

RECENT TRENDS IN THE FINANCING OF PRIMARY-TEACHER EDUCATION IN IRELAND*

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Current expenditure from public funds on primary-teacher education from 1975 to 1980 is examined. Unit-cost comparisons are made between students in primary teacher education, in the university sector generally, and in teacher-education programmes other than primary. The general level of support services afforded students for fees charged in the colleges of education is examined. The possible effects of the continuation, reduction or termination of such levels of student support and services on the demand for places in primary-teacher education, on the level of applications from highly qualified students, and on the composition (male/female and socio-economic) of intake to the colleges are also examined.

The constitution of Ireland (1937)†† recognizes the right of every child to education. The state has a duty to 'provide for' but not necessarily to 'provide' that education, however, it must ensure that at the primary level it is available to all free of charge (31). The constitution also recognizes the right of parents to educate their children independently. However, over 96% of all first-level pupils receive their primary education in state-aided national schools (21). These schools are not public institutions in the usual sense. While the state on average pays 85% of the construction costs, provides a per-capita grant towards the maintenance and running of each school, and pays teachers salaries directly and in full, the national schools, with very few exceptions, are owned and managed by church bodies. Irish primary teachers are, therefore, publicly paid persons.

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†† In this paper 'Ireland' refers to the Republic of Ireland.

employed by and working in privately-owned institutions. The government, through its Minister for Education, exercises considerable control over national schools and determines the minimum qualifications of those who teach in them (5, 12, 13)

The preparation of primary teachers has, for over a hundred years, been carried out in privately-owned but publicly funded denominational colleges of education (often referred to as training colleges). These institutions are owned and managed by church bodies. Both capital and current expenditure in the colleges of education*, including grants and loans to education students, are met by the state through the Primary Education Vote**. Unlike teachers in national schools, the staff in the colleges of education are paid indirectly by the state through the institutions in which they are employed.

The academic year 1974/75 was a watershed in the history of the colleges of education. It marked the termination of the traditional two-year training course for primary teachers and the introduction of a three-year university course leading to the award of a BEd degree. The three larger colleges became recognized colleges of the National University of Ireland while the three smaller ones were granted 'associated college' status within the University of Dublin (Trinity College).

The affiliation of the colleges of education to the existing universities led to a lessening of the Department of Education's control over the academic affairs of these institutions. Up to this time the Department appointed the external examiners and validated the qualifications awarded by the colleges. With the exception of the one year course for primary teaching taken by university graduates, the Department no longer fulfills its traditional role in this regard. Apart from this, however, the state,

* The term 'colleges of education', as used throughout, refers to the six institutions recognized by the state for the training of primary teachers. St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin, Our Lady of Mercy College, Carysfort, Blackrock, Co Dublin, the College of Mary Immaculate, Mount Prospect, Limerick, Church of Ireland College, Rathmines, Dublin (including Scoil Moibhí, the preparatory college attached thereto), St Mary's College, Marino, Dublin, and Froebel College, Blackrock, Co Dublin. Except where otherwise indicated, the term 'education students' will refer only to students in these colleges.

** When taken as a percentage of the total yearly budget for primary teacher education, the financial contributions to current expenditure made by the church bodies involved in the colleges of education are now insignificant, though the non-financial input of the sponsoring/managing bodies to the daily running of the colleges is considerable, especially in some of the smaller colleges where some religious work for little or no salary.

through its Department of Education, still continues to exert a major influence on the colleges. All permanent academic appointments must receive the sanction of the Minister for Education. The staff/student ratio is set by his Department. The level of intake to the colleges each year and the balance of graduate to undergraduate students is also determined by the Department. While legally it is the 'authorities' of each college which admit students (13, p. 86), it is the Department of Education which sets the upper limit to the number of students to be accepted in any one year. It is the Department of Education, also, which decides what qualifications are necessary, over and above those required for university matriculation, for entry to primary-teacher education. Finally, the major source of Departmental influence on, and control of, the colleges of education lies in the fact that now, as heretofore, the Department funds the colleges in full, sets staff salaries, makes decisions on student fees, and determines the level of support provided to students. The financing of the colleges of education, along with the effects and possible implication of recent government policies in this regard, are central to the present study.

In this paper current expenditure from public funds on primary-teacher education from 1975-1980 is examined. Unit-cost comparisons are made between students in primary-teacher education, in the university sector generally, and in teacher-education programmes other than primary. The contention that 'the cost to the state per student in training colleges for primary teaching is over twice that for university students generally' (9, p. 82) receives particular attention. The general level of support services afforded students for fees charged in the colleges of education is examined. The possible effects of the continuation, reduction, or termination of such levels of student support and services on the demand for places in primary-teacher education, on the academic calibre of candidates applying for those places, and on the composition (male/female and socio-economic) of intake to the colleges are also examined.

CURRENT EXPENDITURE ON PRIMARY TEACHER EDUCATION

The financial year 1975 is considered an appropriate base from which to work since it was the first full calendar year in which the degree programmes were in operation in the colleges of education. Coincidentally, it is also the year for which an analysis of costs in teacher education has already been carried out, on the basis of that analysis it was concluded that 'the unit cost of training college students is more than double that of university students' (32, p. 33). The low level of student fees and the high level of student support, especially the provision of board and lodgings, were identified as two of the major factors responsible for the unit cost

difference which seemed to exist. Following this, the Department of Education began to initiate cutbacks in the level of support previously afforded to college of education students* and sought ways of reducing public expenditure generally on primary teacher education. Its policy in this regard was evident in the government Green Paper *Development for full employment* published in June 1978, which stated that 'The indications are that the cost to the state per student in training colleges is over twice that for university students generally' (9, p 82) and in the government White Paper *Programme for national development 1978/81*, which stated 'that the subsidy for board and accommodation for student teachers should be reduced, with a view to placing these students more on a par with other third-level students' (10, p 86)

