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The Multi-Denominational experience in the Irish national schoo system.

This paper will describe and analyse the position of multi-denominationa education in the Irish national school system since its foundation in 1831 The paper is in three sections - the first section gives an overview of the evolution of the system: the second section provides a factual description of the re-emergence of multi-denominational schools in the Republic of Ireland during the past 15 years: the third section raises a number of issues and challenges which face the multi-denominational sector.

Section 1. An overview of the evolution of the system.

When the national school system was set up in 1831, its main object "was to unite in one system children of different creeds". The National Board was "to look with peculiar favour" on applications for aid for schools jointly managed by Roman Catholics and Protestants. While many of the schools which were taken into connection with the Board in the early years were jointly managed, the main Christian Churches put pressure on the government to allow aid to be given to schools under the management of individual Churches.[1] This pressure was so effective that by the mid nineteenth century, only 4% of national schools were under mixed management.[2]

In terms of the curriculum, the main principle was that schools should offer "combined moral and literary instruction and separate religious instruction"[3]. While the Board would decide the curriculum for moral and literary instruction, the Patron of each school would determine the form and content of religious instruction in the schools under his patronage. The rules for national schools to the present day set down that "no pupil shall receive or be present at any religious instruction of which his parents or guardians do not approve"[4] and also "that the periods of formal religious instruction shall be fixed so as to facilitate the withdrawal of (such) pupils".[5]

The principle of mixed education remained the keystone of the national school system from 1831 to 1965. The rules of the National Board and subsequently of the Dept. of Education up to 1965 opened with the statement that "the system of National Education affords combined secular and separate religious instruction to children of all religions, and no attempt is made to interfere with the religious tenets of any pupils".[6] The official lease of vested schools built in the period up to 1965 contained a similar statement: "..... the object of the system of national education is to afford *Combined* literary and moral, and *Separate* Religious Instruction, to Children of all persuasions, as far as possible, in the same school, upon the fundamental principle that no attempt shall be made to interfere with the peculiar religious tenets of any description of Christian pupils".[7]

From the mid nineteenth century on, the Roman Catholic hierarchy made a number of efforts to convince the government to recognise that the majority of national schools were denominational and to change the national school rules to take account of this reality. Examples of such efforts included representations to the Powis Commission in 1870 - this commission recommended to the government that amendments be made to the rules in regard to denominational schools in areas where there was more than one school.[8] Gladstone, who was Prime Minister at the time, initially considered accepting this recommendation but he was prevailed upon by his advisers not to do so.[9] In the 1890s, after the introduction of legislation relating to compulsory education, the Catholic hierarchy again made strong representations to the government to change the rules to take account of the de facto denominational situation. Initially the government seemed willing to introduce some changes[10] and the rules were redrafted by the Office of National Education; but when the revised rules were submitted to Chief Secretary Morley, he felt that they had gone too far in giving recognition to the denominational character of national schools and he refused to sanction the revised rules. [11] One of the main difficulties faced by government advisers at that time was that of devising a formula which would give de jure recognition to denominational schools while at the same time ensuring that children who did not belong to one of the main Christian Churches would not be discriminated against. During both periods, the non-Conformists were particularly vocal in objecting to any change in the National School Rules.[12]

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the Irish system of national education was fundamentally different to the systems in other parts of the United Kingdom. In England and Scotland "parallel" systems had evolved, i.e. denominational schools existed side by side with local authority controlled schools.[13] This development was also mirrored in other Western European countries. In Ireland provision was never made for a separate system of primary schools controlled by the local authority, largely because it had been found by the Powis Commission in 1870 that voluntary effort had adequately met the demand for elementary education in this country. As a result, by the mid twentieth century, the system of national education in the Republic of Ireland was one which was de jure undenominational, but de facto denominational in 97% of cases.[14]

When the Irish Free State was set up in 1921, no major changes were made in the administrative system of national education. Radical curricular reform was introduced in 1922, based on the recommendations of the First National Programme Conference.[15] In 1925, the government set up a committee under the chairmanship of Rev. J. McKenna, S.J. to review the curriculum and the report of this committee (known as the Second National Programme Conference), which was published in 1926, included the following statement:[16]

