

**PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS AND LANGUAGES
IN IRELAND'S POST-PRIMARY CURRICULUM
1878-1989**

by

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**A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
AND RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS**

**FACULTY OF EDUCATION
McGILL UNIVERSITY
MONTREAL
MARCH, 1992**

ABSTRACT

Among the problems faced by the post-primary sector in Ireland today, is the neglect of studies in the modern continental languages of German, Italian and Spanish. While the traditional languages of Irish, English and French are provided by secondary, vocational, community and comprehensive schools, German, Spanish and Italian are offered only in some. The neglect of these three languages is particularly pronounced in the vocational, community and comprehensive schools. This deficiency may have serious economic as well as educational consequences since, with the prospect of a single internal market in the European Community in 1993, Irish students may not be able to compete with their European counterparts for employment.

This thesis explores the part the system of public external examinations has played in influencing the status of languages in the curriculum. The conclusion is reached that the public examinations have contributed to the neglect of German, Spanish and Italian by creating and maintaining subject hierarchies in the curriculum.

RESUME

Parmi les difficultés rencontrées aujourd'hui dans les écoles secondaires en Irlande l'insouciance est pour certains de voir l'importance d'étudier des langues modernes tels l'allemand, l'italien et l'espagnol.

Malgré que l'enseignement des langues traditionnelles en Irlande, l'anglais et le français sont assurés dans les écoles secondaires professionnelles et collégiales, l'allemand, l'espagnol et l'italien sont offerts par quelques écoles seulement. Cette lacune pourrait entraîner de sérieuses conséquences sur l'économie et l'éducation avec la venue en 1993 d'un seul marché à l'intérieur de la communauté européenne, les étudiants irlandais ne pourront possiblement pas concurrencer pour les emplois avec leurs pairs européens.

Cette thèse cherche à démontrer l'influence joué par le système public d'examens en instaurant les langues dans le programme d'étude. Nous arrivons à conclure que le système d'examens publiques est venu à contribuer à cette insouciance à l'égard de l'importance d'apprendre l'allemand, l'espagnol et l'italien en créant une hiérarchie des matières dans les choix de cours.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background to the study

Languages have long been a central component of education in Ireland and have served different functions at various times. Although, theoretically, all languages have been taught for their literary and linguistic worth, some have served as preparatory tools for the Church and the professions, while others have been taught for business and trade. During certain periods, languages have been used as tools of assimilation and proselytization and, conversely, as means for recovering a cultural and national identity.

Given the various purposes underlying the teaching of languages in the schools, emphasis has been placed on certain languages at different times. The study of the classical languages of Latin and Greek can be traced back at least one thousand years and this tradition continued to be emphasized until 1960 and 1973 in the secondary grammar-type schools. While the Irish language was secure as the vernacular until the twelfth century, with the Norman invasion, its position was challenged by French. As a result of increasing interest shown by the British colonial monarchs in Ireland in the sixteenth century, the English language was used as a vehicle of assimilation. In the following two centuries, English increasingly became the language of status and power and threatened the position of the Irish language as the

vernacular and as a school subject. The classical tradition continued to be maintained during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in addition to French. However, it was not until the late nineteenth century, when a formal school system was established at the post-primary level, that nation-wide instruction in languages was available.

In 1878, "intermediate" or "secondary" education, obtained official status in Ireland. The Classics, English and French dominated the curriculum, but German, Spanish and Italian, while less evident, were also included. With an amendment to the curriculum, Irish (Celtic) was also introduced. A system of public external examinations known as "payment-by-results" governed the "intermediate" curriculum.

In 1898 a separate system of "vocational" or "technical" education was established. It was controlled by the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction and was geared towards the needs of industry and commerce. Unlike its counterpart in the "intermediate" sector which provided a "grammar-school" curriculum, it offered no provision for language training. It was not until the 1940's that the vocational or technical system came under the control of the Minister of Education and was subsequently governed by a public external examination.

be relatively unshakable elements of school provision and student choice. Although German, Spanish and Italian are theoretically considered to be "academic" subjects, in practice, they have seldom formed part of this "academic" core. German is provided by about 50% secondary schools while Spanish and Italian are provided by approximately 15% and 8% respectively.

In addition to the problems relating to language provision, it is also not clear if the oral component of language training will receive adequate attention. The new Junior Certificate Programme aims to ensure that the needs and aptitudes of a diverse student body be met and is tailored to this aim (Memo, 1989). The aims of modern language syllabi all suggest that equal emphasis be given to oral and written skills (Walsh, 1989). However, the public examinations may present some obstacles to the realization of this objective as they are presently weighted in favour of the written component. Although there is an oral test available, the percentage assigned to this is low. Hence, it may be that even where languages are provided, the oral aspects of language learning may be neglected.

Theoretical research on the curriculum outside Ireland has shown that the public external examinations have acted as an agent through which subjects gain a firm footing in the curriculum (Layton, 1973; Goodson, 1987). Layton and Goodson propose that there are subject hierarchies in existence

ranging from the academic to practical end of the continuum. Goodson (1987) maintains that as "academic" subjects are considered to have greater "status" than "practical" ones, they receive priority with respect to their maintenance in the curriculum.

Although no theoretical research on the curriculum has been conducted in Ireland, many researchers have noted the constraining effect exerted by the public external examinations on the curriculum (Macnamara and Madaus, 1970; Akenson, 1975; Coolahan, 1981; Mulcahy, 1981; Crooks & McKernon, 1984). However, the extent to which the public external examinations have created and supported subject hierarchies has only been touched upon in passing (Mulcahy, 1981). For the most part, the evaluation of oral languages in a public external examination has virtually been ignored.

1.3 Purpose of the study

This is an historical study of the post-primary curriculum in Ireland from 1878 to 1989. It explores the interplay between the public examinations and the status of all languages in the curriculum with the exception of English and Hebrew. It discusses the findings with respect to the future of German, Spanish and Italian.

1.4 Definition of terms

"Secondary" education was synonymous with "intermediate education" between 1878 and 1923 in Ireland in that it followed the grammar-school tradition which obtained under the Intermediate Board of Education. The secondary school was a distinct entity in Ireland until the 1960's but with the introduction of a comprehensive curriculum that decade and comprehensive examinations in the 1970's, secondary education has become synonymous with post-primary education which includes vocational, community and comprehensive schools. Secondary education caters for pupils between the ages of 12 and 18 approximately.

"Vocational or technical" schools were introduced in Ireland in the nineteenth century and were geared towards the needs of industry and commerce. These schools provided part-time and continuing education in addition to providing full-time courses to students. They were outside the realm of the Minister of Education until the 1940's and were finally merged with the secondary schools in the 1960's.

"Public external examinations" refer to the examinations held under the Intermediate Board of Education between 1878 and 1924. These particular examinations will be treated only for the purposes of background. The major public external examinations in this study are the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate Examinations which were the accepted domain of the secondary schools after 1924 but which became common to

vocational, comprehensive and community schools in the 1970's. The Day Group Certificate Examination, which was taken only by vocational students, will be alluded to briefly.

"Payment-by-results" refers to the examination system held under the Intermediate Board of Education and it is so named because schools received state grants for students based on their performance in the public external examinations.

Although the concept of "curriculum" is discussed further in chapter 2, the working definition in this study refers to

the subjects and individual syllabi which have been recommended by the Department of Education for post-primary schools in Ireland together with any evaluation of those subjects.

"Status" literally means position or relative position. It is associated with prestige, public approval, even snobbery. This concept is discussed in depth in Chapter 2.

1.5 Research questions and organization of the thesis

Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature and rationale for the study. Chapter 3 outlines the methodological approach and its rationale. Chapters 4 and 5 are responses to the basic research questions. Chapter 4 explores the changes in the curriculum and examinations over the last one hundred years and considers the extent to which the academic emphasis has been maintained in the curriculum. Chapter 5 deals with the issue of status and examines the extent to which the public external examination have given rise to subject and

language hierarchies in the curriculum and have perpetuated an academic emphasis across the entire post-primary sector. It analyzes statistics on provision and pursuit of the various languages for the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate courses. The concluding chapter, Chapter 6, considers the future provision and pursuit of German, Spanish and Italian in the post-primary system.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter contains a review of the studies which have been conducted specifically on modern continental languages and more generally on the curriculum and examinations in Ireland. As little has been written in the way of theory of the curriculum and examinations in Ireland, a review of some works conducted outside Ireland is provided. The rationale behind the research forms the conclusion of the chapter.

2.2 Review of the literature

The literature includes primary and secondary sources of data. The primary data is comprised of the Annual Reports and Rules and Programmes for Secondary Schools of the Department of Education for the years 1925 to 1990 and 1930 to 1984 respectively. The Annual Reports provide a detailed account of changes in the curriculum and examinations. The Rules and Programmes for Secondary Schools contain a breakdown of the recommended syllabi for subjects and the requirements of the curriculum and examinations. The secondary sources consist of articles from learned journals, theses, books, reports and newspapers.

2.2.1 Studies on modern continental languages

A number of studies have been conducted specifically on modern continental languages. The earliest work found focused on the teaching of modern languages by O'Tierney (1913). Although its discussion is limited to teaching, this work acknowledges the incompatibility of public examinations with the teaching of modern languages. Research on modern languages in the next sixty years was embedded in the context of other studies and it was not until twenty years ago that research dealt specifically with this area. Hill (1986) dealt mainly with French but extended her discussion to the other minority languages. Using the examination syllabi as her basic source, Hill covered the period 1878-1978. O'Reilly (1986) investigated the theoretical foundations for modern language learning as applied to Ireland and Britain. O'Callaghan (1987) studied the period from 1939 to 1979 and used statistics from the Department of Education. Hever (1988) examined arguments used to justify the teaching of second languages in the school curriculum. Williams (1989) conducted a study similar to the latter but focused mainly on the Irish language.