Tables 1-3 contain data on student numbers in the colleges of education and in the universities** along with current expenditure from public funds and unit costs in both sectors (These serve as source tables for further analyses and calculations throughout this paper.) A comparison of unit costs for students in colleges of education (Table 2) and universities (Table 3) show that for the year 1975, the cost per student in the colleges of education was not double that of a university student. Unit costs in both sectors were in fact the same (i.e., £964). Furthermore, for the eight year period 1973 to 1980, the cumulative overall cost to the state per student in the universities was 9.29% more than in the colleges of education (Tables 2, 3). With the exception of one year, 1976, the unit cost for students in the universities was higher than in primary teacher education. Furthermore, since 1977, the disparity in the unit costs of education students and university students has been increasing each year. In 1977, university students cost 2.36% more than their counterparts in primary teacher education. By 1980, the difference in unit costs had increased to 21.59% †

* The phrase 'student support' as used throughout, includes one or more of the following the direct financial aid which students receive by way of grants or loans from the state and the non-tuition return to the students for the college fee by way of services maintenance, living, or travelling expenses

** The term 'universities' or 'university colleges' used throughout includes the following five institutions University College Dublin (UCD) University College Cork (UCC), University College Galway (UCG) Maynooth College and Trinity College, Dublin (TCD)

† It remains to be seen what effect salary increases granted to staff in the colleges of education in 1981 will have on the unit-cost for education students. Initial calculations indicate that, in 1980 prices, these increases would have reduced the difference in unit-costs for 1980 from 21.59% to 12% approximately. However, consequential claims already being negotiated in respect of certain university salary scales would, if conceded, once again increase the disparity in unit costs between the two sectors

TABLE 1

NUMBERS OF FULL-TIME AND EQUIVALENT FULL-TIME STUDENTS IN THE COLLEGES OF EDUCATION
 FOR THE ACADEMIC YEARS 1972/73 TO 1980/81 AND FOR THE CALENDAR YEARS 1973 TO 1980 (a)

Academic year	Pre-service teacher training	Colaiste Moibhí (b)	Special Education course (Drumcondra)	Remedial course (Drumcondra) (c)	Totals	Calendar year	Totals converted to calendar years (d)
1972/73	1,815	16	25	—	1,856	1973	1,950
1973/74	2,086	16	25	12	2,139	1974	2,069
1974/75	1,875	16	25	13	1,929	1975	1,875
1975/76	1,724	19	25	—	1,768	1976	1,993
1976/77	2,379	25	25	13	2,442	1977	2,587
1977/78	2,561	24	25	—	2,878	1978	2,804
	268 (e)						
1978/79	2,591	26	25	13	2,655	1979	2,699
1979/80	2,720	28	25	13	2,786	1980	2,813
1980/81	2,801	27	25	13	2,866		

(a) Data supplied by each of the six Colleges of Education

(b) Colaiste Moibhí is a preparatory college attached to and financed through the Church of Ireland College of Education
 The vast majority of its students proceed to primary teacher training

(c) Since the students on this course are part-time the numbers in the column represent equivalent full-time students
 Two part-time students are taken as equivalent to one full-time student

(d) The numbers for a calendar year, e.g. 1973, are calculated as follows 2/3 of 1972/73 (=1237) plus 1/3 of 1973/74 (=713), total = 1950

(e) 'Special Trainee Teachers' recruited by Mr. Wilson, Minister for Education

TABLE 2

CURRENT EXPENDITURE FROM PUBLIC FUNDS ON COLLEGES OF EDUCATION 1973 to 1980^(a)

Academic year	Direct grants for stated periods ^(b)	Special Education courses ^(c)	Examinations	Teacher training grants to students	Higher Education grants to students ^(e)	Total current grants	Calendar year	Total current grants converted to calendar year	Total number of students (Table 1)	Student unit cost
1972-73	£ 845,670 1 4 72 to 31 3 73	£17,319	£1,137			£ 864,126				
1973-74	£1 067,662 1 4 73 to 31 3 74	£15,515	£1 744			£1,084,921	1973	£1,029 722	1,950	£ 528
1974-75	£ 989,603 1 4 74 to 31 12 74	£20 009	£ 2		£174,005	£1,183 619	1974	£1,454,849	2,069	£ 703
1975-76	£1,720,294 Cal year 1975	£ 3,139	£1 070		£148 022	£1 872,527	1975	£1 807,272	1 875	£ 964
1976-77	£2,205,539 Cal year 1976	£ 3 411	£ 761		£246,895	£ 807	1976	£2,370 148	1 993	£1,189
1977-78	£3,129 300 Cal year 1977	£11,329	£2,287		£261,480	£ 6 509	1977	£3,285,124	2 587	£1 270

TABLE 2 – Contd.

Academic year	Direct grants for stated periods (b)	Special Education courses (c)	Examinations	Teacher training grants to students	Higher Education grants to students (e)	Total current grants	Calendar year	Total current grants converted to calendar year	Total number of students (Table 1)	Student unit cost
1978-79	£3,433,300 Cal. year 1978	£13,841	£1,485	£312,690	£30,114	£3,791,430	1978	£3,672,996	2,804	£1,310
1979-80	£4,008,042 Cal. year 1979	£16,827	£6,125	£365,658	£63,832	£4,460,482	1979	£4,298,084	2,699	£1,592
1980-81 (f)	£4,692,021 Cal. year 1980	£21,273	£ 624	£444,753 (d)	£56,580	£5,215,256	1980	£4,963,971	2,813	£1,765

- (a) Except where otherwise indicated the source of all data is: Department of Education. *Tuarascáil staitistiúil*. (16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 26).
- (b) The budget for the Educational Research Centre, situated at St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, is included annually in the direct grant to primary teacher education. Since the Centre's work involves it at all levels of Irish education its yearly expenditure has been deducted from the direct grants cited here. All other current expenditure incurred by the Colleges of Education, including expenditure on the primary schools attached to some of the Colleges is included.
- (c) It was estimated that of the total grant under the heading "Special Courses for Physically and Mentally Handicapped" 25% goes to the College of Education which offers such courses.
- (d) Expenditure on Teacher Training Student Grants and Loans for 1980 was £454,753. An estimated £10,000 was deducted as constituting the sum for repayable loans. Such repayable loans are excluded throughout.
- (e) These are the grants availed of largely by university students. The only education students eligible to apply for Higher Education Grants are those attending Marino and Froebel Colleges. The total sum cited here for Higher Education Grants is the product of the number on grants by the average Higher Education Grant for the year in question. The numbers of education students on Higher Education Grants for the calendar years 1976 to 1980 were 2, 15, 56, 99, and 77 respectively.
- (f) Financial data for 1980 supplied by the Department of Education.