> Of all the parts of the school curriculum Religious Instruction is by far the most important, as its subject matter, God's honour and service, includes the proper use of all man's faculties, and affords the most powerful inducements to their proper use. We assume therefore that Religious Instruction is a fundamental part of the school course. Though the time allotted to it as a specific subject is necessarily short, a religious spirit should inform and vivify the whole work of the school. The teacher - while careful in the presence of children of different religious beliefs, not to touch on matters of controversy, - should constantly inculcate, in connection with secular subjects, the practice of charity, justice, truth, purity, patience, temperance, obedience to lawful authority, and all the other moral virtues. In this way, he will fulfil the primary duty of an educator, the moulding to perfect form of his pupils' character, habituating them to observe, in their relations with God and with their neighbour, the laws which God, both directly through the dictates of natural reason and through Revelation, and indirectly through the ordinance of lawful authority, imposes on mankind.
>
> As however, the prescribing of the subject-matter of Religious Instruction, the examination of it, and the supervision of its teaching are outside the competence of the Department of Education, no syllabuses of it are set forth."

The Rules for National Schools were amended to include an abridged version of this statement. While this statement highlighted the importance of Religious Instruction in National Schools, there was no change in the "fundamental principle" of the national school system.

In 1953, the Council of Education which had been set up three years earlier, issued its report on the function and curriculum of primary schools and drew attention to what it regarded as an anomaly in the situation in regard to the control and management of national schools. The report pointed out that the theoretical object of the national school system "is at variance with the principles of all religious denominations and with the realities of the primary schools and consequently that it needs restatement". It was suggested that "it be amended in accordance with Article 44.2.4. of the Constitution and that the fullness of denominational education may be legally sanctioned in those schools ***which are attended exclusively by children of the same religious faith"*** [17](author's italics)

When the Rules were eventually revised by the Minister for Education in 1965, no cognisance was taken of the fact that not all national schools were attended exclusively by children of the same denomination. Neither was there any provision made for parents who might not wish their children to attend denominational schools, although Article 42.4. which recognised "the rights of parents, especially in the matter of religious and moral formation' was quoted. In the preface to the new Rules (1965 edition), the following statement was made:[18]

> "In pursuance of the provisions of these Articles (Articles 42 and 44.2.4.) the State provides for free primary education for children in national schools and gives explicit recognition to the denominational character of these schools".

It is difficult to understand how articles 42 and 44.2.4 can be construed in this way. It is one thing to recognise that denominational schools are an acceptable element in the system and to guarantee that all schools will

receive equal treatment - it is quite a different thing to say that all schools are denominational and to enshrine such a statement in the official Rules for National Schools.

The 1965 edition of the rules also amended Rule 68 - the rule relating to Religious Instruction. The paragraph from the 1926 report was included - with small but significant amendments. Teachers were no longer required to be "careful in the presence of children of different religious beliefs not to touch on matters of controversy".[19] The omission of this phrase was clearly not an oversight. It would be interesting to know on what basis a decision was taken to delete this clause, which for nearly half a century had protected the rights of small minorities in the national school system.

The publication of the new curriculum in 1971 added a further complication to the situation.[20] The new curriculum, which was widely welcomed for its many innovations, encouraged the integration of subjects, both religious and "secular" subjects. In the introduction to Part 1 of the Teachers' Handbook, it was stated that the curriculum should be seen "more as an integral whole rather than as a logical structure containing conveniently differentiated parts." The handbook was specific that this integration should embrace all aspects of the curriculum:[21]

> The decision to construct an integrated curriculum..... is based on the following theses: ..... that the separation of religious and secular instruction into differentiated subject compartments serves only to throw the whole educational function out of focus..... The integration of the curriculum may be seen ... in the religious and civic spirit which animates all its parts.