Although, cumulatively, all of these theses and articles contribute to an understanding of the status of languages in the curriculum, suggestions on how to promote modern languages in the curriculum are confined to traditional incentives within the public examinations (O'Callaghan, 1987). No attempt

has been made to analyze critically the way that the public examinations may have given rise to the current imbalance. Also, none of the studies is later than 1980.

2.2.2 General analyses of subjects

To see if more recent studies had been conducted on modern continental languages, the literature was reviewed for general analyses of subject presentation in the public examinations. It was found that Keelaghan (1954) analyzed presentation rates in all subjects in the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate Examinations for the period 1925 to 1950. Tansey (1978) also explored the subjects presented in both examinations and considered the relationship of gender to subject provision and choice. Kellaghan & Hegarty (1984) researched participation in the Leaving Certificate for the period 1960-1980. Their study discussed the impact of policies made in the 1960's and 1970's and concluded that the relationship was a positive one. As with studies specifically on languages, the most recent analysis of subjects which includes languages, was no later than 1980.

2.2.3 Reports on modern languages

Some reports have also been compiled on modern continental languages. As with the theses and articles which were reviewed, some of the reports are now out of date. These include Wright's Report (1977) which examined trends in

languages other than French and O'Callaghan's report (1977) which traced the emergence of languages from 1963 to 1976.

The most recent studies on the position of languages in the curriculum, but not confined exclusively to languages, were conducted by the National Youth Council of Ireland (1989) and the Council of the European Movement (1989). While their reports are very insightful, they tended to focus on present day concerns and ignored the historical circumstances which have led to the contemporary situation.

2.2.4 Conferences on modern languages

More integrated discussions of modern languages have taken place in the context of conferences in Ireland. In 1982, one was held under the auspices of Trinity College in Dublin. Papers were presented on such topics as "Reasons for learning a foreign language", "The place of foreign languages in the curriculum", "The implementation of the Irish Linguistics Institute modern language project in the classroom", "Reform in the official curricula and examinations", "National policy on future reforms", and "A communicative approach to examinations".

The Irish Council of the European Movement also held a conference in 1989. Papers dealt mainly with the need for modern continental languages and made recommendations for their promotion in the curriculum (Carpenter, 1989; Jordan, 1989 and Walsh, 1989).

Given the range of issues which have emerged from these conferences and reports, together with more recent changes in the curriculum, it is clear that a need exists for a longitudinal study which not only looks at presentation rates in examinations, but which also explores factors affecting the stratification of languages in the curriculum.

2.2.5 General works on the curriculum

To provide a context for the discussion of changes in the presentation of different languages, a number of more general studies on the curriculum were reviewed. Little was found to have been written prior to the 1960's. The most important was a thesis by MacManus (1932) who explored the school curriculum in primary and secondary education in Ireland. However, his discussion of secondary education was limited to events prior to the seventeenth century. Not until 1954 and 1960, when the Reports of the Council of Education: the Curriculum of the Secondary School were made, was there a detailed analysis of the modern secondary curriculum. These documents were followed two years later by the Investment in Education report which provides a comprehensive report on education (1962). Two noteworthy books on education in Ireland were also written at this time by McElligott (1966) and Akenson (1967).

In the 1970's, a number of theses relating to the curriculum were also written (Coolahan, 1973; 1975; Harris, 1975 and O'Connor, 1976). Coolahan's theses explored the

curricular policy and system of "payment-by-results" which obtained under the Intermediate Board of Education prior to 1924. These works provide much of the background in the current study. Akenson (1975) wrote a second book on the history of education in Ireland, which discussed the primary and secondary sectors. Tussing (1976) also produced a comprehensive report on the curriculum at this time.

The 1980's witnessed a greater interest in the curriculum. First, there was a Government White Paper (1980) which outlined future directions in education. This contains recommendations on the Irish language and modern continental languages. Trant (1980) reviewed curriculum development for the previous decade. Coolahan (1981) produced another historical description of Irish education which was well complemented by Mulcahy's (1981) book on the aims of the Irish secondary curriculum. In the context of the Curriculum and Examinations Board, Crooks wrote a report entitled In Our Schools (1987). Crooks & McKernan (1977; 1987; & 1988) also turned out a number of articles and conducted one major study on curriculum related issues.

As more interest developed in the policy making area of curriculum in Ireland in the late 1980's, two indispensable works were produced by O'Buachalla (1988) and Mulcahy & O'Sullivan (1989). In keeping with a growing attention to equality of opportunity in Irish education, a study was also conducted entitled Who Goes to College? (1988). Together with

many newspaper articles, these works provide a comprehensive overview of the history of curriculum issues which have emerged over the last eighty years. They go well beyond the range of the previously mentioned Investment in Education Report of 1962.

2.2.6 Studies on the public examinations

In addition to general works on curriculum, the literature was reviewed for studies on the public examinations. The first major one found was done by Macnamara and Madaus on the Irish Leaving Certificate (1970). Although the research was primarily concerned with how the Leaving Certificate related to Bloom's taxonomy of objectives, it also discussed the link between university matriculation requirements and the public examinations. In the same year, the Minister of Education established a committee to study the Intermediate Certificate Examination. The ICE report was published in 1974. Another study by Madaus & Kelleghan on the Leaving Certificate appeared in 1976. This one focused mainly on the influence of schools and class on student performance in the Leaving Certificate. As the 1970's continued, more critical studies appeared. Titley and Mazurek questioned the role of the public examinations in pupil selection for university. Fontes, Kellaghan, Madaus & Airasian surveyed the adult population in Ireland for the opinions on the public examinations (1980). The Department of Education initiated the

Public Examinations Evaluation Project (PEEP) (1984). Cumulatively, these works reflect a growing concern about the appropriateness of the public external examinations as the major form of assessment in the post-primary curriculum.

2.2.7 Theories of curriculum and subject evolution

Until thirty years ago, educational theorists worked separately from historians and sociologists. Consequently, theories of curriculum change were very fragmented. Since that time, and particularly as a result of developments in the sociology of knowledge, the interests of these separate disciplines have come to overlap (Franklin, 1977). Theories of curriculum change have taken on a more integrated appearance, so much so, that the curriculum itself has come to be defined as a social/historical construction (Milburn, Goodson & Clarke, 1990).

This view of curriculum as a social/historical construction gained momentum with the works of Williams (1961) who saw the curriculum as being a medium through which the legacies of the past and the interests of social groups in the present were reconciled and expressed. However, given the diversity of social groups influencing curriculum change, there has been little agreement in the literature as to how curricular conflicts ever really get resolved (Bayley, 1987). Young (1971) maintains that knowledge within the curriculum is stratified according to the cultural values of the dominant

group at any time. Williams (1973) concludes that there is a direct connection between political ideology, social position and educational policies. Gordon and Lawton (1978) view curriculum change as the outcome of the interaction patterns between individuals of influence and general social, political and economic conditions. They also note the constraining power of the public external examinations on curriculum change. Stray (1985) applies social scientific theory to curriculum development and uses a socio-economic focus. Bayley (1987) turns to Reports by Royal Commissions as sources of resolution for curriculum conflicts. Goodson (1987) argues that curriculum change occurs as a result of subject associations promoting subjects in pursuit of greater career and material opportunities.

In addition to theories of curriculum change, there are also two models of subject evolution in the curriculum. The first model was designed by Layton (1973) and the second by Goodson (1987). As with theories of curriculum, subject evolution has also been influenced by social and historical determinants. Layton's model comprises three stages which traces the evolution of a subject from its "utilitarian" or pedagogic stage to its "academic" or mature stage. According to Layton, a subject matures because of its high academic content or its embrace of theoretical or abstract knowledge. When the subject is academically mature, it enters the realm of the public external examinations and acquires an associated

base in the universities. An academically mature subject may be considered as having high status.

Goodson argues that while this is true, subjects are also promoted because of the vested interests of subject associations. Goodson's model of subject evolution comprises four stages, "invention, promotion, legislation and mythologization". Goodson maintains that, in order to increase their material and non-material resources, subject associations ensure that the content and form of knowledge of a subject meets the requirements of the dominant powers. In the past, the dominant powers have been the universities and their requirements have been for more academic content. Therefore, after the subject has been invented and promoted, one of the "legislative" mechanisms is the public external examinations which have typically served as selection tools for university. In its final stage the subject is "mythologized" where it gains the full blessing of society as a worthwhile fixture in the curriculum (Goodson, 1987).

Although Layton's and Goodson's models are quite different, they both hold that the more academically oriented a subject is, the greater its likelihood of gaining high status in the curriculum. Like Layton, Goodson refers to the subject-based curriculum confirmed by the examination system as the "academic" tradition and to low-status practical knowledge as the "utilitarian" tradition (Goodson, 1987). In summary, then, while different hypotheses are advanced, both

of these models depict the public external examinations as a medium for promoting the academic subjects to higher status in the curriculum.

2.3 Discussion of findings in literature review

Although mainstream curriculum research has recently favoured a social/historical approach, there has been no corresponding interest to such an approach in Ireland. O'Donoghue said:

of the two hundred educational theses completed in Ireland...they did little to illuminate inter-subject relationships and to probe the interface between the curriculum and the wider administrative ideological, social and political contexts of the education system (1990, p.46-48).