TABLE 3

CURRENT EXPENDITURE FROM PUBLIC FUNDS ON UNIVERSITY COLLEGES 1973 TO 1980

Calendar year	Recurrent grants ^(a)	Current grants from Dept of Agriculture ^(b)	Higher Education grants to students ^(d)	Total current grants	Number of students ^(c)	Student unit cost
1973	£10 946,084	£1 537 606	£1 543,165	£14 026 855	21 226	£ 661
1974	£13,324,782	£1,586,005	£1,535,283	£16,446,070	21,490	£ 765
1975	£17 835,000	£1,865,284	£1 645,389	£21,345,673	22,138	£ 964
1976	£21,246,240	£2 336,082	£2 281 214	£25,863,536	22,776	£1,136
1977	£25,316,395	£2,961 003	£2 413 585	£30,690,983	23,599	£1 300
1978	£28 885 500	£3,488 164	£2 862,211	£35,235,875	24,197	£1,456
1979	£36 669 300 ^(c)	£4 274,885	£3,186,719	£44,130 904	24 235 ^(c)	£1 821
1980	£44 327 500 ^(c)	£4 821,215	£3,463,370	£52 612 085	24 522 ^(c)	£2,146

(a) Source Higher Education Authority (HEA) annual reports (23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28) The amounts cited include the current grants to the National University of Ireland (NUI) the University Colleges, and from 1976 on, 80% of the grant to the Central Applications Office (CAO) An examination of the total number of first preference applications handled by the CAO indicated that about 80% were processed on behalf of the university colleges

(b) Source Department of Agriculture

(c) Supplied by the HEA

(d) The percentages of Higher Education Grants (HEG) held by university students for each of the academic years 1972/73 to 1980/81 were as follows 98% 97% 96% 92%, 93%, 92%, 89% respectively (Department of Education data) The proportion of total expenditure on HEG's held by university students for each academic year was calculated accordingly and then converted to calendar year expenditure HEG expenditure is taken from Department of Education *Tuarascail statisticiuil* (16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 26)

(e) Includes full time and equivalent full time students Two part time students are taken as equivalent to one full time student All are converted to calendar year (cf Table 1, note d) Source HEA annual reports (23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29)

When the Consumer Price Index (CPI) is applied as a deflator (1, p. 10), state funding of the colleges of education on a unit cost basis is found to have decreased in real terms in the period 1975 to 1980 (Table 4). In two of the five years (1976 and 1979), real increases accrued in the order of 4.55% and 1.11 percent. For the remaining three years (1977, 1978, and 1980) the current grants to the colleges decreased in real terms by margins of 1.75%, 5.83%, and 5.24 percent. The total real cutback for the period, expressed in 1981 prices, was £528,077. When actual unit costs and real increases/decreases for the years 1976 to 1980 are converted to 1981 prices, it is evident that state expenditure per education student decreased in real terms by 1.43% during this period.

When the recurrent grants to the universities for the same period (1975 to 1980) are analysed on a unit-cost basis, it is evident that such institutions have been in receipt of real increases in funding.* With the exception of the year 1976, when a cutback of less than a quarter of one percent was recorded, the university colleges in the succeeding four years were in receipt of real increases ranging from a half of one percent to 15½ percent. When university unit costs and real increases/decreases for the years 1976 to 1980 are converted to 1981 prices, it is clear that state expenditure per student in the university sector increased in real terms by 7.16% during this period.**

These figures obviously present a picture that differs radically from that presented by McDonagh (32) on the basis of his analyses of the relative costs of teacher and university education in 1975. There are a number of reasons for this difference. The unit-cost calculations in McDonagh's report were based on government estimates for the financial year 1975. In our study, actual, not estimated, expenditure and enrolment figures for each calendar year are used. Further, we take into account part time students, as well as government grants to the universities through channels other than the Higher Education Authority.

* References to university funding are made for comparative purposes only. The authors are not in a position to assess the adequacy or otherwise of public expenditure on university education.

** The acute financial problems currently affecting the universities are not apparent when working from a 1975 base. If 1979 is taken as a base and the current grants to the universities are analysed on a unit-cost basis for 1980 it will be seen that the shortfall was £50 per full time student (including equivalent full time student). The CPI for 1979 and 1980 was 411.9 and 496.00 respectively.

TABLE 4

CHANGES IN UNIT COSTS IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION, 1975 TO 1980

Calendar year	Number of students in colleges of education (Table 1)	Current grants (Table 2)	Actual unit cost (a)	1975 unit cost CPI (b)	Real increase(+) / decrease (-) per student	Real increase(+) / decrease(-) in total current grant	Total real increase(+) / decrease(-) in 1981 prices
1975	1,875	£1,807,272	£ 963 88				
1976	1 993	£2 370 148	£1 189 24	£1,137 47	+£51 77	+£103,178 (4 55%)	+£203,404
1977	2 587	£3 285 124	£1,269 86	£1 292 51	-£22 65	-£ 58 596 (1 75%)	-£101 657
1978	2,804	£3,672,996	£1 309 91	£1,391 00	-£81 09	-£227,376 (5 83%)	-£366 531
1979	2 699	£4,298,084	£1,592 47	£1,575 03	+£17 44	+£ 47,071 (1 11%)	+£ 67,014
1980	2,813	£4,963,971	£1 764 65	£1,862 16	-£97 51	-£274,296 (5 24%)	-£330 307
							-£528 007

(a) Where appropriate throughout the tables unit costs are given to two decimal places

(b) The CPI for the years in question is taken from mid-November to mid November. CPI figures supplied by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) are as follows

1973 150 8	1976 251 6	1979 348 4
1974 176 4	1977 285 9	1980 411 9
1975 213 2	1978 307 7	1981 496 0

Mid November 1968 = 100

Four key points should be noted with regard to McDonagh's (32) unit-cost calculations for the year 1975. Firstly, the total amount, based on government estimates, cited by McDonagh as the current grant to the training colleges for 1975 (i.e., £2,635,400) was 32% more than the sum recorded under the same heads in the *Appropriation Accounts* for that year (i.e., £1,995,132) and 46% more than the total actual expenditure on primary teacher education for 1975 as shown in Table 5 of this paper (i.e., £1,807,272). Secondly, total current expenditure from state funds in the universities in 1975 was £21,345,673 (Table 5). This was 32% more than the sum cited by McDonagh (based on government estimates) for recurrent grants to the universities for that year (i.e., £16,207,034). Thirdly, unit-costings were calculated by McDonagh in relation to 1,650 students in the colleges of education and 20,771 students in the university colleges. The actual numbers of students (including equivalent full time students) in both sectors for the calendar year 1975 were 1,875 and 20,837 respectively (Table 5). Finally, the grant to the universities from the Department of Agriculture was not included in McDonagh's calculations. For 1975 this amounted to £1,865,284 (Table 5).

