic organisation's aims such as the control of local services like planning, nationalisation of inland fisheries, co-op companies for local fishermen and local produce and an abolition of ground rents which were like the aims of Fianna Fáil from its foundation as the republican party. Seosamh Ó Tuairisc would become the 1973 general election candidate for Gluaiseacht landing only 703 votes, approx. 50% of the vote secured by Peadar Mac An Iomaire in the previous election. Its aim of securing a local government specifically for the Gaeltacht regions or "Home rule for the Gaeltacht" which did establish some control over local services such as planning were realised when in 1979 Údarás na Gaeltachta held its first elections (Iomaire 2023). Though, Údarás na Gaeltachta's powers still paled in comparison to that of the local county council and the local county manager who had hegemony in planning matters, though less of a role in education. Gluaiseacht would receive only 6.1% of the

vote, clearly the education policy did not strike a chord. There were 3 seats up for election, two of which were secured by Fianna Fáil and one for Fine Gael. Although education was one of the key drivers of the formation of Gluaiseacht, its lasting impact on national school or secondary school education in reversing the damage caused by 16/59 and 11/60 were noteworthy. Their impact though on the local area and Gaeltacht region were seismically positive. It was mainly sparked by an overall disregard for the Irish language and its people that I've highlighted via the dept. of Education. This neglect was clearly spread right across most departments.

Another sectoral interest outside of the Gaeltacht regions became known as the Gaeilscoileanna movement which sought to found new schools with Irish as the primary medium of instruction outside of the Gaeltacht regions. As previously stated, Circular 11/60 was issued in January 1960 which explained to teachers that they had permission to implement a change from Irish to English as the primary language of instruction if they considered that it would be more beneficial for their students. We know that the INTO had become a vocal opponent to Irish language revival policy from circa 1920 onwards due to their lack of consultation on what was realistically a Conradh na Gaeilge plan to educate children in the Irish language that hadn't received major input from teachers. The Gaeilscoileanna movement understood as O Duibhir noted that a lot of the opposition from amongst teachers to the practice of teaching both infant classes fully through the medium of Irish was likely due to teachers' "lack of ability and training to teach through the medium of Irish" (Duibhir 2018). They thus focused on new schools instead of trying to change the existing mindset. The Gaeilscoileanna movement also understood that the fervour and vision to revive the Irish language post 1922 seemed to focus primarily upon the education sphere without the wider transformation of society also. This new movement was from wider society and thus sought to change the education system via wider public reaction.

The implementation of the 11/60 by Minister for Education Patrick Hillery so soon into the new government's term of office under Lemass can clearly be seen as the near immediate acquiescing to the demands of the INTO. This was the first twist in language policy since the foundation of the Free State in 1922. De Valera's governments from 1932 onwards and particularly under Minister Derrig were ardent Irish language revivalists who would not be for turning on Irish language policy in the face of INTO opposition, even via strikes. As previously stated, the number of schools that were teaching fully through Irish fell drastically in the 1960s to the point that by 1972 and Irish accession to the European Economic Community, outside of the Gaeltacht, there were only 11 primary schools and 5 post-primary schools teaching through the medium of Irish outside of the Irish speaking