Taken together, the rules of 1965 and the provisions of the 1971 curriculum created a new situation. The state now formally recognised the denominational character of the national school system and made no provision for, nor even adverted to the rights of those children whose parents did not wish them to attend exclusively denominational schools. It had removed the requirement for teachers to be sensitive to the religious beliefs of "those of different religious persuasions". According to the curriculum guidelines, all schools were expected to offer an integrated curriculum where religious and secular instruction would be integrated. While the rule under which parents were allowed to opt their children out of religious instruction still remained, the rule became effectively inoperable since religious and secular instruction would now be integrated. Even if religious instruction were separately timetabled, it could be assumed that a specifically denominational ethos would "permeate the school day."

The revision of the rules in 1965 went much farther than anything that had been contemplated in the 19th century and indeed farther than anything that the Catholic Church had sought to achieve in either the 19th or 20th centuries. The proposed revisions in the 1870s and the 1890s would have recognised the denominational character of a school in an area where there was choice. It was one thing for the State to accept the validity

of the request of Catholic schools for formal recognition of the denominational character of their schools; it was an entirely different thing, in conceding to this demand, to ignore the consequences for those citizens who regarded denominational education as being "in violation of their conscience and lawful preference".[22]

Section 2: The experience in Dalkey, 1974 - 1988.

There was a growing interest in education in Ireland in the 1960s and early 70s. In 1967 free secondary education had been introduced and there was considerable public debate about educational issues generally in the late 60s and early 70s. The weekly newspaper "The Education Times" was published between 1973 and 1975 and acted as a catalyst for educational debate. Vatican II had encouraged involvement by the Catholic laity in what had traditionally been a clerically dominated Church. Some Catholics argued that "a fairly strong case can be made from the reading of the documents of Vatican II for the introduction of integrated schools....".[23] The troubles in Northern Ireland had erupted afresh and after 1969 many Irish people were anxious to break down barriers between Protestant and Catholic on the island of Ireland.

In some areas of Dublin, growing numbers of families from a Catholic tradition began to send their children to local Church of Ireland schools, perhaps because they felt that the ethos of such schools was less monolithic than that of Catholic schools. One such area was the village of Dalkey in south Co. Dublin. The local Church of Ireland school, St. Patrick's, had been a national school since the early 1890s. It had been a one-teacher school for over 60 years.[24] In the 1960s it became increasingly popular and the enrolment began to increase. By 1974 it was a five teacher school with over 180 pupils on rolls - about 1/3rd of whom were C of I , 1/3rd other Protestant and 1/3rd Catholic.[25] Parents and teachers would have liked the school to continue to grow to an eight teacher school (one teacher for each year of the national school cycle). They would also have liked the school Patron (the C. of I. Archbishop of Dublin) to endorse the de facto multi-denominational nature of the school and to introduce a more democratic management structure. However, the school manager (the local C. of I rector) and the Select Vestry of the parish were unwilling to allow the school develop to an 8 teacher school. Following discussions with the Dept. the manager was "directed" by the Dept. to restrict enrolment to the existing capacity of the school. A letter from the Dept. dated 8 March 1974, included the following paragraph:[26]

> "As is stated in the Preface to the Rules for National Schools under the Dept. of Education, the State gives explicit recognition to the denominational character of national schools. In accordance with this principle, it would be expected that priority in enrolment would be given first to children of Church of Ireland parents living within the school district (which is not co-terminous with the Parish of Dalkey); second, to children of other Protestant families and thereafter - to the extent to which space might be available - other children; and it is suggested that acceptance of children for enrolment should, in future be decided on that basis".

This letter set on record unambiguously the enrolment implications of the 1965 Rules for National Schools. It also had other implications. If St. Patrick's National School was unable to accept "other children" and if the parents of these children did not wish them to attend the local Catholic school, the state saw no reason to make provision for them within the national school system.

During the school-year 1974-75, the parent-teacher association of the school had discussions with the Patron with a view to persuading the Church of Ireland authorities to allow the multi-denominational experiment in Dalkey to continue. It initially appeared that such a development might be feasible when the Church of Ireland synod in 1974 indicated that it would welcome "agreed experiments towards encouraging integration in education on the understanding that denominational interests be respected".[27] However, it soon became clear that the Patron did not envisage such an experiment in Dalkey and a number of parents decided that a different approach should be adopted.