So far, we have been concerned only with teacher education in the primary sector. However, unit-costs for different sectors of teacher education vary greatly, a point that is not discernible in Barlow's (1, Table 8.1) aggregated data. Tables 6 and 7 provide data on costs in vocational teacher education and Thomond College of Education respectively. In the four year period 1975 to 1978, the average unit cost of trainee teachers in the vocational sector was 32% higher than in the primary-teacher education. Unit costs in Thomond College were, on average, 67% higher than in the colleges of education.*

There are no published data on the unit costs of teacher education in the universities but there is little doubt that they are considerably lower than in the other teacher-education programmes examined. This may be due to what the commission on Higher Education (12) called the 'poor relation' status assigned to university departments of education by academic opinion within the universities. Such attitudes have found expression in the under staffing and poor funding of such departments. While improvements have been made in this regard (5), there is little

* Figures for 1979 were not included in this comparison since unit costs in Thomond College for that year were exceptionally high due to the initiation of new courses.

TABLE 5

UNIT COSTS IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION AND UNIVERSITIES
BASED ON ESTIMATES AND ACTUAL EXPENDITURE
FOR THE YEAR 1975

	Costings based on government estimates ^(a)	Costings based on actual expenditure and enrolments ^(b)
Colleges of education		
Current grant to training colleges	£2,333 900	£ 1 659 250
Grants to students	£ 302 500 ^(c)	£ 148,022
	<hr/>	<hr/>
TOTAL	£2 635,400	£ 1 807 272
No of students	1 650 ^(d)	1 875 ^(e)
Unit cost per student per annum	£1 598	£964
 Universities		
Current grant to the university colleges	£14,795,900	£17 835 000
Higher Education student grants	£ 1 411 134	£ 1 645 389
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Current grant from the Department of Agriculture	—	£ 1,865 284
	<hr/>	<hr/>
TOTAL	£16 207 034	£21 345,673
No of students	20 771 ^(d)	22 138 ^(e)
Unit cost per student per annum	£780	£964

(a) Source Estimates for public services for the year ending 31st December 1975 used by McDonagh (31)

(b) Source Tables 1, 2 and 3 of this paper

(c) This figure includes both student grants and repayable student loans

(d) Estimated enrolment of full time students

(e) Includes full time and equivalent full time students. Two part time students were taken as equivalent to one full time student. This enrolment figure is for the calendar year 1975 (cf Table 1, footnote d)

TABLE 6

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TEACHER-TRAINING UNIT COSTS^(a)

Calendar year	No of students ^(b)	Total current grant – teacher training ^(c)	Current grant – in-service ^(d)	Current grant – pre-service	Unit cost
1975	476	£602 757	£ 5 000	£597,757	£1,256
1976	464	£711,469	£13,000	£698,469	£1 505
1977	410	£693 950	£13 500	£680 450	£1,660
1978	368	£701,338	£14,500	£686,838	£1,866
1979	336	£754 507	£15 000	£739 507	£2,201

(a) Includes Home Economics Woodwork Metalwork General and Rural Science Educational Woodwork, Woodwork and Building Construction, Metalwork (Post primary education)

(b) Source HEA *Annual reports* (24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29) Figures for academic years converted to calendar year figures (cf Table 1 note d)

(c) Source Department of Education *Tuarascáil stáitseachil* (17, 19, 20, 21, 26) Student scholarships grants and allowances are included in these figures

(d) Source *Estimates for public services* 1975 1976, 1977 1978 1979

evidence to indicate that the Commission's recommendation that 'the university departments of education should all be staffed and maintained at a level and to an extent appropriate to a major university department' (12, p 221) has been taken seriously (cf 6)

A comparison of wastage/survival rates among university students and students in primary teacher education provides a further interesting perspective on per student expenditure in these two sectors (36) The survival rate is taken as the percentage of initial entrants which emerges successfully through final examinations The wastage/survival rates of five cohorts of education students which entered the three largest colleges of education between 1974 and 1978 indicates an average survival rate of just over 91 percent Using enrolment figures for 1976/77 and 1977/78, Barlow's (1, p 12) estimated overall survival rates of 62% in Maynooth, 72% in UCG, 72% in UCC, and 76% in UCD are considerably lower than those obtaining in primary teacher education As a consequence of the higher survival rates among education students, the cost per completed degree (or per successfully completed student year) in the colleges of

TABLE 7
THOMOND COLLEGE OF EDUCATION UNIT-COSTS_(a)

Calendar year	No of students _(b)	Current grant _(c)	Student grants _(d)	Total current expenditure	Unit cost
1975	280	£356,162	£31,066	£387 228	£1 383
1976	270	£398 780	£32,341	£431 121	£1 597
1977	238	£486,100	£41,830	£527 930	£2 218
1978	202	£550 300	£34 834	£585 134	£2,897
1979	204	£825 000	£51,326 _(e)	£876,326	£4 296 _(f)

- (a) Formerly known as the National College of Physical Education'
- (b) Source Department of Education Figures for academic years converted to calendar year figures (cf. Table 1, footnote d)
- (c) Source Government *Appropriation Accounts* 1975 1976 1977 1978, 1979
- (d) Source Department of Education *Tuarascail statustuill* (17, 19, 20, 21, 26) A small number of these grants may be held by students in Northern Ireland
- (e) An estimated £11 000 is included here from the sum of £117 590 cited for scholarships, grants and allowances to trainee teachers of practical subjects for this year (21) In 1979/80 and afterwards some of these courses were offered only in Thomond College of Education
- (f) This high unit-cost is explained in part by rapid expansion involving a doubling of student numbers between 1978/79 and 1981/82 and the initiation of new teacher training courses in Rural Science Metalwork and Woodwork

education is lower than in the university sector, apart altogether from differences in unit costs