regions at the beginning of the 1970s (Duibhir 2018). Even for the schools that were now teaching through English, the amount of curriculum time dedicated to Irish was drastically reduced and many parents became frustrated with the poor level of Irish attained by pupils overall. It was at this point in the early 1970s that the Gaeilscoileanna movement emerged. It emerged when this frustration resulted in some parents initiating an organic grass roots movement to establish Irish-medium schools with a focus on immersion teaching of the language (Duibhir 2018). This parent-led campaign often commenced locally with the establishment of a pre-school through the medium of Irish known as a Naíonra or a Naíolann which then led to calls from more parents for an Irish-language primary school. Overall, survey data even to this day repeatedly reports that huge demand continually exists from parents to send their children to a primary school through the medium of Irish. The problem is that lack of supply to meet this demand. The demand is such that 23% of parents surveyed in a 2015 Economic and Social Research Institute would choose a local Gaelscoil for their children if one were available (Daly 2015). Today in Ireland, the number of schools teaching through Irish has risen drastically from that of 11 primary schools and 5 post primary schools in 1972 to 181. These are attended by north of forty thousand students and 31 gaelcholáistí or post primary schools attended by over twelve thousand students along with 17 aonaid or Irish language units within an English-speaking secondary school (Mac Gearailt, Mac Ruairc, and Murray 2023). Despite this, educational advantages once afforded the post-Lemass era Gaeilscoileanna are diminishing such as one extra teaching resource per Gaelscoil which became anathema to the INTO.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion

The primary educational aim of the new State was the preservation and revival of the Irish language as a living language (Coolahan 2004). It has become apparent that by the time Lemass had assumed office in 1959, this remained more of an aspirational aim rather than one that had been or was to be systematically achieved. Even though great progress had been made in the intervening 37 years, a decline in the early post-independence zeal was apparent and a deterioration in the number of schools teaching through the medium of Irish had reduced since a peak in the decade of the 1940s. Lemass's time post 1959 accelerated this fall to near extinction though. Irish clearly became viewed around his cabinet table as an impediment of economic progress. The enthusiasm to restore the language was replaced with a passion to propel Ireland to the very forefront of the global economy via the EU and many more economically liberal avenues. I've endeavoured to focus on the reasons behind the formation of, and short, medium and longer term reactions to, Circular 11/60 as symptomatic of a broader shift in government education policy as this was a critical juncture explaining the change in Irish language teaching.

Lemass and T.K. Whitaker believed that for Ireland to compete in the Anglo-dominated economic markets of Britain and America in particular, our education system needed to adapt to prepare students for this and become more like neighbours in Britain. Prior to this, students of the Irish education system were often leaving with more of a fluency in Irish than English, yet they ended up working as labourers on building sites across every major city in post-World War II Britain, Australia, and the United States of America. Lemass and T.K. Whitaker's program of economic liberalisation that embraced the private sector has had hugely positive economic results for Ireland. It is clear too that when Lemass assumed office that drastic economic measures were needed as 15% of the entire population of the state had emigrated in the 1950s (Scully 2015).

My thesis has shown that whilst the economic progress of Whitaker and Lemass had detrimental impacts on the Irish language, the very formation of the Irish language policy via the Dept. of the Gaeltacht and its lack of engagement with teachers via the INTO initially unintentionally created a dissociated, unintended, and powerful lobby group. Teachers were not engaged appropriately, and this lack of engagement clearly built resentment which led to strikes. The resentment was motivated also as teachers' pay and performance were linked to Irish proficiency of their pupils. Its decoupling led to the severe reduction in the teaching of Irish via the 62% decline. This new tripartite opposition via a non-engaged INTO, Lemass's economic progress, on top of the entrenched opposition from civil servants due to the culture of instrument regni left our language with a new threefold enemy on top

of the old enemy. The gaping abandonment of the abundant native speakers in the Gaeltacht, as highlighted by Gluaiseacht, was a feature of this former British civil service mindset. This also had dire consequences for the language with these areas being plagued by systematic lack of government funding and widespread emigration (Ó Ceallaigh and Dhonnabháin 2015). Right up until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the INTO were still lobbying against unequal treatment of Irish language and English language medium schools. This resulted in the removal of a positive discrimination measure of Irish language medium schools via the advantage of an additional teacher to those schools who used Irish as a medium of instruction. The unfortunate net result of this removal of an additional teaching resource was for Gaeilscoileanna to have faced the dilemma of either increasing their intake in number of students or reducing the total teaching staff to meet the Department's ratios. In fact, the pupil to teacher ratio in all-Irish schools is not necessarily low relative to the average pupil to teacher ratio among all national schools. This INTO initiated policy of pupil to teacher ratio harmonization across all schools, both Irish language and English language medium, reflects a gap between the national language policy goal of fostering bilingualism and implementation of that policy in the educational sphere (Coolahan 2004). As noted, this gap has existed since the 1920s and like two parallel lines, the INTO and the Irish language policy appears to go on for ever and never meet. Lemass's government came to power in 1959 and the circulars can be seen as an output of the INTO lobbying.