The only significant exception to this generalization is Coolahan's work of 1973. Indeed, the review of studies on modern continental languages showed that researchers either analyzed examination syllabi and examination statistics or discussed languages from a theoretical or philosophical perspective. No study combined approaches. Consequently, there is a need for a study which is at once social and historical and which takes the theories of curriculum change and subject evolution into account.

In adopting a social/historical approach to curriculum theory in Ireland, there are some factors to consider. In Ireland, the curriculum is centralized. The theories of curriculum, discussed earlier, relate to a decentralized

curriculum only. Kelly (1990) maintains that with the prospect of more countries adopting a centralized curriculum, it may be that curriculum theorists will have to deal with the impact of a singularly dominant bureaucratic ideology on curriculum as opposed to conflicting ideologies, which have characterized the debates in the past.

Although the curriculum in Ireland has been centralized, the determinants have been just as diverse as in a decentralized model. The determinants thus far identified have included the Catholic church, the Department of Education, various Ministers of Education, parental and social support, tradition and the public external examinations (Mulcahy, 1981).

With respect to Kelly's assumption, it has not been the centralized body of the Department of Education which is considered as the single most dominant constraint on curriculum but the system of public external examinations (O'Tierney, 1913, McGough, 1954; MacNamara and Madaus, 1970; Akenson, 1975; Titley & Mazurek, 1979; Mulcahy, 1981; Coolahan, 1981; Crooks & McKernon, 1984 and Hill, 1986). In fact, in 1984, Crooks and McKernon found that in a survey of school principals, the public external examinations were cited amongst the first three major constraints on curriculum change. Consequently, it is to the influence of the public external examinations that this study turns.

The public external examinations constitute an appropriate focal point to conduct an integrated study of curriculum. First, as the system has been in existence for at least one hundred years, a study of the public external examinations may provide some insight into the social and historical dimension of curriculum change. In so doing, it is hoped that this study will contribute to theories of curriculum change.

Second, a study of the public external examinations also allows for a theoretical component with respect to subject evolution. Because of the fact that all of the languages in the current study are included in the public external examinations and have an associated base in the universities, they are presumably considered as "academic subjects". Yet, because of the dominance of Irish, English and French and the neglect of German, Italian and Spanish, a clear hierarchy has been established. As indicated above, Layton and Goodson maintain that subjects are promoted based on their embrace of theoretical or abstract knowledge. In this study, it is assumed that in addition to their academic content, languages in Ireland have been promoted for political, religious and/or economic reasons. Therefore, there may be an additional component to Layton's and Goodson's models where languages are concerned. Consequently, the findings in this study may also contribute to the theories of subject evolution.

2.4 Conclusion

The review of the literature in Ireland reveals at least ten studies which have been conducted in the last twenty years which dealt specifically with modern continental languages. The longitudinal studies need to be updated to cover the last ten years. Therefore, this study will account for the period 1980 - 1989. There is no study on modern continental languages which examines the extent to which the public external examinations have created or maintained subject or language hierarchies in the curriculum. Nor is there a study which critically analyzes the historical role of the public examinations in perpetuating the academic curriculum in the face of a comprehensive one. Although theoretical works on the curriculum outside of Ireland have resulted in various theories of curriculum determinants and at least two models of subject evolution, there has been no systematic development of curriculum theory or subject evolution in Ireland. Therefore, in approaching the study of modern continental languages today, this study strives to incorporate a social and historical dimension as well as keeping abreast of the recent theoretical findings and applying them where appropriate. It is hoped that the findings may reveal some insights into how the modern continental languages of German, Spanish and Italian have been neglected in the past and how this may be avoided in the future.

be loosely applied. A social historical model was adopted because "history allows access to the recurrent patterns of powerful legacies on which all contemporary action must build" (Goodson, 1988, p.125). Since this is a socio/historical study, the data in Chapter 4 and 5 are presented in chronological order. However, in Chapter 5, which analyzes the part played by the public examinations in creating and maintaining subject hierarchies, less emphasis is placed on the chronological aspects and more on key areas which demanded closer study.

One part of the study that does adhere to a pre-set model is the statistical analysis of subjects presented in the public external examinations. The model used was the same as that used by O'Callaghan (1987). However, O'Callaghan omitted any discussion of the subjects Irish and English as they were taken by the majority of students. Because of the temporal scope of this study, 1878-1992, Irish has been included. It was considered that to omit it would have misrepresented the place of the other languages in the curriculum. Hebrew was omitted because it has only been taken by a very tiny minority on an occasional basis.

3.2 Data collection and analysis

An Eric search on education in Ireland was conducted in September 1989 and was useful in obtaining documents available in Canadian libraries. However, it was necessary for the researcher to go to Dublin on three separate occasions to obtain copies of primary and secondary data. The main sources of primary data were internal documents of the Irish Department of Education. Secondary sources, such as theses, articles, books and reports, which were based on the observations of others were also used (Borg and Gall, 1986).

The first research trip in November 1989 was spent collecting literature on Irish education. A visit was paid to the Irish Linguistics Institute and the Council of the European Movement where some useful reports and journal articles were obtained. Informal discussions took place with the research officer in the National Youth Council of Ireland and the director of the Council of the European Movement. These interviews helped to identify some of the major issues involved in language curricula.

On the second trip in December, 1989, a visit was paid to Professor T. Kellaghan at the Institute of Educational Research in Dublin, who recommended using the statistics from the Department of Education and who supplied photocopies of the original Annual Reports.

In the Summer of 1990, three weeks were spent reviewing journals in the library of the Department of Education in

situation. It became obvious after a while that while the theories of curriculum change were incompatible with the research that the models of subject evolution could be applied in some instances. Consequently, it was decided that the public examinations would be the focus of the thesis and the theories of subject evolution would be loosely applied.

3.3 Documents as source data

Since this is a study of documents, the methodology literature was reviewed for advice. Interestingly, contradictory counsel appeared frequently. Andrews (1985) notes that in dealing with documents we only hear selected rationales. Hammersly and Atkins (1984) warn of dangers in using official statistics. Rudolf cautions against taking the written curriculum seriously (in Goodson, 1988, p.14).

Other researchers advocate the very things that these writers warn against. Beache (1970) reminds the reader of the danger of assuming that what remains to be read is somehow representative of the author or some group with whom he is associated. Bulmer, advocates the use of official documents (in Hammersly & Atkins p. 138). Goodson recommends the use of the written curriculum, since

the written curriculum is the visible public and changing testimony of selected rationales and legitimating rhetoric of schooling (1988, p.14).

The warnings in these debates have been taken seriously. However, in the context of qualitative research where

CHAPTER 4

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

CHANGES IN THE CURRICULUM AND PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS

4.1 Background to reforms of 1924

Although Ireland had a long tradition of classical education, dating back at least one thousand years, the system of post-primary education in Ireland was not formally established until 1878. Education for Catholics prior to this date was provided by the Catholic church and various private institutions. As Ireland was a British colony, various attempts to assimilate the Irish through a school system had been made in the sixteenth century. None of the attempts met with success. The establishment of a formal post-primary education system for Catholics was further retarded in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries because of the Penal Code which forbade Catholics from acquiring an education. In spite of these laws, a series of illegal schools run by Catholic priests sprang up in Ireland. These schools allowed Catholics to continue their pursuit of a classical education. When the Penal laws were eventually revoked in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, consideration was given to a secondary education system in Ireland. Although the problem of state aid to denominational schooling was an issue, it was resolved in 1878 with the establishment of the Intermediate Education Act.

From the outset, intermediate education in Ireland was elitist. It was directed at a minority destined for university, the church or a white collar clerical job in the Civil Service or banks. Because of the intended destinations of the student body, a system of public external examinations which served as selection tools for future education and employment was introduced. The Intermediate Education Act created a board of Intermediate Commissioners who were made responsible for the administration of the public external examinations.

The public external examinations had much prestige. A system of examinations had been established in England in the mid-nineteenth century for the purposes of selecting candidates for entry into the Civil Service, the Armed Forces and the universities. Between 1860 and 1879, examinations in Ireland were administered through the Queen's university. The university offered scholarships and prizes to students competing in the examinations, regardless of denomination (Coolahan, 1981, p. 118).

Between 1850 and 1908 there were various attempts to establish a university for Catholics but it was not until 1908 that the Irish Universities Act was passed and the National University of Ireland was established. This was distinct from the University of Dublin (Trinity College) which on its establishment in 1592 was seen as a means of promoting the religion of the Established Church. The National University of

Ireland comprised four colleges, one in Dublin, Galway, Cork and Belfast. This university was to have a serious influence on the secondary curriculum via the public external examinations.

From the beginning, the examinations assumed a competitiveness which was manifest between schools and students. Prizes and exhibitions were awarded to students based on their success in the public examinations and fees were distributed to school managers based on the students' results (Annual Report, 1924, p.45). The competitiveness which was fostered through this system of "payment-by-results" was reinforced by the fact that examinations results were also printed in newspapers.

The selective and academic orientation of the examinations was reflected in the curriculum which came into effect under the Intermediate Board of Education. The curriculum in 1878 included:

Language, Literature and History of Greece, Rome, Great Britain and Ireland, France, Germany and Italy, Mathematics, including Arithmetic and Book-Keeping, Natural Sciences (Coolahan, 1973, p.174).

In the first year of the Intermediate Board Examinations, candidates had to present themselves for examination in two or more divisions. As many boys entered the priesthood or matriculated to university, they were required to study Latin or Greek (Tansey, 1978 & O'Callaghan, 1987). This did not present a problem with respect to teaching staff, since the secondary schools were run by religious orders (McElligott,

1966, p. 59). Girls, on the other hand were seldom, if ever, taught Greek and were more likely to take a modern continental language (Tansey, 1978). The distinctions in the curriculum were reinforced by the requirements of the public examinations. Boys had to present in Greek, Latin or Mathematics. Girls had to present in English, a modern continental language or Mathematics (Tansey, 1978, p.219). Students were examined in each grade, junior, middle and senior and between 1892 and 1913 a preparatory grade was in existence. The subjects were arranged in seven divisions:

Greek, Latin, English, modern languages, Mathematics, natural sciences, Music and Drawing (Coolahan, 1981, p.63).