The Dalkey School Project was set up in 1975 to focus the commitment of those who wanted the option of schools within the national school system, which would be multi-denominational, co-educational and under a democratic management structure, and which would also have a child-centred approach to education, as indicated in the recently introduced new Primary Curriculum (1971). The membership of the new Project included some parents who had been involved in St. Patrick's N.S. as well as parents and others who had not. The strategy of the new organisation was to work to get one school into the system first, rather than argue principle at national level for many years to come.[28] The task confronting the Project was formidable. The national school system had been undisturbed for over 100 years. There was an established equilibrium between the Department of Education, the Churches and the I.N.T.O. There was a price for the Churches' control of education; they provided sites for schools and they paid the local contribution towards the capital and running costs of their schools. The State paid the salaries of the teaching staff, the larger share of the capital costs and theoretically, the bulk of the running costs - although in practice inflation has swung the actual paymnent of running costs heavily on to the side of local rather than state payments in recent years. The Dalkey School Project realised that the entry fee for any new partner into the network would be high and that it would have to fund-raise on a very large scale if it was to succeed in setting up a school. The Dalkey School Project constituted itself first as an Association and later as a Company Limited by guarantee. It was decided early on to seek recognition as a Patron of national schools and to attempt to set up a national school within the existing rules of the Dept. of Education.

At around the same time, a group of parents in another suburb of Dublin were also interestd in setting up a multi-denominational school. A

residents' association in a new housing development - the Marley Grange and Highfield Residents' Association in Rathfarnham - had campaigned for the setting up of a national school under the combined patronage of the association and the two main Churches (R.C. and C of I). It had carried out a survey of the area and found that a majority of householders would prefer their children to be educated in a multi or inter-denominational school rather than in a denominational school.[29] In their case, there was no school yet built in the area. That Association entered into discussions with the authorities of both Churches and for some time they believed that their quest for a school under combined patronage would be sucessful. However, this initiative eventually failed because the R.C. Church decided unilaterally and without consulting the Residents' Association to proceed with building a Catholic school. It seemed clear that if a multi-denominational school was to open, the approach being followed by the Dalkey School Project whereby the Project would be its own patron was the approach most likely to succeed.

Meanwhile, political support for the option of multi-denominational education within the national school system began to grow. The leader of the Fianna Fáil party, Jack Lynch, in a newspaper interview in 1975 had expressed support for a multi-denominational school on a pilot basis and in January 1977, he indicated that "he sincerely believed we must have some modicum of inter-denominational education".[30] The Labour Party had consistently supported the campaign and individual Fine Gael T.Ds and local Councillors had also indicated support, although Richard Burke, who was Minister for Education at the time was hostile to the movement.[31] During the years 1975 to 1978 the Dalkey School Project was involved in protracted correspondence with the political parties and with the Dept. of Education administrators while simultaneously building up its membership, establishing the extent of local support for a school,[32] organising fund-raising activities and searching for suitable premises in which to open a school.

In June 1977, a general election was held. Before the election, Fianna Fáil had indicated that if they were returned to power, they would support the setting up of a multi-denominational school in Dalkey. When Fianna Fáil came to power in July with John Wilson as Minister for Education, they delivered on their pre-election promise and the following month the Minister instructed the Department officials to enter into discussions with the Dalkey School Project with a view to enabling them to set up a school. Eventually in September 1978 the D.S.P. national school was opened - in temporary premises in Dun Laoghaire. There was considerable difficulty in procuring suitable premises (the building in which the school started was actually bought for the purpose by Project supporters since no other building could be secured) and in obtaining planning permission from the local authority to use the building as a school.[33] Some administrators at both local and central levels seemed to have difficulty in accepting that a multi-denominational school could be a valid part of the national school system. This difficulty was articulated by a former secretary of the Dept.

of Education, T. O Raifeartaigh, in his keynote address to the E.S.A.I. conference in 1979[34] and is also evident in a recent article in Magill magazine by Dominic O Laoghaire, who was Secretary of the Dept. of Education at the time of the opening of the D.S.P. national school, where he referred to the opening of the Dalkey School Project and other multi-denominational schools as a "concession".[35] However, many departmental and local authority officials were exceptionally helpful to the project in its initial stages and helped its passage through the complex bureaucratic web which had been woven throughout the century and a half of the national school system.