Educating the student, teacher and society on the why behind compulsory Irish was also key from the off and remains key, though it appears to have been neglected particularly via the INTO. This is nearly as important as the teaching of the language. Language for students is always best taught hand in hand with the culture as it provides the broader context for the learner and a more joined up picture. The reaction of the people of the Gaeltacht via Gluaiseacht helped emphasise the central role of the Gaeltacht regions for the teaching of the language and its continued growth, without them you've no heartland and a lack of why for teaching. Progress has been made to some extent legislatively in more recent years as a large gap exists. The importance of the Official Languages Act has helped our national language speakers who feel uncomfortable speaking English now have more rights to access the states services through Irish (Slatinská and Pecnikova 2017). It is abundantly clear that the teachers, have never been fully informed or educated effectively on the "why" behind compulsory Irish as is demonstrated by the INTO's role as somewhat of a persistent thorn in the side of the government's Irish language policy. The absence of a common goal for the teaching of Irish is consistently cited as a blocker by teachers of Irish. The role of the government and civil service in aiding the Gaeilscoileanna continues to fail today in schoolbooks. Gaeilscoileanna, which account for

about 4% of total primary schools, constitute a relatively low demand for Irish books designed for second-language learners of Irish. The burden then falls squarely on the shoulders of the teachers to translate the textbooks for a day's schooling into Irish. This is leading to extra work only for teachers in Gaeilscoileanna that teachers in English medium schools are not required to complete. Thus, the biggest pain point of Irish teachers is the constant and consistent additional hours required to be inputted for translation work due to the lack of Irish language teaching resources available (Murtagh and Seoighe 2022). Thankfully through there is a change in attitude towards the Irish language, as it has become independent of nationalist ideology and is viewed now more as an expression of individuality" (Quinn 2008).

The government and Dept. of Education have also brought about a situation where once the INTO complained of an oversupply of suitably trained teachers via the preparatory schools to a stark contrast where there exists a severe lack of programmes at institutions of higher education that prepare teachers in Irish-language pedagogy. This reflects the absolute reality that fostering Irish–English bilingualism through the education system is not a primary consideration of policymakers anymore despite the rhetoric or lip service to Irish by politicians and policy makers alike. Clearly, Irish is no longer treated as a core subject of the education system but rather another subject of the system like Geography or History.

Perhaps now too is the time for the Irish language education approach to embrace economic forces and private sector even further. The fact remains that despite the trojan efforts of the Gaeilscoileanna movement, a clear gap in demand exists. Irish medium primary schools in English speaking areas as a % of total primary schools in Ireland hit a peak of 4.9% in 1940 and reduced to a low of 0.6% in the 1970s. The Gaeilscoileanna movement has resurrected it to 3.6%. A 1.3% gap exists to even return it to the levels of 1940 never mind fill the demand which stands at 23% according to 2015 Economic and Social Research Institute, research previously mentioned. New teaching methods like virtual learning have helped small Irish language Gaeilscoileanna to join forces without geographic boundaries via a satellite model offering existing schools a wider range of subjects and support too.

Finally, more can be done, smartphone apps like Duolingo too have seen more users of Irish on their app than there are native speakers of the language. Their user base is also across the globe with the most users of Irish on the app of any country outside of Ireland being India. More on demand

learning applications can be embraced for the betterment of the language. Private sector input like this to help the Irish language is also key rather than a reliance on the state sector as the public sector bodies seem to be rather unwillingly entrenched opponents.

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