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Learning and Living Together

The Multi-Denominational School Movement and Emergent Inclusion in 1970s Ireland

Abstract

This paper was written in Japanese by Dr. Akira Iwashita and published in 2025 as Chapter 16 in a book titled "*Intermediate and Minorities: Bridging People with Education", edited by Ichiro Kuraishi.* (ISBN978-4-8122-2407-6.) The paper was translated from Japanese to English by Chat GPT and the English language version was edited by Áine Hyland.

The paper is the outcome of research undertaken by Akira Iwashita in Ireland in 2022 and 2023, and the chapter is based on both primary and secondary sources. The research was supported by JSPS KAKENHI Grant Number 23 H00934, *A Comparative Social History of the Secularization and Religious Character of Education in the Modern World.*

The paper describes the background to the setting up of the Dalkey School Project in Ireland in 1975. It discusses the controversy between the Parent Teacher Association in St. Patrick's National School, Dalkey, and the Church of Ireland rector who was manager of the school, when demand for places in the school exceeded the number of pupils who could be accommodated. The school had become a *de facto* multi-denominational school, but the manager, with support from the then Minister for Education, Richard Burke, decided to prioritize the enrolment of Protestant children. This decision led to the setting up of an independent association (afterwards to be registered as a limited company) which would become the founder and Patron of a new multi-denominational school, the Dalkey School Project N.S. which was not controlled by any church or religious group.

Learning and Living Together

— The Multi-Denominational School Movement and Emergent Inclusion in 1970s Ireland —

Akira Iwashita

Issues and Methods

Public Education and Religious Patronage in Ireland

The public education system of the Republic of Ireland is a remarkable case in that it has largely retained the nineteenth-century framework based on cooperation between the state and the churches. Even today, all Irish primary schools are privately owned institutions belonging to "patrons," and there are no state- or municipally-established public schools. This situation is the outcome of the continued operation, with little structural change, of the "National School System" founded in 1831. Under this early model of public education, privately founded schools that met certain conditions were approved as "national schools" and received financial support from the state while remaining under limited public supervision.

As of 2021, 2,749 of Ireland's primary schools were Catholic, enrolling 89.2 percent of all pupils. In these schools, bishops or archbishops usually serve as patrons, and priests act as school managers (principals). Another distinctive feature of Catholic schools is their small size, which reflects the deliberate effort in more populated urban areas to maintain separate schools for boys and girls, thereby promoting single-sex education. Although far fewer in number, Church of Ireland national schools share almost the same organizational structure as their Catholic counterparts.

Since most patrons are senior clergy of the institutional churches, individual national schools, though part of the public education system, effectively function as denominational schools. The absence of secular public schools has long been criticized—both domestically and by international bodies such as the UN Human Rights Committee and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination—as depriving citizens of the opportunity for non-religious education. Nevertheless, there

has been little momentum within Ireland to fundamentally reform this institutional structure.

That said, secular education is not entirely absent from contemporary Irish public education. A statistical table issued by the Department of Education lists "multi-/inter-denominational primary schools," which are, in effect, secular schools operated by the limited company *Educate Together* (ET), acting as patron. ET schools provide an ethics curriculum entitled *Learn Together* as an alternative to religious instruction. When pupils or parents wish to receive denominational religious education, it is offered outside school hours as an extracurricular activity, with the school providing only the facilities while parents and religious organizations conduct the instruction voluntarily.

Although still a minority, ET schools have steadily increased since the 2000s and now constitute a significant segment of Irish public education. The origin of this secular education movement can be traced back to the *Dalkey School Project* (DSP), a civic initiative launched in the 1970s in Dalkey, Dún Laoghaire–Rathdown, a suburb of Dublin, with the aim of founding a multi-denominational (non-denominational) school. Initiated mainly by local parents, the DSP not only succeeded in opening its own school in 1978 but also developed into a nationwide movement for secular education. As a grassroots civic movement that partially transformed a century-old state system, both the DSP and its successor, *Educate Together*, constitute a crucial moment in the history of Irish public education.

Theoretical Perspectives and Method

The case of the Dalkey School Project (DSP) offers valuable insights into the overarching theme of this volume—*inclusion and exclusion in education*. A key conceptual guide here is the notion of "emergent inclusion" proposed by the editor of this volume, Ichirō Kuraishi. Drawing on the works of Jacques Rancière and Gert Biesta, Kuraishi critically reexamines the conventional binary of inclusion and exclusion that has dominated discourses in education and welfare.

According to Kuraishi, previous debates on inclusion can be reduced to two models:
(1) the **"social mobility model"**, in which individuals move autonomously into the system without changing it (as in the case of scholarship programs), and
(2) the **"pure inclusion model"**, in which the system expands to include marginalized

individuals without altering those individuals themselves (as in the case of universal social welfare in education).