Further distinctions in the curriculum for boys and girls were made in 1890 when the number of required subjects was increased from two to four.

GROUP A	GROUP B
Greek	Euclid
Latin	Arithmetic
French	Algebra
German	Plane trigonometry
Italian	Elementary mechanics
Celtic	Algebra/arithmetic

Two of the four subjects had to be taken from two separate groups of subjects. Boys had to select one from languages and one from Mathematics. Girls had to pass in three subjects, one of which must be from the language group (Tansey, 1978, p.219).

The separate curriculum for boys and girls was not only discriminatory in its requirements but also in its rewards. As

differential marks were allocated to the various subjects, all subjects did not have equal status. The differential marks favoured Greek, Latin and English while French, German, Italian, Spanish and Gaelic had considerably less prestige. A further distinction was made between French and German and Italian and Spanish. Hence, women were not only obliged to take the less prestigious languages, but they were penalized by the differential marks which were subsequently awarded to them.

Gender bias in the curriculum was not to become an issue until much later and the main complaint that was launched against the system at this time was its academic orientation. Consequently, a commission was established to investigate the education system in 1898. The Palles Commission identified many defects in the system including

the cramping effect of the examinations, the fact that the intermediate schools were too oriented towards the university and led away from commerce, industry and agriculture, and that the courses were too literary (Coolahan, 1973, p.179).

While Ireland was very much a church-dominated, rural society at this time, there was a growing awareness of the needs of industry and commerce. As indicated earlier, the vocational or technical system of education had been established in 1898 but was completely separate from the secondary sector in its aims and curriculum. To establish some balance in the intermediate curriculum, the Commission proposed changes which came into effect in 1902.

groups which included Classical, Modern, Mathematical and Scientific courses. Celtic was replaced as a subject by the Irish language. History and Geography were recognized as separate subjects (Annual Report, 1924, p.50).

The Irish language had been secure up until the twelfth century in Ireland but it was not really until the 19th century that serious efforts began to be made to ensure its revival as the official language. The year 1903 marked the first real attempt when the Modern Course was subdivided into two divisions. This allowed students to choose between Irish plus French or German, or French and German.

The increased emphasis on the Irish language was not without cause. From 1800 to 1918 Ireland had been governed from Westminster in England where elected Parliament members represented Irish constituencies. The governing power in Ireland was the Chief Secretary who was assisted by some junior ministers. From the beginning of the 1900's there was an increasing demand for political freedom from Britain and an accompanying growth and interest in the Irish nation and culture. In 1918, a general election was held by members of the Sinn Fein political party in Ireland. Following the election, a constituent assembly known as Dail Eireann was formed which subsequently set up a government. The Government of Ireland Act was passed in 1920 which partitioned the country into the twenty six and six counties. The former represented what is now the Republic of Ireland while the

latter continues to be under British rule. After the War of Independence in 1921, articles of agreement were signed by the British Government and representatives of Dail Eireann. In January 1922, a provisional government took office, and by December of that year, the Free State had obtained formal status. After 1922, all administrative changes were made through the Irish parliament and government.

4.2 Curriculum and examination requirements 1924-1960

As a result of a Dail Commission on Education in 1922, the Intermediate Education Commissioners were disbanded. The system of grades, with separate curriculum and examinations each year was abolished. In 1924, the Intermediate Education (Amendment) Act was passed and the Department of Education in Ireland was established. The Department of Education introduced general reforms which included: a revision of the educational basis of the system, a complete reform of the secondary programme, and the introduction of a new system of determining the amount of State financial assistance payable to a school (Annual Report, 1924). Additionally, its mandate included the revival of the Irish language in the schools.

The educational basis of the system was reformed by substituting the one year courses with three and five year courses of study. The former was called the Intermediate Certificate and the latter, the Leaving Certificate course.

With changes in the course of study, the examination

system was also revised. In lieu of the grade examinations, two new public examinations, the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate Examinations were introduced. The Intermediate Certificate was taken at around the age of sixteen and marked the end of the junior programme. The Leaving Certificate was taken after an additional two years of study.

The Department of Education was fully aware of the restrictive aspects of the public external examination at this time and they noted in 1924 that

most good authorities hold that the examination system raised the standard of secondary education over the country as a whole, although they agree that the process of evaluating all the work of a school by a written examination conducted by external examinations on a uniform curriculum tended to produce a lack of initiative and of constructive educational work in most of the schools (Annual Report, 1924, p.46).

Despite this recognition, the examinations continued to be used as instruments of selection for university, the church and public life.

The aim of the Intermediate Certificate was to testify to the completion of a well-balanced course of general education suitable for pupils who leave full-time education at about 16 years of age and alternatively to the fitness of the pupils for entry on more advanced courses of study (Annual Report, 1930, p.58).

The Department of Education noted that "the Intermediate Certificate, while not competitive, is of the same standard as the Clerical Officers' examination of the Civil Service Commissioners, on the results of which a large number of the State employees are appointed" (Annual Report, 1930, p.58). In order to obtain this certificate, a student had to pass in

five subjects which had a strong academic emphasis.

Irish or English, Mathematics, a second language and either History and Geography or Science, or Latin or Greek (Annual Report, 1924, p.51).

The Leaving Certificate Examination also served as the equivalent to the university matriculation examination. The aim of the Leaving Certificate was to

testify to the completion of a good secondary education and to the fitness of a pupil to enter on a course of study at a University or an educational institution of similar standing (Annual Report, 1930, p.58).

The only restriction for students of the Leaving Certificate in 1924 was that they must pass in five subjects one of which must be Irish or English. But the function of the examinations as selective devices for third-level education ensured that this freedom of choice was curtailed. As indicated in chapter 5, the subject choices were largely determined by the requirements of the Intermediate Certificate and the requirements of third-level institutions.

The Department of Education viewed the new programme as being very positive. For one, set texts were abolished and teachers were free to submit their own syllabus. Second, as the examinations were to be held on a three and five year basis, they were seen to allow more freedom of practice on a day to day basis. Third and most importantly, the examinations no longer served as the principal means of ensuring the income of the school (Annual Report, 1924, p.51).

Under the new system, capitation grants were provided to

schools. These grants were subject to a fixed number of attendances by students and their pursuit of approved courses of study prescribed by the Department of Education. While capitation grants were made by the State, the schools were privately run by religious orders. These secondary schools charged fees to students and were considered academically, morally and socially superior to their counterparts in the vocational sector.

As the secondary schools encouraged the moral, intellectual and religious development of their students, the curriculum was literary and academic. Such a curriculum not only satisfied but also reflected the interests of the Catholic church and the universities. The approved course of study needed to obtain a capitation grant was, not surprisingly, identical to the subjects required in the public examinations. Hence, the academic orientation of the curriculum was reinforced with respect to provision and pursuit of core subjects. In 1924, the approved core of study for junior pupils included:

Mathematics, History and Geography and two languages one of which must be Irish or English. Girls were free to take a composite subject instead of Mathematics drawn from Arithmetic and either Science or Domestic Science or Drawing or Music (Annual Report 1924, p.51).

As the Minister of Education and members of the Department of Education were all selected from the Gaelic League which promoted the Irish language and culture from the late 1800's onwards, the schools were used as the major vehicle to advance this cause (O'Buachalla, 1989). The Irish language, history, geography and literature of Ireland was emphasized, particularly at the primary level, but also in the secondary sector. From 1913 until 1960, a major movement to revive the Irish language was undertaken and resulted in the creation of three different types of schools, Class A, Class B1 and Class B2. The schools were ranked in accordance with their use of Irish as a medium or part medium of instruction and corresponding bonuses were paid in the capitation grants allocated to such schools. From 1927 onward Irish was required in the school curriculum. From 1928 it was required in the Intermediate Certificate Examination.

Although the Irish language gained increasing status in the schools, in keeping with the stated aims to avoid "cramping" the system, the Department of Education accommodated the aims of schools which had specialized in the study of the classical, semi-classical and modern continental languages. Instead of full courses, the Department suggested the presentation of half courses in certain subjects. Two half courses were to be equivalent to a full course for the purpose of grant-earning students and for the fulfilment of the requirements of the Intermediate Certificate. The minimum time

was to be half of that normally allocated to a full course. But in all cases, the pupils subjects would have to include a full course in either Irish or English (Annual Report, 1926, p.51). This proposal was put into effect in 1929 in the Intermediate Certificate Examination. Although five subjects were required to pass the examination, only the three subjects of Irish, English and Mathematics were considered essential for the granting of the certificate. The examinations were revised so that a 40% pass could be obtained with what had hitherto achieved a grade of 30% (Annual Report, 1929, p.43).

There was considerable upheaval in the curriculum in the early 1930's. On the one hand, the Department of Education was trying to adhere to pressures to promote the Irish language to high status. On the other hand, the Department clearly, did not wish to neglect the modern continental languages, particularly French and German. In 1930, the requirements for an approved school had to include Irish and English as compulsory subjects (Rules and Programmes, 1930/31, p.8). Yet, the Department indicated that a manager, who maintained the spirit of the programme, should have control over which subjects received most attention in the school (Annual Report, 1930, p. 27). The Department of Education even recommended that, owing to the fact that students have to study four languages in the Leaving Certificate classes, "French could be taken up as a non-examination subject" (Annual Report, 1930 p.218). However, in 1932 this loose

For the most part, the next five years saw no change in the curriculum. A number of proposals were submitted to associations of managers in the year 1935. Among the proposals were suggestions to introduce an oral examination in Irish and to introduce a public examination at the end of a student's second year of study. These were not put into effect and the only change that did occur was a minor one related to the course in History.