The D.S.P. national school functioned in temporary premises for six years, while negotiations and planning for a new permanent purpose-built school continued. During this time the school grew from 80 pupils to more than 300 pupils, from three teachers to ten. Places at the school have always been at a premium and selection is on a first come first served basis. At the end of the period in temporary premises the school was on four separate campuses - apart from the original building, classrooms were made available by the local Presbyterian Church, the Church of Ireland and the Dun Laoghaire V.E.C. When the new building was opened in 1984 by Minister for Education Gemma Hussey, all the political parties were represented, including former Taoiseach Jack Lynch.

The task of starting the D.S.P. national school had not been easy. There had not been a great deal of overt opposition to the movement, but it is difficult to say that it was not there. On occasions, the opposition surfaced, as in 1978 when an organisation called the Council for Social Concern, with an address in Ely Place, launched an attack on the Dalkey School Project organisers. A circular which was distributed in the Dalkey area calling on the electorate to contact their T.Ds. or to write to the Minister for Education registering their objection to the proposed school, included the following statement:[36]

> "Atheistic interest in the Dalkey School Project is clear. Ireland's system of education is denominational by Constitutional guarantee.... We submit that there is no need for such a school as this which can only be divisive. It can only be hostile to religion in an age when it was never more needed.....Dalkey could be a precedent for major trouble in other areas.

Apart from the time and energy expended on the Project, the financial costs had been substantial - the local contribution towards the cost of setting up the temporary premises, the cost of the new building and the cost of purchasing the site was in the region of £150,000 - all of which had been raised by voluntary contributions and by various fund-raising events. In addition to these costs, the school management has provided the local share of current costs every year - at present in the region of £11,000 p.a.[37]

While the new building for the Dalkey School Project was being built, other groups with similar aims were active, and in due course a second and third school were opened in Bray, Co Wicklow (in 1981) and in Glasnevin - the

North Dublin School Project (in 1984). The school in Bray opened in pre-fabricated classrooms on a site lent by Bray V.E.C. and North Dublin opened in the old Model School building in Glasnevin. In September last three further schools opened - in Sligo, Kilkenny and Cork and at present there are further active groups around the country also seeking to open in the not too distant future - notably in Limerick and South Dublin City. It hasn't been easy for any of these groups - the perception within the groups is that it has been more difficult than it would be to open a new denominational school.[38]

Section 3 - Issues and Challenges.

Temporary recognition: Within the past year the position has become more difficult for the multi-denominational sector. In the case of the three most recent schools which have been recognised, the Department has insisted that these schools be recognised on a provisional basis only and they have indicated that the teachers are recognised only as temporary teachers.[39] The practical implication of the Department's decision to grant only provisional recognition to new multi-denominational schools is that no financial aid is given towards the capital costs of setting up such schools. Since this is usually a relatively small amount of money (in the case of the Dalkey School Project the sum involved was less than £10,000) it is difficult to see why the Dept. is so determined not to make this payment. For decades the Dept. has sanctioned capital grants for schools in temporary or sub-standard premises "pending the erection of a new school". In the case of such grants, the school trustees would sign an undertaking that "should the building cease to be used for national school purposes within..... (a specified period), the unexpired value of the grant would be repaid".[40] If this approach were adopted in the case of multi-denominational schools, as it has been in the case of denominational schools for decades, the Dept. could safeguard its investment in the event of the school becoming unviable.

In general the Dept. has indicated that they regard an application for a denominational school as a "safer bet". In a recent interview a Department spokesperson made the following point:[41]

> Say for example there is a new housing estate going up; you have a guarantee of maybe a couple of thousand pupils for a denominational school because up to now, the evidence is that most people want denominational education.

The Projects would argue that when parents had no other choice, they sent their children to denominational schools. But since the option of multi-denominational schools have become a reality there is growing demand for places in such schools - in all areas where such schools exist, the demand continues to grow in spite of the fact that the population of young people is falling.