Although these two vectors appear opposite, both share the same underlying logic: inclusion is understood as an extension of concentric circles from the center toward the periphery—what Kuraishi calls the "concentric model." Such linear thinking, however, even in the "pure inclusion" form, assumes inclusion as the movement of minorities from outside to inside. As a result, it conserves the identity, order, and power relations of the majority, functioning ultimately as a mechanism of social conservatism.

In contrast, Kuraishi posits *emergent inclusion* as an alternative model—one that involves interrupting and redefining existing orders and creating new identities rather than being incorporated into existing systems. Through his reading of postwar Japanese educational struggles, Kuraishi interprets *emergent inclusion* as a radical movement that constructs a new *"we"*—rights-bearing subjects who had not been recognized within the existing order—and strives to *appear* in the public sphere to assert previously unnamed or unacknowledged needs.

From this perspective, the historical significance of the DSP can be best understood through the lens of *emergent inclusion*. Anticipating the argument to follow, the DSP generated fissures within the structure of Irish public education and carried the potential to reconfigure it. Moreover, the movement gave rise to new actors possessing *a new identity*—subjects who articulated unprecedented educational demands within Ireland's existing system.

It is precisely this aspect that invites us—concerned with inclusion and exclusion in education from the standpoint of minorities and mediators—to focus on the secular education movement in Ireland during the 1970s.

The analysis proceeds as follows. First, I will describe the development of the DSP, especially in its early stages, focusing on the civic actors who carried the movement (Sections 2–3). Second, I will examine the outcomes of the movement and its historical significance in Irish educational history (Section 4). Third, I will consider whether and how the DSP can be interpreted as an instance of *emergent inclusion* (Section 5). Finally, I will draw several generalized conclusions.

Sources

Despite its historical importance, the early activities of the Dalkey School Project (DSP) have received little scholarly attention. This scarcity of research is primarily due to the fact that most of the organization's internal documents were privately held by its founding members. Consequently, nearly all detailed studies of the DSP's formative years have relied on the work of Áine Hyland, an educational historian who was herself one of the project's founding members.

The present chapter draws upon Hyland's publications on the DSP while also utilizing *primary materials* preserved in her private collection, including the St. Patrick's National School PTA documents, DSP minutes, and newsletters. These sources make it possible to reconstruct the early activities of the movement and to clarify the human networks involved.

To analyze governmental and societal responses to the DSP, I have also employed contemporary newspaper articles and official documents housed in the National Archives of Ireland, particularly those related to the Department of Education. These complementary sources allow for a more comprehensive understanding of both the internal dynamics of the DSP and the external reactions it provoked.

The Prehistory of the DSP: St. Patrick's National School and Its PTA, 1973–1974

Conflict between St. Patrick's National School and Its PTA

The story begins in Dalkey, a coastal town located about fifteen kilometers southeast of Dublin along the seashore. Though small—with a population of approximately 8,200 in the 2016 census—Dalkey is now known as one of the most affluent residential suburbs of Dublin. Originally established by the Vikings and flourishing as a port town since the medieval period, Dalkey became famous in modern times for its historical sites and scenic views. From the latter half of the twentieth century onward, its beauty and convenient access to the city center made it a preferred suburban area for members of the expanding middle class and new professional groups based in Dublin.

On the northern coast of Dalkey stood St. Patrick's Church, affiliated with the Church of Ireland, beside which was St. Patrick's National School. The Archbishop of Dublin served as its patron, and the parish rector doubled as the manager —a typical arrangement for a Church of Ireland national school. However, in the 1970s, the school

was somewhat exceptional. Under the initiative of its principal, Florence Armstrong, the school actively admitted Catholic pupils and practiced a form of education that was multi-denominational and non-sectarian in character.

This approach attracted not only progressive middle-class parents who had recently moved into the area but also liberal Catholics who did not wish their children to attend the conservative, denominational Catholic schools. As a result, applications for admission steadily increased. Yet this very success created a problem: St. Patrick's, a small school with combined classes, could no longer accommodate the growing number of applicants within its limited space and facilities.

In February 1972, the rector and manager, Rev. Eric Young, announced a policy to cap enrollment at 190 pupils. He further declared that, henceforth, admissions would prioritize children of the Church of Ireland and that meant that in practice Catholic pupils would no longer be accepted. This represented a clear reversal of the school's earlier multi-denominational policy. The PTA (Parent–Teacher Association) protested strongly against this decision, while the manager and the parish vestry accused the PTA of improper interference in school administration.

As tensions escalated between the school (represented by the manager and vestry) and the PTA (composed of teachers and parents), the patron sought to mediate. The Archbishop of Dublin, acting as patron of St. Patrick's, proposed a compromise: the PTA would be allowed to expand the school to a limited extent if it agreed to bear the maintenance and construction costs, while also accepting that no further extensions could be requested in the future. The parish accepted this proposal, but the PTA refused.

At the PTA general meeting in May 1973, Hilary Pratt was elected as the new chair, in an effort to reduce the division between the PTA and the school authorities. The PTA adopted a resolution condemning the manager's policy and rejecting any denominational selection of new entrants. However, since PTA resolutions carried no legal force, the likelihood that the school would comply was minimal. Consequently, the PTA began exploring the possibility of founding an entirely new, multi-denominational school that could be recognized as a national school.