Despite the Department of Education's intentions to allow schools more flexibility in the curriculum, the full and lower courses in French and German were withdrawn in 1939. Although prescribed texts had been seen as having a "cramping" effect on examinations in 1924 (Department of Education, Annual Report, 1924, p.50), they were re-introduced in 1940 in English, Latin, Greek and modern continental languages. Two years later, set texts were also adopted for Irish. In addition to these changes, students sitting the Intermediate Certificate Examination had to present six subjects rather than five. These had to include,

Irish, a second language, History and Geography and Mathematics for boys (Annual Report, 1939, p.1).

Hence, while the educational unit adopted in 1924 had been theoretically amenable to providing subject choice, by 1940, most of the reforms had been reversed. Consequently, the curriculum became even more narrow and rigid than before.

Apart from a requirement concerning Irish, no other major changes took place until the 1960's.

4.3 Curriculum and examinations 1960-1989

Prior to 1960 secondary education was synonymous with the grammar-school. The curriculum was characterized by literary and academic subjects and was evaluated in the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate Examinations. The vocational or technical schools, on the other hand, were run by local committees and sponsored jointly by local rates and state aid. The vocational school system was governed by an examination known as the Day Group Certificate. This was taken after two or three years of post-primary school but did not provide access to university. The purpose of vocational and technical training as stated in 1940 was to:

continue and supplement the education provided in elementary schools, and includes general and practical training in preparation for employment in trades, manufacturers, agriculture, commerce and other industrial pursuits and also general and practical training for the improvement of young persons in the early stages of such employment (Randles, 1975, p.20).

Hence, in 1960 the secondary and vocational sectors remained separate and public perception generally held that secondary schools were more reputable and more desirable than their counterparts in the vocational sector.

The education system in Ireland was closely scrutinized at the beginning of the 1960's. A number of reports emerged which identified, amongst other things, the need to reconsider

the place of Irish, Latin and Greek. By 1960, it was apparent that the policy to revive the Irish language through the schools had not met with great success. The place of Latin was also questioned given the increasing use of the vernacular in the Catholic church. Greek had even less use than Latin and interest in had declined considerably. In 1961, in anticipation of membership in the European Community, a report entitled "Educating Towards a United Europe" was produced. It recommended that

Irish should take its place on the school time table on a par with other languages: that the emphasis should be on oral work: that the Government should give fresh and mature consideration to its policy and its methods for implementing it, if it insists on retaining it (Randles, 1975, p.76).

and that

a new approach is required also to the teaching of modern continental languages....We must teach more students to speak, read and write these languages with facility. The chances of success in a European framework will be greatly reduced if we do this immediately (Randles, 1975, p.76).

A far more significant, but largely conservative document was the Report of the Council on Education: the Curriculum of the Secondary School which appeared in 1962. Although this report approved of the elevated position of Irish in the curriculum and supported the status quo with respect to the curriculum and examinations, the authors of this report made a reservation.

We are convinced that the major factor in the limitation of modern language teaching is the amount of time devoted to Irish in the limited weekly period of twenty seven hours (1960, p.284).

With the pressures for change in the curriculum at this time in most of the developed world, the retention of traditional and non-practical subjects was contentious. This report was apparently unable to cope with such a dilemma. On the one hand, it recognized the dominant position of Irish and its demand for time and resources. On the other hand, it continued to recommend its high status. The report also identified the lack of utility of the Classics but nonetheless, condoned their presence. While the Council supported the promotion of modern continental languages, its motivation was heavily influenced by cultural rather than intellectual considerations. The Council's statements gave far more emphasis to the benefits which would accrue to the Irish language and culture than the advantages associated with a knowledge of a modern continental language.

The teaching of modern languages will make a most valuable contribution to our national culture. They will help to keep us in contact with those sources of culture on the continent which enriched the minds of past generations in our country and lessen the impact of Anglo-American culture which has exercised and is still exercising an excessive influence on us. We believe that, at least among abler pupils, the study of a modern continental language will stimulate rather than retard the study of the Irish language, both because it will remove the impression that English is the only language which counts in the world outside Ireland, and for the generally accepted reason that the study of one language assists the study of others (1960, p.170).

Despite the Council's recognition of the need for an oral component in languages in the examinations, "for various reasons, it was not disposed to recommend an oral test for either certificate" (1960, p.266). Moreover, to accommodate those schools which could not provide for a full course in languages, it recommended "alternative restrictive syllabus, designed to give pupils at least a "reading knowledge" (p.268). Consequently, not only was the purpose of developing the oral component defeated, but, once again, by confining the study of modern languages to the "abler" pupils, the academic rather than practical elements of the curriculum were again reinforced.

Another report, the Investment in Education Report (1962) also remarked upon the differential status of languages in the curriculum. It found that almost twice as much time was given to Irish and English than was allotted to Latin and Greek at junior and senior level. In turn, Latin and Greek were granted double the time allocated to modern continental languages. In boys' schools, Latin and Greek received more time than in girls' schools. Conversely, girls' schools gave more time to modern continental languages than Latin (Investment in Education Report, p.278). Hence, not only did the curriculum support Irish, English, Latin and Greek as high status subjects, but the hierarchy in this instance would have again favoured boys.

In addition to languages, the recommendations of the various reports set the stage for more sweeping changes in the education system. The Tuairim Report pointed out that investment in education was economically and socially very desirable and it encouraged the raising of the school leaving age (Dublin branch of Tuairim, 1961, cited in Randles, 1975, p.76). The findings of the Investment in Education report had an even greater impact and resulted in changes subsequently made by the Minister for Education in 1962. Dr. Hillery proposed a common examination for students in vocational and secondary schools. He also proposed that the courses from the Day Group Certificate be coordinated with those of the Intermediate Certificate.

As a result of the above proposals, the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate Examinations were made available to the vocational students in 1966 and 1968. New comprehensive schools were built to cater for the lack of existing facilities in some parts of the country. This measure helped to provide a link between the hitherto separate entities of the secondary and vocational sectors. A scheme of free education was introduced in 1968 and the school leaving age was raised in 1972.

In addition to the introduction of common examinations and common schools for all students, there were innovations in the curriculum. However, these innovations met with resistance, particularly with respect to languages. In 1968

the Department of Education recommended that the subjects, Gaelige, English and the modern continental languages "would" include an oral test which was, presumably, in anticipation of Ireland's membership in the E.E.C. in 1973 (Rules & Programmes, 1967, p.27). However, in 1971, this wording had altered to "may include" an oral assessment (1971, p.27). By not requiring an oral assessment, the academic orientation of the curriculum was reinforced. In 1969, a proposal was made to include a technical Leaving Certificate which would parallel the existing academic Leaving Certificate. However, like the oral examinations it was not undertaken. Instead, in 1971, technical and business subjects were introduced into the Leaving Certificate course. In order to create some specialization, a group system of subjects was also recommended. Subjects were grouped into different categories in the Leaving Certificate and it was recommended that each pupil should take at least three subjects from the group of subjects for which he/she is best fitted and at least two subjects from outside that group (Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools, 1971, p.17). The groups consisted of:

Language:

Irish, English French, German, Italian, Spanish, Latin, Greek and Hebrew.

Science:

Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Physics and Chemistry, Biology, Applied Mathematics.

Business Studies:

Accounting, Business Organization, Economics, Economic History.

Applied Science:

Engineering Workshop Theory and Practice, Technical Drawing, Building Construction, Mechanics, Physics and Chemistry, Applied Physics, Agricultural Science, Agricultural Economics, Home Economics, (Scientific and Social), Home Economics (General).

Social Studies:

History, Geography, Art (including Crafts), Music, General and Practical Musicianship, General Musicianship, Home Economics (General (Rules & Programmes Secondary School, 1971, p.17)).

However, just like the other changes, this group system was never made compulsory and consequently was seldom practised.

A similar resistance to change was evident in other areas also. Despite innovation in the curriculum, the subjects required for an approved school in 1971 continued to include the traditional subjects. They provided a choice only between three extra subjects, one of which was a language, Commerce or a Business Studies' subject. The approved course for junior students also remained unaltered except that students could choose from a higher or lower course in Irish, English and Mathematics. All students had to take Civics and vocational students had to take subjects pertaining to their specialization. At the Leaving Certificate level, the students had flexibility as before and the only subject that remained essential was the Irish language (Rules and Programmes, 1971, p. 12).

Despite the merging of the academic and vocational curriculum, the aims of the Intermediate examination remained more or less the same.

The aim of the Intermediate certificate is to testify to the completion of a well-balanced course of general education suitable for pupils who leave full-time education at about 16 years of age and, alternatively, to the fitness of the pupils for entry on more advanced courses of study in a post-primary school (Rules and Programmes, 1970).

The changed aims of the Leaving Certificate were more obvious, but the continuous and even reinforced emphasis on the examinations was unmistakable:

The aim and purpose of the Leaving Certificate course is to prepare pupils for immediate entry into open society or for proceeding to further education. The examination is mainly a test of achievement. Employers and others wishing to use it for selection purposes are advised to institute their own supplementary tests, which should assess aptitude rather than achievement. High standards will be set in the Leaving Certificate Examination and it is strongly recommended that pupils should not be presented in too many subjects - not more than seven in any case (Rules and Programmes, 1970, p.29).

