

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Essay/Assignment Cover Sheet

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Essay/Assignment title _____

Criteria	Ex	VG	Good	Fair	Poor	Comment
Introduction (statement of problem, response to task)						
Range and use of appropriate sources						
Development of argument (analysis, interpretation)						
Conclusions (application, findings, outcomes)						
Presentation, language, academic conventions						

Please tick Y/N for Profile of Needs

General comment:

Indicative grade:

Tutor: _____

Date: _____

Key Developments in Irish Secondary Education since 1922 and one development outlined.

In this essay I am going to be outlining the key developments in the secondary education system in Ireland from 1922. Some topics I will be talking about include, The founding of the Department of Education and the passing of the Intermediate Education (amendment) Act both in 1924, The school Attendance Act 1926, The Vocational Education Act 1930 and others. I am also going to be discussing in detail the announcement of free post-primary education in 1966. Throughout this essay I will compile an evaluation of the historical events that occurred within the Education system from 1922 that promoted the growth within Ireland's education system resulting in where it is today.

Following Ireland's Independence in 1922, it gave way to a series of events with an aim to evaluate the education system suited to the newly Free State and the refinement of a department it was tied to. "It was not until the establishment of an Irish government made it feasible for a representative Commission to investigate the question of what type of Secondary Education is suitable for Irish schools" (Department of Education Report, 1924-25, p. 48). Firstly it was obvious that Ireland was in need of cultural revival and promotion of its native language within its schooling system. "The main change was the introduction of Irish as a compulsory subject in schools to be taught for one hour per day" (T. Walsh, 2016, p.22).

Following the Establishment of the Department of Education in June of 1924 and the passing of the 1924 Intermediate Education (Amendment) Act "removed the legal difficulties which stood in the way of putting recommendations into operation" the school year 1924-25 saw the introduction of reforms in Secondary Education which may be said to have revolutionised the system from both the educational and financial point of view (The Department of Education Report, 1924-25, p.48). It

repealed the clauses in the previous acts which made grants to schools dependent on the results obtained by their pupils in the public examinations. The scheme of capitation and other grants and of teachers' salaries, together with the general lines of the programme and examination system, all derive from this Act.

As mentioned previously, the rate of capitation grant replaced four former grants distributed in excess of 51,471 in the school year 1924-25, in comparison to the previous year. (O Raifeartaigh, T. , 1958-59, p.45). This as well as the introduction of the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate showed an increase in students progressing a secondary level education. "1925, the first year of the two Examination system, 2,903 sat for the Intermediate Certificate and 995 for the Leaving Certificate" (O Raifeartaigh, T. , 1958-59, p.45).

In 1926 the School Attendance Act was passed. This stated that it is compulsory for children from the ages of six to fourteen to attend school. Along with this at the same time prohibiting the employment of children who this act applies to (School Attendance Act, 1926). The aim of this Act was to give children the opportunity to develop their education and to start establishing a minimum education universal to all children in the country when they progressed further on in life (Niamh Bhreatnach, 1994, p.3). This would prohibit parents pulling children out of school to work in family businesses which would have been a common problem within the education system.

In 1930 the Vocational Education Act declared that each county borough should provide a vocational education. These Vocational Education schools would be to provide training and practise to prepare for entering into a trade, manufactures, commerce, education and also practical training for the purpose of gaining employment in these areas (Vocational Education Act, 1930). These Vocational

schools would facilitate students with the interests of learning practical skills that they can gain an award in which will therefore increase their opportunities.

Throughout the 1950's to 1960's saw a large underinvestment in the Irish secondary education system this therefore led to a large drop in the number of students sitting the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate. In 1951, only 4,591 students sat the Leaving Certificate (Department of Education Report, 1950-51). This was mainly due to the fact that emigration rates in Ireland were rising rapidly and suddenly leaving the country to find a better way of living was in high demand. "Over 500,000 people left Ireland between 1945-1960- stark evidence of the poor state of the Irish economy at this time" (Encyclopedia, 2020).