To that end, the new PTA formed an internal committee to investigate the establishment of such a school in Dalkey or nearby Dún Laoghaire, and began circulating petitions. By October 1973, 450 residents representing 328 households had signed, collectively

accounting for 656 children under the age of twelve. Based on these figures, the PTA petitioned Minister for Education Richard Burke, arguing that a new school was necessary to accommodate the excess demand at St. Patrick's.

Responding to the PTA's request for intervention, the Department of Education sent a letter on 8 March 1974 advising the new manager, the Rev. Williams that the school should either expand its facilities or, if that was impossible, restrict admission by giving preference to Protestant pupils.

Around the same time, the PTA addressed two further letters—on 5 and 25 March—to Taoiseach Liam Cosgrave, appealing for the withdrawal of the enrollment restrictions and for authorization to establish a new school. Both petitions were rejected. At an extraordinary general meeting on 4 April 1974, the PTA resolved to continue its campaign for a new multi-denominational national school. The resolution declared that the PTA could not accept the Department's instruction to implement denominational admissions, urged the principal to refuse such directives, and called upon him to cooperate in finding a temporary solution so that all children of the junior grades could be admitted in the following term.

By this time, national newspapers had begun to report extensively on the controversy surrounding St. Patrick's. Anticipating media attention, the PTA executive committee strategically submitted an open letter to Minister Burke in the *Irish Independent* on 2 April, criticizing his refusal to address their demands. This letter sparked a lively public debate, with letters from Catholic readers defending the Department and denouncing the parents, and counter-letters from Labour Party local representatives supporting the PTA. The dispute thus transcended a local quarrel and became a national educational issue attracting widespread attention.

Breakdown between the PTA and the School

On 21 June 1974, the annual general meeting of the St. Patrick's National School PTA was held, and a motion of no confidence in the policy of the manager, Rev. Williams was introduced. The resolution stated:

"The PTA can no longer support the present management of the school by the principal of St. Patrick's National School and recommends that he resign his position as principal. The PTA requests that the Archbishop of Dublin, as patron of the school, assume

responsibility for its management and undertake negotiations with the interested parties to establish new administrative arrangements."

The motion passed by a vote of 76 to 11. However, as mentioned earlier, parents and PTAs had no legal authority to intervene in school management, let alone dismiss a principal. Thus, the resolution served only as a symbolic demonstration of opposition toward the Department of Education and the manager. By this stage, the core members of the PTA had clearly recognized the limits of pursuing multi-denominational education reform within the confines of St. Patrick's itself.

A report prepared by Hilary Pratt, the PTA chair, dated the day before the annual meeting, was circulated among the committee members. Intended to justify the upcoming motion of no confidence, the report also conveys a sense of deep emotional solidarity among the PTA leaders. The following extract illustrates this tone:

"It may not be usual to begin a report with words of thanks, but in the case of St. Patrick's, there are so many 'thank-yous' that must be said.

First and foremost, heartfelt thanks go to Miss Armstrong and her colleagues. Throughout an increasingly difficult year, they have continued to maintain the high standard of education for which our school is known.

Next, thanks to all the parents—past and present—and friends who helped the teachers, organized extracurricular activities, or accompanied the children to sports matches and swimming lessons. It is this kind of dedication that truly makes St. Patrick's what it is. Through mutual trust and cooperation between parents and teachers, we have built the kind of school we want for our children.

Lastly, I want to thank the members of the PTA executive. It has been a privilege to serve as chair in a year when such dedicated people held office. Pat Johnston has done a wonderful job as secretary—indeed, the larger her waistline grew, the more efficient her work became! [Pat was pregnant at the time—translator's note.] Bill Hyland has been a most conscientious treasurer; our clear and transparent accounts are entirely due to his efforts.

This year has been a difficult one, demanding more meetings than any of us anticipated. We have faced many setbacks, yet the morale of the committee has remained high, and I am deeply grateful for all the support and advice they have given me.

On a personal note, my own child will be leaving St. Patrick's next year, and so tonight marks the end of my involvement with the PTA. Still, I want to say this: throughout the year we have been thrust into the public eye, often misunderstood and misrepresented. The world is full of cynics who cannot resist taking potshots at anyone who stands up for what they believe is right. But thankfully, there are many others here in Dalkey who believe, as we do, that some things are worth fighting for. The ideal that children of all denominations—and those of no religion—should attend school together is both a moral and a Christian ideal. And if there is any place where such a Christian ideal should begin, it is surely within a church school itself.

There is a saying that nothing is as powerful as an idea whose time has come. I pray that the time has now come—for this school and for this country.

H. Pratt"

This letter vividly captures the conviction and unity that bound the PTA members together. It also signals a decisive turning point: from this moment onward, the parents' movement would move beyond St. Patrick's National School and seek to establish a new educational institution embodying their ideals.