Student support

Up to the academic year 1973/74, repayable loans were made available by the Department of Education to students in colleges of education to meet their college fees and living expenses. Such loans were not available to other third level students. In the first year of university degree courses in the colleges of education (1974/75), a 'Teacher Training Grants'*

- * 'Teacher Training Grants' are confined to students in primary teacher education with the exception of students in St Mary's Training College Marino Dublin and Froebel College, Blackrock Co Dublin. Higher Education Grants, the vast majority of which are held by students attending the universities were made available to Froebel and Marino students for the first time in 1976/77. The maximum Teacher Training Grant covers the college fee in full plus an allowance of £60 (1981/82). The maximum Higher Education Grant covers the college fee in full plus an allowance of £1,000 (1981/82)

scheme was introduced by the Department in addition to the loans scheme. The means test applied in the early years enabled a large percentage of education students to qualify for full or partial grants (Table 9) Since the introduction of the grants' scheme, the number of education students on loans has dwindled to a mere handful averaging out at about 2% per year from 1974/75 to 1979/80 (17, 19, 20, 21, 26)*

All students in the colleges of education, whether or not they are eligible for grants or loans, benefit from a level of support within the colleges which is better than that obtaining generally in other third-level institutions The college fee is a composite one, it covers not only tuition but also board and lodgings for resident students and partial board and an allowance for lodgings for extern (but not home-based) students Some non-resident students also qualify for travelling expenses**

Student fees in the colleges of education remained static at £125 per annum from 1972/73 to 1975/76 In the period 1975/76 to 1981/82, fees increased in real terms The fee for 1981/82 was £510 By converting the student fees for the entire period under review (1973/74 to 1980/81) into 1981 prices it is evident that the 1981/82 fee of £510 is appreciably greater than the inflation-adjusted fee for any of the preceding years The increase in fees in recent years has been greater in real terms for home-based students for whom the living-out allowance of about £3 per week was terminated in 1978 At the same time, the allowance (living-out allowance, bus fares) afforded to students who are eligible for them have increased at a rate which falls very much short of inflation

Student fees provide a higher percentage of total current expenditure in the colleges of education than in the universities In 1978/79 according to Barlow (1), between 11 and 13% of current income in each of the university colleges came from student fees, whereas in the colleges of education fees accounted for about 16% of current income An exam-

* Loans can be availed of only by students who satisfy the same means test as for student grants but who do not have the four honours in the Leaving Certificate Examination which are required for grant eligibility Since the number of students entering primary teacher education with less than four honours is small the proportion of students applying for loans is very low The maximum loan (1982/82) covers the College fee plus £60 A student cannot avail of both a loan and a grant

** Froebel College is an exception and while students of St Mary's College can avail of meals they do not receive any other allowances Students in both of these colleges who are eligible for Higher Education Grants may also qualify for a subsistence grant to a maximum of £600 in 1980/81 and £1 000 in 1981/82

ination of income/expenditure in one of the larger colleges of education over the four year period 1977 to 1980 supports this latter finding*

The level of support for students in primary teacher education has, in recent years, been adversely affected by the failure of successive governments to adjust the means test schedules of the grants scheme in line with inflation and rising costs. As a result of this and the general increase in monetary incomes the proportion of education students in receipt of grants (Table 9) fell from 59% in 1974/75 to 42% in 1980/81 (cf 33)**

In the context of student support two surveys conducted in 1980 among a sample of undergraduate education students are of some relevance. The purpose of the surveys, both of which were conducted by questionnaire, was to gauge the extent to which education students undertook part-time employment during the academic year and their reasons for so doing. The first survey was confined to a sample of second year degree students while the second surveyed a sample of undergraduate students across years†. The findings were similar. About one in four respondents stated they held part time jobs during the academic year working, on average, 10 to 11 hours per week. A large proportion (c 70%) of those who undertook part time employment did so to meet essential needs and expenses. The seriousness of such a situation, whatever the cause, becomes apparent when it is realized that the lecture/workshop load of education students generally is very high, varying from a lower limit of about 18 periods per week for third-year students to about 25 periods per week for first and second year students.

DEMAND FOR PLACES IN THE COLLEGES OF EDUCATION

A former Minister for Education has indicated that a relationship exists between the level of demand for places in primary teacher education

* Since the fees of students in receipt of grants are in effect paid indirectly by the state the real (i.e. non-state funded) contribution of students to the current expenditure of the institutions in question is less than the percentage figures cited here. Furthermore since the proportion of education students in receipt of grants is about double that of the university sector the difference in student contributions to current expenditure in both sectors is not as great as the percentage figures cited here would seem to indicate.

** The Government introduced major changes in the third level grants schemes for incoming students in the academic year 1981/82. As a result of this the proportion of students on grants in 1981/82 increased to about 49 percent.

† Unpublished data. The first survey was carried out by the present authors. Data from the second survey, which was carried out independently, were made available to them.

and the level of support afforded students in the colleges of education. While pointing out that 'college of education students get a reasonably good deal' the Minister, in 1978, went on to claim that 'this is reflected

in the demand for places in the colleges each year'. He estimated that in 1977/78 'there were two successful candidates available for every place in the college' (8, p 844). He was confident that this would continue. McDonagh (32) also estimated that there were two qualified suitable candidates for every available place in primary-teacher education and claimed that there were reasons for believing that demand for places might not be dampened to a serious extent by a reduction in level of student support.

Applications/admissions data* for the four year period 1978/79 to 1981/82 are included in Table 8. On the basis of these data the number of qualified/suitable candidates for each available place in primary teacher education can be ascertained. While demand does exceed the number of places available each year, the ratios calculated for the four years in question indicate that the average number of qualified suitable applicants for each available place was 1.40. It would appear, therefore, that the demand for places in colleges of education has been over-estimated. Furthermore, if the level of student support provided by the colleges of education has any bearing on the level of demand for places, the possible effects on demand arising from policy changes with regard to student support would merit close examination.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRIMARY-TEACHER EDUCATION OF LEVEL OF FUNDING

Successive Irish governments have shown serious commitment to their constitutional obligation to 'provide for' the education of first-level pupils free of charge. The fact that the vast majority of Irish children attend state aided national schools has served to heighten politicians' awareness of their responsibilities in this regard. Furthermore, since the foundation of the Irish State in 1922, the national schools have been used as important agents in the conservation of the national culture, the transmission of religious values, and the preservation of the Irish language. It is not surprising, therefore, that in such a context the calibre of recruits to the colleges of education and the quality of those graduating from them into the primary teacher profession have been a matter of particular concern to the state and the churches.