There is every indication that the demand for multi-denominational education will continue to grow. In the 1981 census there was a sizeable

increase in the proportion of the population who did not belong to any of the four main Christian Churches.[42] In the case of Dalkey, a survey of parents of children in the school, carried out in 1983, indicated that a considerably higher proportion of parents in this category sent their children to the DS.P. national school than parents who belonged to denominations which managed schools in the area.[43] Applying these ratios to the population in the country as a whole - on the assumption that the same proportion of Catholic, Protestant and "Others" would avail of multi-denominational education if it were available within a reasonable distance, one can estimate a demand of between 40,000 and 80,000 pupils for multi-denominational primary education, i.e. between 7% and 14% of the national school population.[44]

The future provision of multi-denominational schools

This raises the whole question on the future provision of such schools. Since 1981, the annual number of births in the country has been on the decline - a fall from 75,000 births in 1981 to just under 60,000 in 1987. Already this phenomenon, combined with family emigration, has resulted in a reduction in the numbers on rolls in national schools and it is generally accepted that there will be continuing decrease in school enrolments in the years to come. There are over 550,000 in national schools at present - this could fall to 450,000 by the year 2,000.[45] Consequently there may well be at least 100,000 vacant places in national school buildings by the end of the century.

Since the end of the war, and especially in the past twenty years, a major capital programme for national schools has been carried out. This has cost the government i.e. the taxpayer, the equivalent of about one thousand million pounds in current prices.[46] This represents between 85% and 90% of the cost of building these schools. The buildings are vested by an official lease for 99 years to which the Minister for Education is a party[47]. The lease states "that a National School in connection with the Minister shall at all times, during the term aforesaid, be maintained upon the said premises, and that every school to be kept on the premises hereby demised shall be subject to the Rules and Regulations of the Minister applicable to Schools vested in Trustees". In the event of the building no longer being required for national school purposes "the Trustees shall and will if required by the Minister, well and truly pay or cause to be paid back unto the said Commissioners of Public Works or their Successors for the time being the said sum of £__ so paid in aid of the erection of the said National school".[48] Despite the considerable investment by the State in national school buildings, the former Minister for Education, Patrick Cooney, has asserted in the Seanad that these national schools are privately owned and that the Minister can do nothing to ensure that such buildings be made available for multi-denominational schools or for any other purpose, when they are no longer required for denominational school purposes.[49]

It is understandable in the current climate of recession that every effort should be made to optimise the use of resources at all levels of education. In this context, a number of Projects have shown willingness to use existing

vacant national school accommodation.[50] However, the denominational school authorities were not prepared to make this accommodation available and successive Ministers have made it clear that in this issue they are not prepared to intervene.

Perhaps the time is opportune for the government to review and revise its policy in relation to capital expenditure for national school buildings. Why should new buildings for national schools in new housing developments be planned on the assumption that everyone in the new area will choose to send their children to denominational schools? And when national school buildings under denominational control become vacant, would it not be possible to devise ways of encouraging denominational school authorities to make these buildings (which were financed primarily from state funds) available for multi-denominational schools? The multi-denominational groups could be required to reimburse the denominational authorities for their financial input into the building. If the government fails to take action in this regard, surely it is not unreasonable to expect that the multi-denominational sector be given grants for new buildings in the same way as the denominational sector was in the past?

Religious Education - All Projects were required by the Dept. of Education to submit a policy document on R.E. before they were allowed to open a national school. In broad outline, these policy documents stated that the ethos of a Project school "reflects the ethos of a society in which there are many social, cultural and religious strands co-existing in harmony and mutual respect". The policies are based on the premise that "the primary responsibility for the religious education of each child lies with its parents, therefore any programme for religious education must take account of the parents' wishes with regard to the religious education of their children".[51] Two parallel approaches are taken in regard to Religious Education in each school:

"1. ..... the Board of Management will offer a Religious Education Core Curriculum, designed to help children to understand the religious traditions of life and thought that they will meet in their environment; and to help them to be sensitive to the ultimate questions posed by life and to the dimension of mystery and wonder that underlies all human experience.