The Dalkey School Project: From Founding to Opening, 1974–1978

The Establishment of the Dalkey School Project

When it became evident that St. Patrick's National School could no longer function as a site for multi-denominational education, a group of parents—centering around the PTA—formed a voluntary organization to establish a new national school in Dalkey based on multi-denominational principles. This association, named the Dalkey School Project (DSP), began convening preparatory meetings and recruiting members on 30 June 1974, and was formally inaugurated on 23 February 1975.

At its inaugural meeting, Michael Johnston was elected as chair, Jim Love as honorary treasurer, and Helen Fahy as honorary secretary. The board also included Hilary

Jenkins, Hilary Pratt, Jim Buckley, Desmond Green, and Áine Hyland as directors. Among these, Love, Jenkins and Green were not parents of St. Patrick's pupils; they joined the Association in support of the project's ideals.

The DSP's founding constitution defined its objectives as follows:

1. The Dalkey School Project (hereafter "the Project") is an association whose fundamental purpose is to promote, wherever local support may exist, the establishment of schools in Ireland that are multi-denominational (offering equal access to children of Catholic, Protestant, and other backgrounds, treating all cultural and social origins equally), co-educational, and democratically managed.

2. For this purpose, the Project shall seek recognition from the Minister for Education as a patron of a national school—specifically, as a patron representing citizens who, according to their conscience and lawful preference, wish their children to be educated together in a new type of school rather than receiving denominational instruction as practiced in single-faith schools. This commitment is not intended as a rejection of the conscientious commitments of those who support denominational schooling; rather, the Project respects those commitments and seeks equal respect for its own conscience-based position.

In subsequent statements, the DSP repeatedly emphasized five guiding principles:

1. Child-centered education
2. Co-education
3. Multi-denominationalism
4. Democratic school management
5. The establishment of schools with eight teachers

Founded on these ideals, the DSP soon extended its support base beyond former St. Patrick's affiliates and Dalkey residents. Membership grew from 200 in March 1975 to 500 by April 1977.

To achieve its goal of founding a new school recognized as a national school, the DSP focused on two main tasks. The first was fundraising for land acquisition and building costs, which applicants were required to cover in part under national school regulations. The organization sought contributions both from individuals and through loans from

corporations and banks. Although corporate support was not forthcoming, personal donations reached £3,000 by April 1977 and £4,600 by October of the same year.

The second task was to demonstrate public demand for a multi-denominational school in Dalkey, thereby persuading the Department of Education of the necessity of such a school. To that end, the DSP conducted a survey beginning in October 1975 to assess community attitudes. Questionnaires were distributed and collected from households within a 1.25-mile radius of Dalkey Town Hall. Preliminary results were published in December, followed by a full report in June 1976.

The findings were striking: 75% of respondents supported multi-denominational education, 81.5% favored co-education, and 75.6% endorsed democratic school management. The survey also revealed a shortage of national schools accessible from certain areas within Dalkey. On this empirical basis, the DSP countered the Department of Education's claim that the existing schools sufficiently met local needs, arguing that a new school was both necessary and justified.

Negative Campaigns

From its inception, however, the DSP faced persistent opposition from Catholic authorities. In February 1975, the Bishop of Down and Connor publicly denounced the DSP as "an attack on the identity of Catholic schools." The following month, an anonymous "group of Catholic parents" published a pamphlet provocatively titled *"Have the Snakes Come Back"* timed to coincide with St. Patrick's Day (17 March). Referring to the legend of St. Patrick driving snakes out of Ireland, the pamphlet depicted the DSP as a new "snake" threatening the Irish nation.

The DSP was lumped together with "Nazism, Marxism, secular humanism, and UNESCO," portrayed as a subversive, anti-Catholic force. The pamphlet's address matched those of far-right Catholic organizations such as the Knights of St. Columbanus and the Irish Family League, indicating that these groups were the real actors behind the campaign.

In reality, the DSP did not directly attack the denominational structure of Irish education nor call for a total reform of church control. Yet its five principles could

easily be read as the inverse of Catholic educational ideology, and the presence of many liberal Catholic supporters—including the secretary Helen Fahy —made it particularly unsettling to conservative circles. To far-right groups, the DSP symbolized the liberalization of Irish society and the potential erosion of traditional religious values. Their fear that it could trigger fundamental change in public education was not entirely baseless, even if their rhetoric was extreme.

At the level of realpolitik, the DSP also encountered resistance. The Minister for Education at the time, Richard Burke, who had already rejected the St. Patrick's PTA's earlier petitions, continued to refuse all requests from the DSP. Speaking at the Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, on 27 September 1975, Burke dismissed the movement for "multi-denominational education" as resting on the false assumption that denominational schooling caused social division.

He declared:

"Those who advocate so-called multi-denominational education in primary schools claim that by teaching children in accordance with the faith of their families, teachers are sowing the seeds of intolerance and nurturing prejudice. This is nothing less than a libel—utterly arrant nonsense!"