Although the courses which were required and approved by the Department of Education did not change radically, the list of approved subjects in the Intermediate Certificate expanded from fifteen to twenty-two between 1924 and 1962 and to twenty-six subjects thereafter. In the Leaving Certificate the same list expanded from twenty-one in 1924/5 to thirty one in 1962. In some cases, the expansion was due to the subdivision of subjects into specialized areas (Mulcahy, 1981, p.34). Mulcahy has suggested that, the rules and requirements

of the secondary curricula and examinations were simply extended across the entire post-primary sector and has argued that the consequence of this was to rob the vocational sector of its very precise aims of training for the work force and to impose the academic and literary dominance of the secondary curriculum on vocational students (1981, p. 36-37).

As a result of the diverse student body present in the schools, different problems began to emerge. These problems, in turn, increased the need for more research on the public examinations and the curriculum. Consequently, a study of the Irish Leaving Certificate was conducted by Macnamara and Madaus (1970). These researchers found that the Leaving Certificate tested the very low objectives on the Bloom Taxonomy of Objectives. This meant that the test only measured achievement and not aptitude and exploded the myth that the public examinations should be used as tools for selection for higher education or employment. As suggested by the date, these findings coincided with the changed aims of the Leaving Certificate Examination in 1970. The Minister of Education also established a committee to evaluate the Intermediate Certificate Examination and to advise on new types of public examinations (Crooks, 1977, p.38). The committee proposed a system of school-based assessment monitored by a central body (M.E.A.S.) which would take responsibility for all aspects of the curriculum and examinations (Crooks, 1977, p.39). As a consequence of this

proposal, a new board known as the Interim Curriculum and Examinations Board was established.

As more research emerged on the curriculum and examinations, further measures were taken with respect to languages. In 1973, Latin was no longer required by the National University of Ireland as a matriculation subject. The compulsory pass in the Irish language was no longer necessary to obtain the examination certificate. These modifications were accompanied by Ireland's entry to the European Community which escalated innovations at a rate unprecedented.

With the availability of external funding from the European Economic Fund, some projects relating to vocational issues were implemented. In 1976, the Council of the European Communities and the Ministers of Education agreed to resolve the problem of inadequate preparation of youth for work as the merging of the secondary and vocational curricula had not met with its anticipated success. Consequently, measures were taken in 1977 and 1978 to introduce pre-employment courses. The Shannon Project for Interventions for Relevant Adolescent Learning (SPIRAL) was also initiated as was the Early School Leavers Project.

Ireland's membership of the European Community also resulted in projects for languages. Just as priority had been given to the Irish language in the past, funding was again directed towards its promotion. Two projects were proposed in 1973. One was the Irish Studies programme which was never

instituted. In addition to other problems, it was rejected because of its assessment procedures (Crooks & McKernon, 1984, p. 13). A second project Nua Chursa Gaeilge was introduced and approved by the Minister. The Department of Education accepted alternative forms of assessment as equivalent to the Intermediate Certificate Examination. There were also other projects in Irish. One project was promoted by Bord na Gaeilge and another was initiated by the Curriculum Development Unit at Shannon. The former was directed at less academic students and focused on the oral aspects of the language. The latter was aimed at urban teenagers in Dublin (Crooks & McKernon, 1984, p. 30).

The attempts to revive Irish were also accompanied by greater interests in Latin. The Cambridge Classics Project which contained a new methodology for teaching Latin was adopted in some Irish schools. Three years after Ireland's entry into the European Community, modern languages were also included in the action programme for education. A seminar was held in 1979 which presented the "skeleton syllabus" for the communicative approach presently used by the Council of Europe. The first materials and audio tapes were published by 1983. The materials were developed in French and German and more slowly for Italian and Spanish. In 1984, the first guidelines for a general policy to improve the knowledge of modern languages in the European Community were established.

The aim of the policy was to

offer as many young people as possible in the Community the opportunity to acquire a practical knowledge of at least two languages in addition to their mother tongue (Languages for 1992, p.20)

As Irish and English were compulsory subjects and French was provided in the majority of schools in Ireland, the numerical requirement of two or three modern languages was met. In reality, however, German and Italian appear to be the languages most required for business and trade.

In addition to vocational training and languages, Ireland's entry to the European Community also focused attention on the issue of evaluation and assessment. Although an Interim Curriculum and Assessment Board was established in 1977, it was disbanded in 1987 when the Minister announced her intention to reconstitute it as a Council for Curriculum and Assessment on a non-statutory advisory basis (Crooks, 1987, p.7). This meant that the control of the public external examinations remained under the administration of the Department of Education. This is significant because the proposals of the Interim Curriculum & Examinations Board regarding assessment procedures were quite in favour of local assessment and recognized the inappropriateness of the public examinations as the sole form of evaluation. Meanwhile, the Public Examinations Evaluation Project (PEEP, 1984) recommended assessment at three levels for the Intermediate Certificate, higher, lower and basic skills. The PEEP report differed from the ICE report in that it placed more emphasis

on working within the system of the public external examination system (Crooks & McKernan, 1984, p.35). Hence, despite the potential for a radical move in the public external examinations, with the disbanding of the Interim Curriculum and Examinations board, the status quo was again reinforced with respect to evaluation procedures.

Although there seems to have been an unwillingness to change the structures and procedures for evaluation, in Ireland, some progress has been made with respect to the teaching of languages. Between 1984 and 1989, new syllabi were introduced in French and German. In 1988, they were introduced in Italian and Spanish (NYCI, Young People and the New Europe, p.8). In 1988, a European Economic Community plan, known as the Lingua Programme, was also initiated. The first phase of this programme which was designed to promote the teaching and learning of languages began in 1990 and is to run for five years. Within the course of compulsory full-time education, it aims to

encourage young people to study at least one foreign Community language and to acquire a working knowledge of two Community languages (Languages for 1992, p.30).

In addition to the European directed programmes, other reports urging the promotion of modern languages also emerged. These reports were particularly concerned with the lack of language training facilities in the traditional vocational schools. In Languages for 1992, it was noted that

the now widespread - absence or decline in the teaching of foreign languages in technical and vocational training establishments is thus inconsistent with an equal opportunities policy (Languages for 1992, p.19).

In 1989, the National Youth Council of Ireland commented:

Those young people involved in the vocational educational system are much less inclined to pursue a foreign language as a subject and consequently approximately two thirds would have no skill whatsoever in a foreign language (Young People and the New Europe, 1989 p.9).

Moreover, because of the legacy of modern continental languages in girls' schools, these schools are still more likely to provide a modern continental language than boys schools. Hence, although girls had traditionally been discriminated against with respect to languages, the current situation discriminates against boys.

In an effort to encourage the wider participation in German, the National Council of Curriculum and Assessment and the Irish Council of the European Movement recommended that German and other modern continental languages be taken at Leaving Certificate level, even if they had not been taken in the Intermediate Certificate (1989, 1989). At the time of writing, these proposals had not been adopted by the Department of Education.

The need to encourage wider participation in languages seems crucial. In 1989, 50% of the population of Ireland was under twenty five and unemployment records were the third highest in Europe. The literature on drop-outs in adult and vocational education in Ireland indicated that significant numbers of adolescents were not being catered to in the post-

primary schools.

Out of 65,000 young people which form each cohort, 5,000 leave school without sitting any state examination. Another 5,000 sit Group Cert or Inter Cert but achieve less than 5 D's in the examination. At the other end of the scale, more than 45,000 sit for the Leaving Certificate but only 17,000 move on to higher education (Crooks, 1988, p.4).

This means that at each end of the scale there are 10,000 and 17,000 students with entirely different aptitudes and abilities to be catered for with respect to language learning. There are almost 40,000 somewhere in the middle, some of whom will go on to do the Leaving Certificate Examination and some who will not.

In order to meet the needs of the changing body of students in the schools, the Department of Education established the new Junior Certificate Programme in 1989. This Certificate subsumed the original Intermediate and Day Group Certificate. To accommodate the diverse aptitudes and interests, higher and lower level courses were made available in all languages except Irish, where there is also a foundation course. Even though this programme will have its first examination in 1992, in 1989, the public external examinations had yet to be aligned with these curricular changes (Department of Education, M16/89). To complicate matters further, in 1989, it was proposed that the National University of Ireland would abolish its matriculation examination contingent on the agreement of the Department of Education. If so, the National University of Ireland would

have a major say in the Leaving Certificate Examination. It was proposed that the NUI could see draft Leaving Certificate papers and make comments. It would allow for representatives of the NUI at the marking conferences and permit NUI representatives to select and read a number of candidates scripts (The Irish Times, Monday, March 27, 1989, no.41,329). At the time of writing, these proposals had not been finalized. However, if they are, it may well be that the academic bias which has dominated the secondary curriculum through the external examinations over the last one hundred years may not be eliminated, but be reinforced.

4.5 Summary

Between 1850 and 1990 many major developments occurred in secondary education in Ireland. Under the Intermediate Board of Education (1878-1923) at least three attempts were made to ensure that the curriculum reflected the changing needs of society and not just the interests of the universities. However, the system of public external examinations which had increased the status of schools and colleges in Ireland between 1850 and 1878 was retained under the Intermediate Board of Education. As the results of the examinations served as the basis by which funds were allocated to schools, the examinations assumed great importance in the public eye. Consequently, despite the emerging needs of society, the curriculum was oriented towards an academic end.