2. The Board of Management shall also facilitate any group of parents that may require it to provide Denominational Instruction as required by them for their children....."

In practice, this policy has worked well in the existing schools. The development of the R.E. Core Curriculum has been a challenge well met by management and teachers and implemented to the satisfaction of parents. Denominational Instruction has been facilitated for different groups in the different schools. The basic principle is that in the case of the R.E. Core Curriculum, parents may opt to withdraw their children in accordance with Rule 69; in the case of Denominational Instruction, parents opt their children in to such classes.

In recent years, the Dept. of Education has attempted to require that Project schools meet further conditions in regard to Religious Instruction before granting them recognition. The Dept. is not now prepared to accept from other projects the policy document originally accepted by them in the case of Dalkey which had been redrafted to take specific account of Departmental requirements. The most recent group which is seeking recognition has been told by the Department that their policy document "must include an undertaking of the provision of denominational religious education within school hours, with access by clergy, to all pupils for whom this is sought".[52] This requirement is being appealed on the grounds that it is discriminatory. As far as the Projects are aware, denominational schools are not required to give a similar undertaking. From the start, the Project schools have asked that they be treated in the same way as other national schools - they have not requested exceptional treatment but neither do they accept that more difficult conditions should be imposed on them. All political parties accept that this is a reasonable request.[53]

Revision of the Rules for National Schools

The final point relates to the Rules for National School. Would it not be appropriate to revise these rules to take account of the reality of the present situation? Now that there are six multi-denominational schools in the system, it is no longer accurate for the rules to contain a statement that "the State ..... gives explicit recognition to the denominational character of these schools".[54] Perhaps in the current revision of the rules (they have not been revised since 1965 and the previous Minister in the Programme for Action 1984-1987 indicated that a revision was in train[55]) account will be taken of the multi-denominational sector and the anomalies in the rules will be removed.

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10. *Copy of correspondence between the Irish government and the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland in relation to proposed changes in the rules under which grants are made by Parliament for elementary education in Ireland,* P.P. 1893/4 (55), LXVIII.

11. *Copy of further correspondence between the Irish government and the Commissioners: with extracts from minutes of the proceedings of the Commissioners, in relation to certain proposed changes in the rules under which grants are made by parliament for elementary education in Ireland.*

12. See *Nonconformist,* 8/9/1869; also H.H. Dickinson, D.D. *Primary Education, Ireland - The Present Crisis Considered in connection with the New Rules proposed by the Commissioners of National Education.* (Dublin: Hodges, Figgis & Co., 104 Grafton St.; William McGee, 18 Nassau St., 1896).

13. Mary Sturt, *The Education of the People* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967).

14. In 1953, the Council of Education pointed out that "less than 3% of schools are mixed schools, i.e. attended by children of different religious affiliations".

15. National Programme Conference, *National programme of primary instruction* (Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1922).

16. National Programme Conference, *Report and programme* (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1926).

17. Department of Education, *Report of the Council of Education on (1) the function of the primary school, (2) the curriculum to be pursued in the primary school* (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1954) Pr. 2583.

18. Preface to the *Rules for National Schools*, 1965 ed.

19. National Programme Conference, *Report and Programme*, 1926.

20. Department of Education, *Curaclam na Bunscoile - Primary School Curriculum - Teachers' Handbook* (Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1971).

21. *Ibid.*, Introduction.

22. Government of Ireland, *Bunreacht na hEireann (Constitution of Ireland)* (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1975 ed.)

23. Fr. Colm Burke, *The Furrow*, February 1975, p.104.

24. Micheal Johnston, *The History of St. Patrick's National School, Dalkey.* (Unpublished dissertation for H. Dip. in T.C.D., 1974).

25. Report of the chairperson of the P.T.A. of St. Patrick's N.S., 1974 (copy in possession of author).

26. Quoted in *Contact* (parish magazine of St. Patrick's Church, Dalkey), April 1974.

27. Quoted by Dr. McAdoo, Archbishop of Dublin, speaking at the 1975 annual meeting of the T.C.D. Theological Society.

28. Micheal Johnston, Talk entitled "Integrated Education" given at the Methodist Centenary Church, Dublin on 7th February 1988.