Employing a classic strawman argument, Burke misrepresented and emotionally rejected the DSP's position. He insisted that since pupils could legally withdraw from religious instruction under the *conscience clause* of national school regulations, the existing system was already open to all denominations. This, however, was a distortion. The DSP was not asserting a private parental right but seeking a public institution where children of all faiths—or none—could learn together as equals. Burke's rhetorical strategy deliberately privatized and trivialized the issue, framing it as unnecessary because "freedom of conscience" was already protected. Throughout his tenure, he ignored all DSP petitions and continued to criticize the principle of multi-denominational education.

Political Change and the Opening of the Temporary School

By late 1976, however, the political climate began to shift. When Patrick Hillery became President on 9 November 1976, a cabinet reshuffle followed, and Peter Barry replaced Burke as Minister for Education. Seizing the opportunity, the DSP renewed its approach to the Department and received a more positive response.

Encouraged, the DSP board set out a plan to open a school by September 1977, seeking temporary recognition from the Department and beginning to recruit prospective pupils. With 200 new members and 128 registered applicants, the DSP listed 135 prospective students for the first intake.

Yet early in 1977, communication from the Ministry abruptly ceased. Officials replied vaguely that the matter was "under consideration at the highest level." Realizing that a 1977 opening was impossible, the DSP convened a special general meeting on 16 April 1977 to inform parents and supporters.

The political landscape then changed again. Following the general election of 5 June 1977, the Fianna Fáil party won and formed a new government under Jack Lynch, appointing John Wilson as Minister for Education. On 17 August 1977, Wilson met with Michael Johnston and Desmond Green, assuring them that Fianna Fáil supported multi-denominational schools and that the DSP would receive official recognition by June 1978.

With government approval now foreseeable, the DSP shifted to practical preparations—securing premises and funding. Two subcommittees were established to manage land and finance. At a meeting with education officials in September 1977, it was agreed that the government would cover up to 50 percent of the cost for temporary premises. The Department also required a religious education policy statement, consistent with Regulation 68 and the national curriculum. The DSP drafted such a statement, distinguishing between general moral/religious education and specific denominational instruction, the latter to be provided voluntarily outside regular hours.

At the end of February 1978, the Department granted formal recognition. Yet major practical obstacles remained, especially financial. While £4,600 had been raised through donations, the purchase of the intended temporary premises—a house at 14 Vesey Place, Dún Laoghaire—required £25,000. The shortfall was covered personally by eight core families, including the Johnstons, Fahys, and Hylands.

Finally, on 1 September 1978, the Dalkey School Project National School opened its doors at Vesey Place. Three years and four months had passed since the DSP's formal establishment.

From DSP to *Educate Together*: 1987 Onwards

The Dalkey School Project National School, established in 1978, served as the prototype for a new kind of national school within the Irish public education system—one that was multi-denominational, co-educational, and democratically managed. Encouraged by its success, similar initiatives soon emerged in other regions, such as Dublin, Galway, Limerick, and Cork, often with direct support or inspiration from DSP members.

However, in the early stages, each new school was operated independently, under the name of its own local "school project." At that time, the Department of Education refused to allow the Dalkey School Project to act as patron of any other school. Since the patronage system in Ireland requires every national school to have a recognized patron—whether an individual, a religious institution, or a corporate body—each local project had to negotiate separately with the Department of Education to obtain such recognition. This process proved cumbersome and inconsistent, as the Department assessed each application case by case, and schools lacked a unified representative organization.

To resolve this difficulty, delegates from the various school projects convened a national conference in April 1984. After several years of discussion, they agreed to establish a new corporate body that would serve as the common patron for all multi-denominational national schools. In 1986, this organization was formally incorporated as Educate Together Ltd., and began operation in January 1987.

Since then, *Educate Together* (ET) has acted as both a representative organization for the multi-denominational school movement and a patron body authorized to establish and manage national schools under Irish law. Its constitution defines its purpose as:

"To advance education in Ireland through the establishment and support of schools that are co-educational, child-centered, democratically run, and multi-denominational, providing equality of access and esteem to children of all social, cultural, and religious backgrounds."

In practical terms, ET schools replaced religious instruction with an ethical education curriculum titled *Learn Together*, consisting of four strands:

1. Moral and Spiritual Development,
2. Equality and Justice,
3. Belief Systems, and
4. Ethics and the Environment.

This curriculum aims to help children develop a reflective understanding of moral values and human diversity, without promoting or privileging any specific faith. Pupils who wish to receive denominational religious education are offered opportunities outside regular school hours, using school facilities but organized independently by parents and religious groups.

The movement grew rapidly. By 1998, there were 16 ET schools; by 2011, 58; and by 2021, 115, enrolling about 40,000 pupils nationwide. ET has also extended its activities beyond the primary level, opening the first Educate Together Secondary School in 2014.

In the 2000s, amid rising immigration and diversification of Irish society, ET schools became increasingly attractive to both native Irish families seeking secular education and immigrant families seeking inclusive environments. The state, facing pressure from the UN Human Rights Committee and the Equality Authority, began to acknowledge the need to diversify school patronage. In 2011, the government initiated the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector, recommending the transfer of some Catholic schools to multi-denominational patronage—a small number of which were subsequently re-assigned to ET.