Due to the rapid decline of the rural economy all over Ireland but particularly in the West this led to many young people, who would have otherwise been attending secondary schooling, considering emigration as a solution to an economic and social dilemma. Roughly three out of five children who grew up in 1950's Ireland left the country at some stage and in 1955 the commission of emigration stated that emigration became 'a part of the generally accepted pattern of life' (Irish Emigration History, 2012). Looking at these facts it's not hard to see that gaining a secondary school education was not a priority or even an interest among the younger population of Ireland between the 50's and 60's.

In 1965, the Invest in Education Report was published by the OECD and outlined the desperate need for Ireland to invest in its education sector. Within this report it was outlined the importance of expanding and promoting education to Ireland's youth. "If we are to keep in step educationally with most other countries in Europe, post-primary education must be universalized, and made freely available to all our children" (Patrick F.G Cannon, 1966, p.72) As mentioned previously, the drop in the

agricultural sector meant that socio-economic status was now another large factor preventing children from furthering a post-primary education. This report stated the importance in supporting the population of these disadvantaged areas now more than ever before by recognising the dropout rates coinciding with the age groups mostly associated with senior years. The report referenced other countries in Europe and used them as inspiration for propositions such as raising the school leaving age to 16 (Patrick F.G.Cannon, 1966, p.72).

The topic I am going to be discussing in detail which proved in my opinion to be the pivotal moment of secondary level education since 1922 when Ireland gained its Independence, is the announcement of free post-primary education.

On the 10th of September 1966 Minister for Education and Fianna Fáil TD Donogh O'Malley, without even consulting the cabinet, announced his far-sighted decision for free secondary education in Ireland at a seminar of the National Union of Journalists. This was arguably to become the single most effective initiative taken by any minister in the country ever. O'Malley described the lack of secondary education as a 'dark stain on our national conscience' and that 'no boy or girl in this State will be deprived of full education opportunity - by reason of the fact that the parents cannot afford to pay for it.' (Ryle Dwyer, RTE, 2016).

"O'Malley stole the Blueshirt thunder and, as a result, it was virtually impossible for his Cabinet colleagues not to support his initiative. O'Malley had forewarned Seán Lemass of his plans. When the Taoiseach did not object, O'Malley took this as approval." (Ryle Dwyer, RTE, 2016). This proactive approach described as a 'bombshell' was exactly what the country needed for a radical change of economic development.

This in my opinion was the turning point for Ireland's education prospects seen as it was proving difficult to improve the overall numbers of students in the country progressing into a secondary education. By taking away fees, it made it possible for anyone to attend schooling and gain the tools they could use to broaden their opportunities in life, giving hope and an imagination to the people of Ireland.

On the other hand I know from my own experience of secondary education, although it is passed off as 'free' there are definitely expenses that go hand in hand with secondary education. For example, I live on a country road about a nine minute drive from my local secondary school and my parents both work, this gave me no other option but to take the bus to school which cost me €350 a year totalling a significant amount of €2,100 for the six years I attended secondary school (Bus Eireann, 2020).

Although I can appreciate that without this change coming into effect in 1967 I would be uncertain that I could have received a secondary education at all, this along with registration fees, uniforms, school supplies and examination fees in my last year definitely does not constitute 'free' in my opinion. I think there needs to be more work towards providing a free transportation service for children to no fault of their own cannot make their own way into school.

Overall, we can see that since 1922 Ireland has gone through a series of rigorous events in the aim to shape its education system and therefore lead us to where we are today. I can appreciate that although our secondary education system is certainly not perfect, that by the progression and work done by former members of our government we have laid out a supportive foundation that has seen many children from the ages of twelve to twenty pass through and obtain the quality of education they can use to open many doors of opportunity. Ireland has certainly

come a long way since 1922 and by supporting its children, it has supported its future.

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