The traditional grammar-school curriculum which obtained under the Intermediate Board of Education was more or less inherited intact by the Department of Education in 1924. Although the system of "Payment-by-Results" was abolished, a system of public external examinations was retained. As the examinations of the Intermediate and Leaving Certificates served as instruments by which students were selected for the Civil Service, university and other forms of employment, the examinations continued to exert a strong pressure on the curriculum. The examinations acted as a catalyst for the promotion of the Irish language and the Classics after 1924. Throughout the late 1920's and 1930's, the Department of Education tried to promote the modern continental languages of French and German by introducing full and lower courses, but by 1939, these courses were withdrawn. The curriculum once again resumed a rigid and academic character.

The dominant positions of Irish, Latin and Greek was not challenged again until the 1960's when education began to be seen as an economic tool rather than only as a means of promoting moral, intellectual and religious development. At least three reports were prepared at this time. Some were more critical than others. The Tuairim Report was progressive with respect to languages and education. The Report of the Council on Secondary Education (1960) was, for the most part, conservative and suggested little to change the status quo. The Investment in Education report (1962) which was concerned

with the economic development of Ireland was far more critical of the existing system. From it, some major developments materialized including the introduction of free education, the raising of the school leaving age and the merging of the vocational and secondary sector. In adopting these measures, Ireland, like other countries at the time, was preparing a workforce for the increasing demands of industry and technology.

Although there has been expansion in industry and technology in Ireland, in the last thirty years, there has also been chronic unemployment. Even though free education provided equality of opportunity, the curriculum of the merged secondary and vocational sector has not prevented students from dropping out of school. This has resulted in a significant number of unemployable youngsters in Ireland.

Ireland's economic development expanded further when it joined the European Community in 1973. Through the European Community, more funds became available for development in education and with these funds, new projects emerged to cater for vocational and technical needs. Funds were also directed towards languages. Although the efforts to revive the Irish language had failed relative to expectations in the 1920's and 1930's, Irish received funding as a minority language. Despite the decline of Latin, a new project was adopted to revive its teaching in the schools. Funding was also directed towards the promotion of French, German, Spanish and Italian. However,

there are indicators that Italian and Spanish in particular will suffer cutbacks. These languages have benefitted from new methodologies and syllabi which have been introduced in the schools. In an effort to come to terms with the diverse clientele in the schools, a new Junior Certificate Programme was introduced in 1989. However, despite many criticisms of the public external examinations, they have been retained as the major form of evaluation. With the potential for increased involvement of the National University of Ireland in the Leaving Certificate Examination, it may well be that the public external examinations may, through their academic emphasis, constrain curriculum development, in general, and the promotion of modern continental languages, in particular.

CHAPTER 5

THE PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS

5.1 Curriculum change and subject evolution in Ireland

The review of documents for the last one hundred years indicated that languages in the curriculum were promoted by different social groups in Ireland. These groups included the Catholic Church, the Gaelic League, the National University of Ireland and the Department of Education. Since 1960, languages were also promoted through official and non-official reports which emanated from Ireland and the European Community. Therefore, despite the fact that the curriculum in Ireland has been centralized, change has resulted from a variety of sources. Thus, because of the diversity of influences, Kelly's theory that a centralized curriculum is associated with a dominant bureaucratic ideology (see chapter 2) does not apply to the promotion of languages in Ireland.

Even so, that does not mean that a dominant ideology has not been present. In fact, it seems that between 1924 and 1960 there was a dominant cultural ideology which was manifest by the promotion of the Irish language. Further, it appears that the curriculum in Ireland has been dominated by an "academic" ideology, which has been manifest by the choice of subjects provided and the standards expected of students in schools.

The emphasis on academic subjects and standards, would seem to support Layton's and Goodson's models of subject

evolution to some degree. As mentioned in chapter 2, these researchers argue that subjects are promoted because of their embrace of theoretical or abstract knowledge. However, given that the Irish language was promoted for cultural, rather than academic reasons, their theories do not hold entirely. Moreover, given the decline of Latin and Greek in the 1950's and 1960's, which were considered to be highly abstract and theoretical, Layton's and Goodson's theories are again suspect.

Despite some contradictions, however, Layton's and Goodson's theories certainly carry some weight. For one, there is evidence that Latin may be revived. Second, there has been a clear distinction between the promotion of French and German and Italian and Spanish. The reasons for these distinctions are unclear, but there seem to be an unspoken understanding that French and German are more difficult subjects than Italian and Spanish. Consequently, the latter tend not to be promoted as much. However, it must be remembered that all of these languages have already gained a firm footing in the curriculum and have an associated base in the universities. As such, all of these languages are considered as "academic" subjects with respect to Layton's and Goodson's models. Therefore, while the author of this study agrees that the public external examinations have served as a "legislative" device in Ireland, it is further assumed that after a subject has been "legislated", the public examinations have also

facilitated the promotion or demotion of a subject to higher or lower status in the curriculum, independent of their academic content. Therefore, this chapter deals mainly with how the public external examinations have created and manipulated subject hierarchies in the curriculum and how, through the pressure for an academic emphasis in the curriculum, these hierarchies have been reinforced.

5.2 The creation of subject hierarchies

When the Intermediate Board of Commissioners formalized the system of public external examinations in Ireland, they set a precedent for a hierarchy amongst languages. First, different marks were awarded to languages, thereby, favouring some languages over others. As indicated in table 5.1, higher marks were given to Latin, Greek and English than French and German. French and German were also awarded higher marks than Irish, Spanish and Italian.

TABLE 5.1
DIFFERENTIAL MARKS ALLOCATED TO SUBJECTS
UNDER INTERMEDIATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Marks</u>
Greek, Latin and English	1200
French and German	700
Celtic	600
Italian and Spanish	500

Source: Coolahan, 1973, p. 177.

In having twice as many marks as other subjects in the curriculum, Latin, Greek and English were heavily favoured.

This was evident in two ways. First, these marks were used as a basis for awarding exhibitions to students. Second, payments were made to school managers based on students' results in two subjects. As the payment was calculated according to the aggregate marks up to a fixed maximum, the higher the marks a particular subject obtained, the more likely it was to be provided by schools and presented by students (Annual Report, 1924, p.49).

When the practice of awarding different marks to subjects was discontinued in 1908, there was a shift in emphasis in languages presented. As shown in table 5.2, in 1910, English, French and Irish ranked highest in popularity while, Latin, German and Greek were less favoured. In 1920, there was an increase in the numbers presenting Irish and a corresponding decline in French and German. This increase in Irish was presumably due to the matriculation requirements of the National University of Ireland established in 1910.

TABLE 5.2
SUBJECTS PRESENTED
AT PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS UNDER INTERMEDIATE BOARD

<u>Year</u>	Total students/ <u>English</u>	<u>Greek</u>	<u>Latin</u>	<u>Irish</u>	<u>French</u>	<u>German</u>
1910	11,476	1,048	5,033	6,397	11,003	2,132
1920	12,734	1,170	6,088	8,332	8,829	803

Source: (Coolahan, 1973, p.194).

Despite the fact that this custom of allocating different marks to subjects created hierarchies amongst languages, this practice was resumed under the Department of Education in 1924.

TABLE 5.3
DIFFERENTIAL MARKS AWARDED TO SUBJECTS
UNDER THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
INTERMEDIATE CERTIFICATE

Year	1930	1931	1949	1965	1974	1989
Irish (literature)	400	600	600	600	600	
Irish (language)		300	300	300	300	
English (literature)	400	400	400	400	400	
English (language)		200	200	200	300	
Latin and Greek (each)	400	400	400	400	400	
French, German, Italian, Spanish (each)	300	300	400	400	400	
Lower courses		150				

Source: (Department of Education, Rules & Programmes for secondary schools, 1930, 1931, 1949, 1965, 1974, 1989).

As table 5.3 indicates, in 1930, there was no distinction between marks for Irish, English, Latin and Greek in the Intermediate Certificate Examination. When the Department of Education recognized that Irish was not receiving sufficient attention in the schools, in 1931, Irish was allotted more marks than English. This measure remained in effect until 1974. To this day, bonus points can still be gained by students who answer examinations through Irish. There was also a difference in the marks allotted to French, German, Italian and Spanish which did not gain the same marks as English, Latin and Greek until 1949.

Differential marks were also allocated in the Leaving Certificate and followed the same pattern as before.

TABLE 5.4
DIFFERENTIAL MARKS AWARDED TO SUBJECTS
UNDER DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LEAVING CERTIFICATE

Year	1930	1943	1949	1965	1973	1989
Irish		600	600	600*	600*	
English		400	400	400	400	
Latin and Greek (each)		400	400	400	400	
French, German, Italian, Spanish (each)		300	400	400	400	

*The Irish paper was broken into 500 written and 100 oral in 1965 and 450 written and 150 oral in 1973.

Source: Dept. of Ed. Rules & Programmes 1943, 1949, 1965, 1973).

As shown above, the Irish language consistently gained higher points than the other subjects. English, Latin and Greek were considered equal. However, the modern continental languages did not have the same status as English, Latin and Greek until 1949.

Although the system of "payment-by-results" had been abolished by 1924, the reintroduction of differential marks to subjects reinforced the competitive nature of the examinations. When the Department of Education revised the system, it substituted scholarships for the exhibitions and awards that had been granted under its predecessor. As scholarships were given to candidates on the aggregate mark obtained in subjects presented in the Intermediate Certificate Examination, the subjects with greater mark earning potential were favoured. This was borne out by the

required to be presented. The Leaving Certificate Examination required that five subjects be presented. Because of the high standard expected in the Leaving Certificate, the Department of Education recommended that no more than seven should be taken (Rules & Programmes for Secondary Schools, 1984, p.29). Students normally present eight subjects in the Intermediate Certificate Examination. Thus, the students' choice of subjects in both examinations was limited to two subjects outside the core. The effect of this was to allow three languages to be taken, two of which were Irish and English and one extra which was optional.