Today, *Educate Together* stands as a key actor in Ireland's evolving educational landscape. Although it still represents a minority—only 3 percent of national schools—its presence challenges the long-standing dominance of denominational schooling. The organization's democratic structure and secular ethos have positioned it at the forefront of debates on equality, inclusion, and citizenship in Irish education.

Consideration — The Dalkey School Project as Emergent Inclusion?

The Significance of the DSP in the History of Irish Education

So far, we have traced in outline the development of the Dalkey School Project (DSP) and Educate Together (ET) from their early activities to the present. In this section, I would like to consider their historical significance. How can the DSP be understood when positioned within the broader history of Irish education?

The Irish National School system, established in 1831, preceded other regions of Britain in creating a centralized system of educational administration. By distinguishing strictly between secular and religious instruction through state intervention, it aimed to realize the liberal ideal of a common school accessible to both Protestant and Catholic denominations. In contemporary terms, the Irish system could even be described as more "modern" and "secular" than public education systems in other parts of Britain. However, from the mid-nineteenth century onward, the actual operation of the National School system diverged sharply from the ideals originally proclaimed.

In particular, with the introduction of a special category of national schools—"privately managed public schools," where the founders bore 100% of building costs in exchange for a significant relaxation of restrictions on religious instruction—the system underwent a major transformation. The original national schools, conceived as mixed Protestant–Catholic institutions, were gradually replaced, despite a conscience clause, by de facto denominational schools. By the late nineteenth century, Irish public education had been effectively "re-denominationalized."

This denominationalized structure of public education was then carried over unchanged into the period after Irish independence. Successive Irish governments accepted and maintained the existing system, effectively legitimizing the church's control over public education. Moreover, the government's acceptance of ecclesiastical control was not revised but rather clarified and strengthened as Ireland left the British Commonwealth and became a republic.

For example, the 1954 report of the Council of Education on primary education explicitly stated that the non-denominational principle of the national education system had been "distasteful to the Irish people," but that "as a result of past struggles, our primary schools today are essentially religious and denominational." Even though state funds were used for their operation and maintenance, "the primary schools are, for the most part, actual parish schools run for a particular denomination." Therefore, "it is not the government's business to make any recommendations regarding religious instruction or education. Matters such as the time allocated to religious teaching,

inspection of lessons, and evaluation are the exclusive concern of the religious denomination managing the school."

In this continuity lay the 1965 *Rules for National Schools*, particularly Rule 68, which formally codified the denominational character of national schools. Both ideologically—by positioning Catholicism as the core of post-independence national identity—and fiscally—by relying on church personnel and resources to reduce education expenditure—the state had rational grounds for permitting and promoting church control over public education until the 1970s.

From this perspective, the DSP can first be understood as a movement that, at least partially, broke through the denominational structure that had characterized Irish public education for over a century since the nineteenth century. Moreover, the ripple effects of this movement extended far beyond the locality of Dalkey. The establishment and recognition of a new national school by the DSP awakened latent demand for multi-denominational and secular education in other regions, and the DSP itself served as a catalyst connecting these local educational movements.

The growing momentum of these initiatives eventually gave rise to a national organization encompassing multi-denominational schools throughout Ireland, which developed into a secular sector comprising 3 percent of the entire primary education system. The movement that began in 1978 with the founding of a single school by local residents thus triggered a structural transformation of the entire public education system—a re-secularization that countered its earlier re-denominationalization.

Conditions Supporting the Success of the DSP

Looking back historically, it becomes clear that the success of the Dalkey School Project (DSP) was supported by several socio-historical conditions.
First among these were regional and class-based advantages—or biases. In the Dublin metropolitan area of the 1970s, there was, at least partially, the emergence of a growing middle class and a trend among professionals to move into suburban residential areas. Dalkey, which became one of these newly developed suburban communities, was inhabited by relatively affluent residents who, including many Catholics, had become politically and religiously liberal.

These distinctive socio-economic conditions, unique to Dalkey, were crucial to the DSP's early activities, and the movement's leaders themselves clearly recognized the locality's special character. For example, the DSP's public opinion survey in Dalkey revealed that a large majority of residents supported multi-denominational education. Yet, the very act of conducting such a survey was based on the prior expectation that liberals would form the majority.

Furthermore, the survey employed advanced social research methods and statistical analysis. This was made possible because the DSP board included individuals such as Spearman and Green, who possessed expertise in mathematics and statistics. But not only Spearman and Green—the DSP's executive committee as a whole represented a highly valuable reservoir of *human resources* for advancing the movement.

Its members included media professionals, former or current civil servants and bureaucrats, university lecturers, intellectual professionals, and experienced civic activists. Notably, the DSP provided an arena of activity for women who, despite their high education and outstanding ability, had lost their professional careers as civil servants due to the marriage bar. While the public "front men" of the movement were figures such as Michael Johnston and Desmond Green, women like Helen Fahy and Áine Hyland, who served as secretary and administrator, were former officials of the Department of Education. Drawing upon the practical knowledge and administrative skills they had acquired through their careers, they played a vital role in sustaining the movement.