* We are concerned here only with the open competition for places in the undergraduate degree courses in all the colleges of education with the exception of the Church of Ireland college where a separate competition operates (22).

TABLE 8

APPLICATIONS AND ADMISSIONS DATA
FOR THE YEARS 1978/79 TO 1981/82^(a)

Academic year	1978/9	1979/80	1980-1	1981/2
Total no of applicants	3 938	3,529	3 349	3,862
No of applicants who qualified at Leaving Certificate Examination	2 236	2 095	2 113	2,118
No and % of qualified applicants called to interview	1,663 (74%)	1,962 (94%)	2 009 (95%)	2,034 (96%)
No of qualified applicants absent from interview	367	404	517	733
No of qualified applicants unsuccessful at interview	101	154	127	116
No and % of qualified applicants successful at interview	1,195 (72%)	1,414 (72%)	1,365 (68%)	1 185 (58%)
No of qualified applicants, successful at interview 'called' to teacher training	1 098	1 178	1,070	945
No of qualified applicants who refused the 'call' to teacher training	242	292	180	140
Maximum no of qualified suitable candidates ^(b)	1 281	1,187	1 246	1 088
No of open competition candidates in Colleges of Education (October)	856	886	890	805
No of qualified suitable candidates for each place	1 50	1 34	1 40	1 35
Average no of qualified suitable candidates for each place 1978/79 to 1981/82				1 40

(a) Data for Open Competition candidates only supplied annually to the Colleges by the Department of Education. The term interview includes a traditional type interview, and tests in oral Irish and Music

(b) The figures in this row are derived as follows taking 1979/80 as an example. Total number of qualified applicants (1962), minus the number who refused a call to interview, failed the interview or turned down a 'call' to teacher training (850). This gives a sub total of 1 112 or 56.6% of these called to interview. To this is added the same proportion of qualified applicants not called to interview (75) giving a maximum total of qualified suitable applicants of 1,187 for 886 places

The quality of primary-school education depends in large measure on the calibre of the teachers who provide it. While it cannot be argued that sufficient financial support for the colleges and students of education guarantees the recruitment of good-calibre candidates to primary teaching or ensures a high quality professional preparation in the colleges, it seems reasonable to assume that the continued reduction in real terms of state funding for the colleges and students of education would set at risk the traditionally high standards which have obtained in primary-teacher education and in the primary-teaching profession. Also of interest is the effect that changes in funding might have on the composition of the student body in the colleges, both in terms of male/female balance and socio-economic mix.

Up to recent years the mode and level of student support in the colleges of education have proved satisfactory and seem to have been important factors in facilitating the recruitment to primary-teacher education of high-calibre male and female students from a broad socio-economic base within society. To matriculate in the National University of Ireland, a minimum of two honours in higher level papers and four passes in ordinary level papers in the Leaving Certificate Examination is required (5). Applications/admissions data for primary-teacher education (supplied to the colleges of education annually by the Department of Education) for the years 1978 and 1981 indicate that, on average, 68% of those who were offered a place in a college of education had more honours in higher or common level Leaving Certificate Examination subjects. The average number of honours was five. Of those who accepted places and entered primary-teacher education in 1978 and 1981, more than 90% had four or more honours in higher or common level papers. At least 60% had five or more honours. No candidate with less than three honours (including Irish) in the Leaving Certificate Examination is eligible for entry, through the open competition, to primary-teacher education (22). The proportion of students entering with the minimal requirements was about 8 percent.

On the basis of past trends it would seem that there is little danger in the foreseeable future that the available places in primary teacher education will not be filled. There is no guarantee, however, that they will be taken, as in the past, by candidates of high academic ability. Complacency in this regard would seem ill-advised.

Primary teacher education draws its students from a wide socio-economic base within Irish society. Its entrants are more representative of the lower socio-economic strata of society than is the case in the

university sector The proportion of education students who qualify for grants (Table 9) provides some evidence of the socio-economic spread of intake Since the initiation of a student grants' scheme for the colleges of education in 1974/75 the percentage of education students with parent/guardian incomes or rateable valuation low enough to enable them to qualify for grants has almost invariably been more than double that of the university sector

During the 1970s, the eligibility threshold for student grants declined steadily in real terms (33) By 1980/81, for instance, the full grant of £440 could be availed of only in cases where the parent/guardian income did not exceed £4,610 (or a rateable valuation of £37) and where there were not less than three dependent children in the family If there were six or more dependent children, the parent/guardian income could not exceed £5,250 (or a rateable valuation of £42) for full grant eligibility A student from a family with parent/guardian income in excess of £6,100 or a rateable valuation of more than £50 was ineligible for a grant irrespective of the number of dependent children

The proportion of students in receipt of grants from 1977/78 to 1981/82 in the colleges of education averaged 44.87%, while the proportion of university students on higher education grants over the same period averaged 21.22 percent (The eligibility criteria are the same for both Teacher Training and Higher Education grants) It seems reasonable to conclude that the lower income groups are represented much more equitably in primary teacher education than in the university sector

Evidence from the university sector suggests that a decline in the level of student support was matched by a fall in the participation rate of students from less well off families in university education In the case of University College Dublin, McHale (33) found that from 1975/76 to 1978/79 the decline in enrolment of children of parents of low socio-economic status matched the decline in the real value of student grants and the decrease in the numbers of students eligible for grants In view of this, it is likely that, if the level of support afforded college of education students were reduced further or put on a par with that of university students, intake to primary teacher education from the lower socio-economic groups would also fall

Any narrowing of the socio-economic base from which recruits to primary teaching are drawn would be of particular concern to educationalists Bronfenbrenner (2) stresses that teacher education should draw its recruits from all, but especially the lower, strata of society, with a view

TABLE 9

PROPORTION OF STUDENT GRANT HOLDERS IN
THE COLLEGES OF EDUCATION AND IN THE UNIVERSITIES^(a)