29. Gabriel M. Kiely and Nuala Cooke, *A School for our Children; Education Survey Report.* (Dublin: Marley Grange and Highfield Residents' Association, Rathfarnham, 1975).

30. *Irish Independent*, 12 January 1977.

31. See for example, report in *Irish Press* 29 Sep. 1975 in which Richard Burke is quoted as stating:

> There is at present a campaign for what its promoters call "multi-denominational" education in primary schools based on the suggestion that education in schools under the control of persons of their own religious faith and by teachers of their own religious faith promotes disharmony and dissension in the community. To my mind this is completely false. Indeed I regard it as a libel on teachers to suggest that in educating children in accordance with the particluar teachings and belief of the religion of their homes, the teachers implant the seeds of intolerance and encourage attitudes of bigotry. It is also arrant nonsense.

32. Dalkey School Project, *Survey of Attitudes and Preferences towards multi-denominational, co-educational, democratically managed National Schools* June 1976.

33. *Demokratisierung des Erziehungswesens* Proceedings of an international seminar hosted jointly by the Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung and the Dalkey School Project in Dun Laoghaire from 17-19 Nov.1978.

34. T. O Raifeartaigh, "Integrated Education": keynote address in *Annual Proceedings of the Educational Studies Association of Ireland* Dublin 1979.

35. Dominic O Laoghaire, "Some schools more equal than others?", in *Magill*, January 1988.

36. Leaflet entitled *The Dalkey School Saga: has the government surrendered to the multi-denominational pressure groups?* distributed by the Council of Social Concern, Ely Place, Jan. 1988.

37. Treasurer's report at the annual general meeting of the Dalkey School Project, December 1987.

38. Cathy Herbert, "Obstacle Course for Multi-Creed Schools" in *Magill*, September 1987.

39. Letter sent from the Dept. of Education to the Sligo School Project in August 1987 setting out the conditions under which recognition was given to the school.

40. Such a grant was sanctioned in relation to the D.S.P. national school in 1978 and an undertaking on these lines was signed by the D.S.P.

41. Cathy Herbert, *op.cit.*

42. Central Statistics Office, *Census of Population of Ireland*, 1981. Vol 5 - Religion.

43. Dalkey School Project, "Survey of parents' attitudes", published in the *D.S.P. Newsletter*, January 1987.

44. 41% of respondents in the D.S.P. survey described themselves as Catholic; 11% as Protestant; 9% as "Other"; and 27% as "None". 13% preferred not to state their religious affiliation. Comparing these figures with the figures available from the 1981 census, it is evident that a relatively low proportion of Roman Catholic children in the area attend the school; that about 2.5 times that ratio of Protestants attend it and that about 12 times the Catholic ratio applies to "others" (i.e. no information, no religion and stated non-Christian religions).

45. Davy Kelleher McCarthy Ltd., *Ireland's Changing Population Structure - with forecasts of population and labour force to 2001.* (Dublin: Sept., 1987).

46. The annual reports of the Dept. of Education give details of the amount of the grants sanctioned every year for national school building. Details are also given of the total cost of such building. Using an index such as the annual building index of the Dept. of the Environment, it is possible to estimate in current prices, the value of the grants sanctioned during the past forty years.

47. *Rules for National Schools,* (1965 ed.), Rule 38 (5) (c).

48. Extract from official lease of national schools vested in trustees (1965 edition).

49. Seanad Eireann (Official Report), Vol. 114, No.10 (30 Oct. 1986), p. 1108.

50. At different times, Dalkey, Sligo and South Dublin City approached the appropriate Church authorities with a view to leasing vacant national school accommodation but this accommodation was not made available to them.

51. Dalkey School Project, *Draft patron's policy on religious education,* December 1979.

52. Letter dated 10 August 1987 from the Dept. of Education to Dublin South City Project.

53. Dalkey School Project, *Newsletter No. 2,* 1986.

54. Preface to the *Rules for National School,* 1965 ed.

55. Dept. of Education, *Programme for Action,* 1984 - 1987.