However, the DSP's success was not supported by the academic qualifications and expertise of its board members alone. As a voluntary association without the backing of any specific corporation or political party, the DSP had to cope simultaneously with the political tension of dealing with a government that stubbornly refused to grant approval for the school's establishment, and with right-wing Catholic groups conducting negative campaigns, while also managing the practical and material requirements of securing a school site, building, and teachers.

To sustain such a movement with vitality and enthusiasm, egalitarian and fraternal solidarity among members was indispensable. This solidarity was expressed not only in serious actions such as petitions, signature drives, public meetings, and media demonstrations, but also through informal and recreational activities—such as running stalls at the Dalkey Town Hall Saturday market. The *Newsletter* published by the DSP

for its members frequently included announcements and calls for participation in these markets.

“Notice of the Home Produce Market”

After a brief suspension during the summer, the DSP Home Produce Market will resume. Every Saturday from 10:30 a.m. to noon, various home-made goods will be on sale in the market in front of Dalkey Town Hall. If you feel a little hungry while shopping, freshly made waffles, hot pancakes, scones, coffee, and soft drinks will also be available.

...If you are able to help on the day, gather other helpers, or assist more generally, please contact Helen Fahy. Alternatively, just come directly to the venue on Saturday morning. So far, sales at this market have brought in over £1,400 for the project’s account. This is a wonderful achievement in itself, but more importantly, it represents a major step toward our real goal of opening our first school. However, this amount is still only a small fraction of what will be needed to purchase land and construct the school. Your continued support for the Home Produce Market—and for all DSP activities—will be a great help in realizing the aims of the project.”

Many women and “housewives” supported the movement both personally and financially by bringing their home-made cakes, clothes, or accessories to the market for sale and donating the proceeds. Such activities also played an important role in fostering emotional bonds among female members within the organization.

As mentioned above, women such as Helen Fahy and Áine Hyland not only fulfilled core administrative functions within the DSP, utilizing their expertise as former education officials, but also participated as “housewives” who sold handcrafts at the market, baked waffles, and chatted over coffee with their fellow members. From one perspective, this may suggest that a certain gendered division of roles operated even within the liberal, coeducational DSP organization. Yet, from another viewpoint, it can be seen that solidarity transcending class and professional background was formed—

particularly among women—and that this solidarity underpinned and strengthened the cohesion of the DSP as an organization.

The DSP as Emergent Inclusion

As detailed in Section 2, the prehistory of the DSP lay in a parents' movement centered on the Parent–Teacher Association (PTA) of St. Patrick's National School. At that stage—though the leaders were aware of the public significance of their actions beyond private interest—the movement largely amounted to an aggregation of parents' private needs for a better educational environment for their own children.

However, the character of the movement fundamentally changed when the parents abandoned the attempt to reform St. Patrick's from within and decided instead to establish a new, multi-denominational school. For those involved, the DSP was a project with no clear prospect of when—or even whether—they would ever be able to open their own school, and there was no guarantee that they would be able to enroll their own children there.

In reality, the DSP succeeded in obtaining approval and opening its school within just three years and four months of its founding—a relatively short period. Yet this success was due to external, contingent factors such as political change, and can be regarded as a fortunate coincidence rather than an inevitable outcome. For many participants, it was quite possible that by the time the school opened, their own children would already have outgrown primary-school age.

In other words, without a sense of commitment to public or common good that transcended private parental needs, such sustained activity would not have been possible. The sense of publicness or common purpose that sustained the DSP was not equivalent to the modest forms of "participatory democracy" often celebrated in educational discourse—such as "creating our own school" or "parental participation in school management." Although these appeared similar, they were, in essence, quite different.

What the DSP members sought was a universal aspiration that could not be reduced to private concern or local egoism: *"We want children to sit together regardless of denomination"* and *"We want such a school to exist in our society."* From the very beginning, this aspiration was encapsulated in the simple phrase *Educate Together*,

which later became the name of the national organization promoting multi-denominational schools.

As already seen, far-right Catholic forces went so far as to propagate bizarre conspiracy theories in order to label the DSP as an anti-Catholic movement. Even less extreme actors, such as Minister for Education Richard Burke, distorted the DSP's claims and reduced them to the level of special or private parental needs.

According to this view, such private needs had no place in public education. Since, under existing regulations, the right not to receive religious instruction was already guaranteed through the option of "withdrawal from religion class," the argument went, such needs were already satisfied. Therefore, the movement for multi-denominational schools was dismissed as a misguided demand by a minority seeking to impose its private preferences on the public system.

The DSP, however, persistently insisted that its school be recognized as a national school—that is, that its claims be acknowledged as possessing institutional publicness. This strategy contained a certain ambivalence. From a purely institutional point of view, the recognition of a DSP national school did not entail a total overhaul or abolition of the denominational patronage system or of the various laws and regulations defining the sectarian nature of national schools.