Academic year	1974/75	1975/76	1976/77	1977/78	1978/79	1979-80	1980-81 ^(b)
% of College of Education students on grants	59%	56%	54%	45%	48%	45%	42%
% of University students on grants	28%	27%	25%	24%	22%	20%	19%

(a) Source Department of Education *Tuarascáil staitistíuil* (17, 19, 20, 21, 26) and Tables 1 & 3 Data relates only to 'Teacher Training and 'Higher Education' grant-holders The eligibility criteria are the same for both types of grant Students excluded from these grant systems were not included in the calculations

(b) Data supplied by the Department of Education

to catering for the needs of pupils from diverse backgrounds If so, then any policy of cutbacks in the level of support for education students which might set at risk such broad based recruitment into the primary-teaching profession cannot be taken lightly Furthermore, such cutbacks might severely restrict equality of access to third-level education for poorer students in an area of third level education where access has been relatively open in the past While demand does exceed the number of available places in the colleges, it would be regrettable if 'ability to pay' were to skew the present socio-economic balance of intake to primary teacher education in favour of better-off students

The level of student support may also have a direct bearing on the male/female composition of intake to primary-teacher education The rapid fall in male intake over the past decade is causing concern Primary teaching, it seems, is no longer as attractive as it has traditionally been to male students, at any rate fewer of them are applying for, and are prepared to accept, places in primary-teacher education A comparison of the applications data for the three year period 1967 to 1969 with those for 1978 to 1980* indicates that while the average number of boys taking

* Based on applications/admissions data supplied annually to the colleges of education by the Department of Education

the Leaving Certificate Examination more than doubled between 1967/69 and 1978/80 (14, 15, 20, 21)* the number of qualified male applicants for primary-teacher education fell, during the same period by about 12 percent** During the four year period 1978 to 1981, the number of qualified male applicants who reached the standard necessary for a call to interview for primary-teacher education fell in 1979 and 1980 returning to its original 1978 level in 1981 During the same period, the number of female applicants qualifying for a call to interview rose by over 30 percent Furthermore, while over 38% of males called to interview during this period failed to attend, a little less than 23% of females were absent Finally, while just over 17% on average of females who were successful at interview refused a 'call' to training, 31% of the males called turned down the offer The refusal rate among males is significantly higher than it was in the late 1960s

As a result of these trends the proportion of males nationally in primary teacher education decreased by about 50% during the 1970s In 1973/74, it stood at 32%, by 1979/80, the proportion of males had fallen to 15.7 percent† In the once all male St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, the male/female breakdown of the undergraduate student body for 1981/82 was 17% male, 83% female

The male/female imbalance in the colleges of education has, not unexpectedly, begun to affect the overall composition of the primary-teaching profession The proportion of male teachers in national schools remained stable at about 32% from 1930 to 1970†† Between 1970 and 1980 it had fallen to 26.8% (15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 26) In this ten year period, the number of national teachers in service increased by 3,952 The number of females in the profession increased by 3,584 and male teachers by 368, giving a male/female increase ratio of 1.10 approximately

The factors determining the male/female composition of intake to primary-teacher education are complex and varied It would be simplistic

* Data for 1980/81 supplied by the Department of Education

** The average number of females taking the Leaving Certificate Examination increased by about 160% over the same period The number of qualified girls applying for primary teacher education increased by about 57 percent

† Male intake to primary teacher education for 1981/82 was 117 an increase of 34 on the previous year This marks the first increase in male intake through the open competition since 1978

†† Cf Department of Education's annual reports for the period

and misleading to explain the imbalance in intake by saying, as one Minister for Education has, that the female applicants simply 'beat the blue socks off the males in the examinations and interviews' * A number of factors must be taken into account in any serious attempt to explain the trend. The initiation of mixed (male/female) intake through open competition to all the colleges of education**, the removal of the so called marriage ban in 1958 for female national teachers†, and the more recent introduction of equal pay legislation. However, the increase in attractive and highly paid career opportunities for high-calibre male students in areas other than teaching has probably contributed most to the decrease in male intake to primary-teacher education.

The imbalance in male/female intake to the colleges of education has become particularly acute in the 1970s, a time of economic depression. It is unlikely that such a trend will reverse itself when the economy recovers and job opportunities increase††. In the face of such unwelcome developments it could, at least, be argued that no policy with regard to the financing of colleges or students of education should be pursued which would aggravate this trend further by rendering primary-teacher education less attractive to good male students. On the negative side, we would argue that to implement a series of cutbacks in the levels of support for education students at this time is ill advised since it effectively removes one of the few remaining factors which may be effective in attracting high-calibre male students into primary teacher education. On the positive side, it seems that much more could and should be done by way of public relations, advertising, and career guidance to help address, or at least retard, the growing male/female imbalance in primary teaching. To adopt a 'let's wait and see' or a 'hope for the best' attitude to issues such as the composition or quality of intake to primary teacher education would be unwise, if an adverse public impression of primary teaching, either

* *Irish Times* February 4th 1981

** This effectively began in the 1970s with the admission of female students for the first time in 1971/72 to St Patrick's College Drumcondra and the subsequent admission of males to the previously all female training colleges. The effect of this was to terminate what amounted to reserved places for men at the once all male college in Drumcondra.

† Because of an over supply of teachers in the 1930s a regulation was promulgated in April 1934 and became operative from October of that year which prohibited the continued employment of female teachers in a full time tenured teaching capacity in national schools after marriage. Those whose training was completed prior to the date of promulgation were exempt. This marriage ban was removed in 1958.

†† The level of teachers salaries is a major factor. It remains to be seen what effect if any recent salary increases for primary teachers will have on the level of male intake to primary teacher education.

as a largely female preserve or as a second-choice occupation for male students, is allowed to develop, it could be very difficult to reverse

THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE BENEFITS OF PRIMARY-TEACHER EDUCATION

Any discussion of state support for education students would not be complete without reference to Tussing's (35) study of Irish educational expenditure, since the principles which he suggests should guide public spending on education would seem, at first sight, to run counter to arguments that the colleges of education should continue to receive the present levels of state support for themselves and for their students

Tussing distinguishes between the public and private benefits of education and argues that the compulsory school going period (i.e., 6 years to 15 years) should be given preferential treatment financially by the state and that students who pursue their studies further should begin to meet the real cost of their education since they reap considerable private benefits from it. Such an argument may, at first sight, seem plausible but, in the context of primary teacher education, it fails to take adequate account of the special position given to primary education in the Irish Constitution (cf. 4, 23), the nature and needs of primary teaching, and the complex inter-relationship of the variables which affect intake to primary teacher education. It is difficult to see, for instance, how primary education could be given priority status, as Tussing recommends, if special provision were not also made and maintained for the recruitment, support, and professional preparation of high-calibre primary teachers on whom the quality of primary education so much depends.

The level of student support in the colleges of education has been identified as one of the factors which aids in the recruitment into primary teacher education of high-calibre candidates from a broad socio-economic base within Irish society. In spite of the cutbacks of recent years students in the colleges enjoy more adequate levels of support than those obtaining generally in other third level educational institutions. The continuation of such a situation could not, we think, be convincingly argued from a benefit to the student point of view. From a benefit-to-the-state perspective, however, cogent arguments could be made for maintaining student support in the colleges at a level which would continue to attract highly qualified candidates into primary teacher education and facilitate the entry of students from the less well off sectors of society. Since the average annual expenditure on pre-service primary teacher training amounts

to about 2.7%* of total annual expenditure on primary education, the financial savings which might accrue from a series of cutbacks in the level of support for education students would be very small relative to total expenditure on first level education and would scarcely justify the risks to the quality and composition of intake to primary teaching which might be incurred in the implementation of an approach such as that suggested by Tussing

One of the obvious difficulties faced by any government, however, is that of affording varying levels of support to different categories of third level students**. The fact that the budget for the preparation of primary teachers has traditionally been included in the vote for, and statement of, expenditure from public funds on primary education, might provide a basis for justifying the different approach which has operated in the financing of the colleges and students of education. If the budgetary sum earmarked for this purpose is regarded as investment in first rather than third level education, then expenditure on primary teacher education will be seen in a different light. Viewed in this way the argument for higher investment in the colleges of education and better incentives to attract high calibre male and female students into primary teaching is more plausible and can be seen to be more in keeping with the overall plan for future investment in Irish education as proposed by Tussing

There is an inherent difficulty in the present system of student support in the colleges of education for, while over 40% of students are from families with incomes (rateable evaluation) low enough to enable them to qualify for grants, once the college fee is paid, all students irrespective of their means and needs, are in receipt of levels of support which are more adequate than those obtaining throughout third level education generally. Consequently, there are some students in the colleges of education from high income families who enjoy a level of support from the state which their parents/guardians could well afford to fund. This high income group constitutes, we estimate, about 10 to 15% of the total student population in primary teacher education†.

* Based on expenditure figures for the years 1975 to 1979 (17, 19, 20, 21, 26)

** Here we are concerned not with the differences in total state expenditure per student in the various faculties or institutions but rather with differences in state expenditure on direct grants and support services to students in different areas of third level education

† This estimate is based on an examination of the parent/guardian income levels of all students in one of the larger colleges

The solution to this problem may not be the gradual reduction in the levels of support for all education students. Such an approach would probably put teacher education out of reach of would-be recruits from income groups well below or just above the grants eligibility threshold and make financial survival very difficult for many others. An alternative approach to the problem would confine student aid largely to a loans system. Schemes such as this for all third level students have been discussed on a number of occasions in recent years (1, 7, 9, 10, 11, 35).

A different approach, entailing less risk to the quality and socio-economic spread of intake to the colleges of education, would preserve the present levels of support for all education students but would involve the introduction of a sliding internal means test within the colleges whereby students from high income families would pay a proportionately higher fee to compensate the state for the level of support provided them during their years of professional preparation. The present writers would favour this approach because it would lay the extra financial burden on the better-off students. Furthermore, since it would not require any change in the existing arrangements for student services within the colleges, it would avoid serious risk to the academic and social life of these institutions. Charging the very well-off student a higher fee while maintaining student support at its existing level may also help to facilitate the continued entry to primary teacher education of students from the less well-off sectors of society, without placing heavy repayments burdens on them after graduating. Finally, at a time when the cost of third-level education generally is escalating and the opportunities outside of teaching for better qualified students have improved considerably, the maintenance of the existing levels of support on offer to students in the colleges of education may prove a helpful and even necessary incentive in continuing to attract male and female students of high calibre into primary teacher education*.

CONCLUSION

A number of issues are central to any serious discussion of the funding of primary-teacher education. The first concerns the overall level of the state's financial input to this sector of education and the criteria by which it is determined. The second relates to level of student support and the proportion of the total current budget, if any, which should be allocated

* Current unemployment among recently qualified primary teachers along with the availability of a much improved grants scheme for non-education students may also lessen the attractiveness of primary-teacher education.

directly to the support of students

A comprehensive approach to the formulation of policies on the financing of primary teacher education should be set in the context of its fundamentally important role and function in first level education. Such an approach would give considerable emphasis to the following. The special provision made in the Irish constitution for primary education and the resultant public and social nature of the enterprise, the need to recruit high-calibre candidates from a broad socio-economic base to service first-level education, and the importance of maintaining an acceptable male/female balance in intake to the colleges of education. Due consideration would also be given to the professional nature of teaching (3, 6, 12, 30 34) and the requirements of professional education in an area of this kind

Pedagogical training has evolved from mere apprenticeship, through short teacher-training courses, to university-degree courses where the profession is anchored in the liberal arts and draws heavily on behavioural sciences such as psychology, sociology, economics, psycho-linguistics, and social anthropology. As a result teacher education today places new and heavier demands on the colleges of education and, of its nature, is considerably more expensive than education in non professional areas such as arts. It demands a more favourable lecturer student ratio since it involves a greater amount of small group work and individualized attention and also requires a higher level of expenditure on equipment and materials

In recent years unit-cost comparisons between university and college of education students have strongly influenced Department of Education deliberations and government decisions on the financing of primary-teacher education (9, 10, 32). While we recognise that unit cost comparisons provide a useful index for the analysis of public expenditure on the different sectors of education, we have argued for a more comprehensive approach to the formulation of policy on the financing of primary teacher education and have discussed some of the major issues involved

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