At least at the stage of its initial success, the DSP's movement was not radically transformative of the fundamental structures or principles of Irish primary education. The government tolerated the establishment and recognition of the DSP school precisely because it could be accommodated within the extension or flexible interpretation of existing regulations, without requiring comprehensive reform. In this sense, the DSP's movement was moderate and could be seen as fitting within a conservative framework.

Yet, beneath this conservative appearance lay a radical potential—because the DSP publicly appeared as a new actor articulating educational demands that had never before been recognized within the existing system. The activists of the DSP were not single-mindedly devoted only to opening their own school while ignoring broader structural issues. Indeed, Article 1 of the DSP's constitution explicitly stated that the organization's purpose was "to encourage and assist, wherever local support for such schools may be forthcoming, all those in Ireland who seek to establish schools which

are multi-denominational, co-educational, and democratically run, giving priority to these principles."

From its inception, therefore, the DSP anticipated and intended that similar movements would follow, and that it would help and cooperate with them to expand the movement. In practice, even while preparing for the opening of its own school, the DSP quickly established links with and supported multi-denominational school initiatives in other areas.

From these activities, we can discern a strategic subtlety: while appearing to act modestly within the system, the DSP effectively created a small "ant's hole" in the structure—one that gradually widened over time. Although the change seemed minor at first, the cumulative achievements over the years have produced a significant transformation. Today, the activities and legacy of the DSP have generated cracks in the existing denominational order of Irish public education, opening possibilities for its reconfiguration.

It is here, perhaps, that we can discern the *subject* and *practice* of "emergent inclusion" as conceptualized by Kuraishi.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to interpret the practice of the Dalkey School Project (DSP) as a case of "emergent inclusion." Naturally, there may be many possible objections to such an interpretation. What Kuraishi envisages by the concept of emergent inclusion is a more radical type of movement—driven by the urgent needs of minorities in more marginalized positions, often involving direct action that may go beyond legitimate procedures.

By contrast, the DSP was unmistakably a liberal and "well-mannered" movement led by members of the middle class. From Kuraishi's perspective, which emphasizes the tension and opposition between emergent inclusion and the practices of *experts* and *professionals*, the DSP might appear excessively elite-driven and insufficiently aligned with the self-liberation of minorities—the very condition that defines emergent inclusion.

Kuraishi's argument is profoundly illuminating. He contends that true inclusion does not consist in assimilation into existing orders but in their *estrangement*; not in acting upon others, but in the *self-recreation* of marginalized subjects; and that it is this emergence of new identities into the public sphere that constitutes genuinely radical inclusion. I regard his view as a major breakthrough in debates concerning inclusion and exclusion.

However, acknowledging its brilliance, I would nevertheless like to raise a question: might Kuraishi's conceptualization of emergent inclusion be somewhat too stringent? In particular, his treatment of the role of experts and professional intervention in processes of inclusion seems rather unsympathetic. According to Kuraishi, while the concentric-circle model of inclusion presupposes a harmonious relationship with experts and professionals, emergent inclusion is defined precisely by its independence from professional reliance.

He writes that "in processes of inclusion, the wishes of those concerned—their own sense of what they desire and how they wish to live—must be foundational; the voice of experts must never take precedence over that of the participants themselves. This is the standpoint of emergent inclusion."

And yet, perhaps, in the field of education especially, it is impossible to imagine an inclusive process entirely free from elements of paternalism. Can we really assume that "the intentions of those concerned" exist prior to, and independent of, the practices and support of professionals and practitioners? Might it not be possible to locate within the concept of emergent inclusion a legitimate and constructive role for expertise and professional knowledge?

The case of the DSP suggests that, at least in the domain of education, emergent inclusion and professional knowledge need not be wholly opposed but may in fact be interconnected. The DSP's leading members were, without exception, highly educated middle-class professionals with distinguished careers. They could hardly be described as ordinary citizens, still less as social minorities. Yet it was precisely the skills, knowledge, and experience grounded in their education and professional backgrounds that enabled the movement to transcend the mere aggregation of private parental needs, to shake off the labels of "anti-establishment" or "anti-Catholic minority movement," and to give public visibility and legitimacy to a new rights-bearing subject characterized by the demand to *Educate Together*.

Expertise and professional skill, far from being antithetical to emergent inclusion, may sometimes function as catalysts that help to *name* and *construct* previously unrecognized needs and subjects.

In other words, there remains ample room to discuss the conditions under which emergent inclusion becomes possible. This is also to explore how emergent inclusion—beyond sporadic and short-term transformations of "identity"—can lead to planned and sustained transformation of institutions.

It is my hope that more scholars will take up this compelling concept of emergent inclusion, examining its potential not only theoretically but also institutionally and practically, and that the debate on inclusion and exclusion will deepen further. I would like this historical study to serve, however modestly, as a contribution to that ongoing inquiry.

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