Mulcahy has claimed that the specialization in the Leaving Certificate courses has also resulted in continuity of subject choice between the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate courses. He noted that although Irish was the only compulsory subject in the Leaving Certificate Examination, students generally pursued those courses in the Leaving Certificate which had been taken in the Intermediate Certificate (Mulcahy, 1981, p.151). This tendency was also commented upon in the Report of the Council

Normally, the senior course will be devoted to the somewhat specialised study of subjects which were included in the junior course (1962, p.224).

The fact that there is continuity between subjects presented in the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate Examinations is not altogether surprising, considering that the core requirements of the Intermediate Certificate have typically

corresponded to the core required for the allocation of capitation grants. Hence, once subjects were obligatory, there were teachers available to teach them. Thus, the likelihood of obligatory subjects being offered at the higher levels was increased. Since the obligatory courses of Irish and English were taken in the Intermediate Certificate and since Latin, Greek or French were most frequently offered, the chances of taking these in the Leaving Certificate were fairly high.

Mulcahy also noticed that in an attempt to create specialization in subject areas, the actual duration of the course of study in the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate was restrictive. Courses last for three and two years respectively. Once taken, it was not possible for a student to drop or substitute a subject. Hence, the expectations of the examination system worked hand in hand with the curriculum to maintain high standards and, thereby contribute to subject hierarchies.

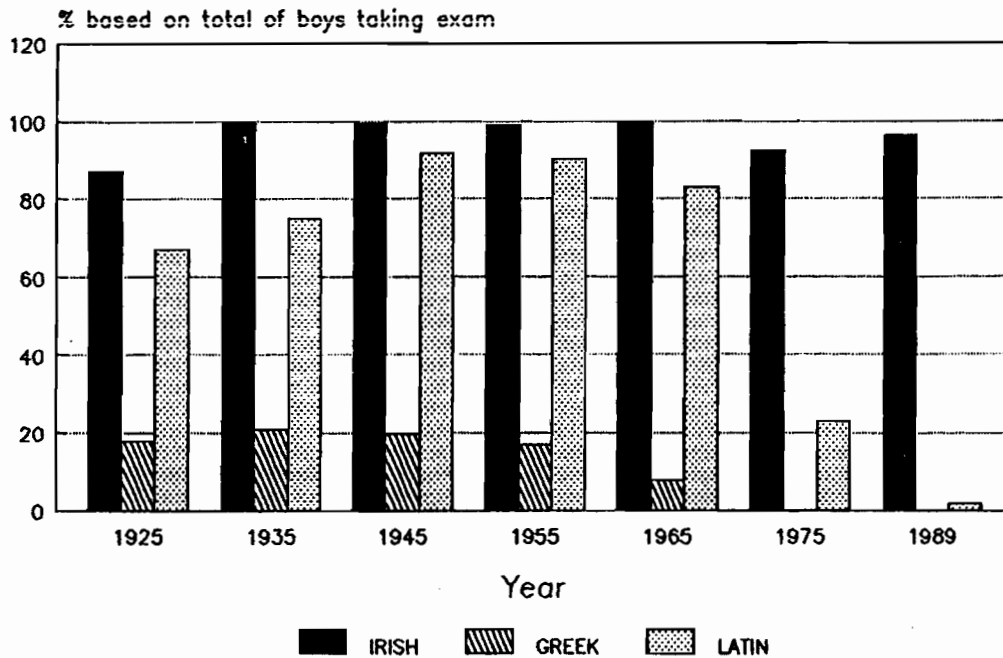
In summary, the assumption in this study is that in addition to acting as a "legislative" device, the concomitant devices associated with the examinations system like the introduction of differential marks to subjects, the allocation of scholarships and the requirements of third level institutions have contributed to the creation of subject hierarchies in the curriculum. Additionally, the expectation for high academic standards has ensured that subject choice was restricted, and the subject hierarchies reinforced.

5.3 Patterns in languages pursued 1925-1989

On the basis of the assumption stated above, an analysis was made of subjects presented in languages between 1925 and 1989. As indicated in figures 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, and 5.8, the analysis of subjects presented in the Leaving and Intermediate Certificate Examinations shows that until 1965, the position of modern continental languages was very marginal as compared with Irish, Latin and Greek. After 1925, presentation rates in Irish rose steadily and stayed at almost 100% until 1989. This was undoubtedly due to the requirements of the National University of Ireland prior to 1924 and its compulsory status in the curriculum thereafter. Latin and Greek increased in presentation between 1935 and 1955. This would appear to be due to the differential allocation of marks prior to 1949 and the fact that the Department of Education supported their revival after 1925 (Annual Report, 1929, p. 74). As these languages were also required by external institutions, they were widely pursued. The decline of Greek and Latin coincides with their abolition as matriculation subjects in 1950 and 1973 respectively. With the decline of these subjects in the 1960's and 1970's, there was a considerable increase in boys taking French. It is commonly accepted that French was substituted for the "extra" language requirement in the curriculum. Although French had been consistently taken by girls prior to the 1970's, there was an increase even in French for girls as Latin declined.

FIGURE 5.1

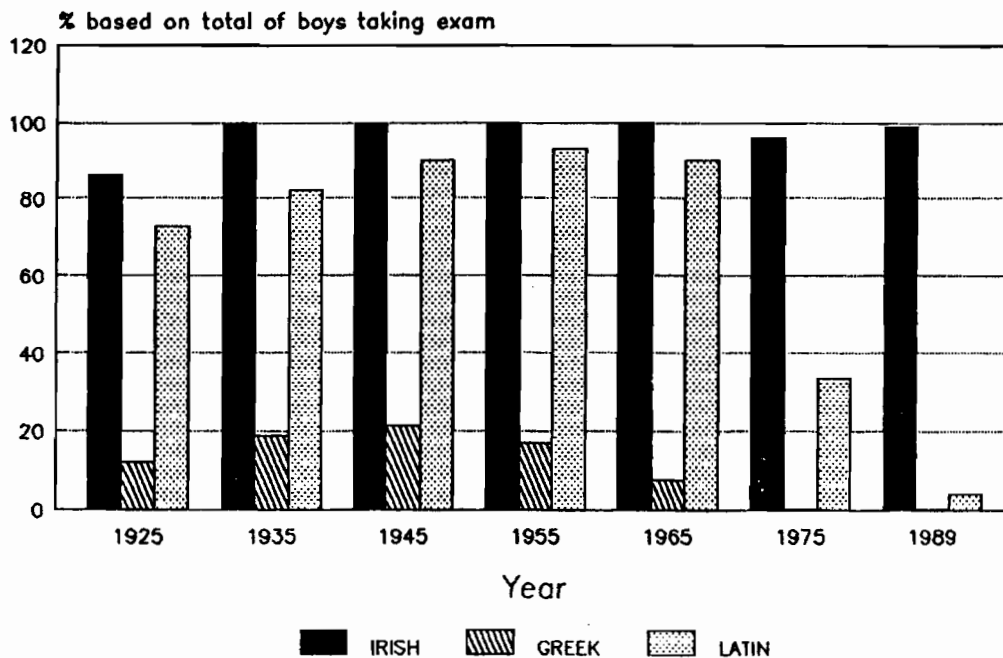
Boys' Leaving Certificate Languages presented in examination



Source: Dept. of Ed. Annual Reports

FIGURE 5.2

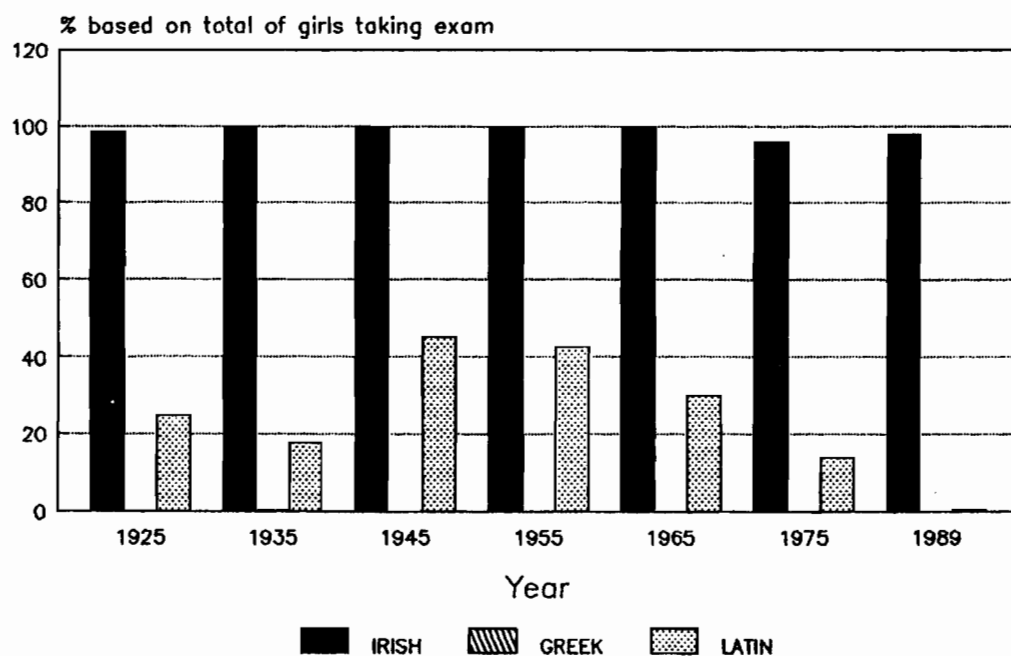
Boys' Intermediate Certificate Languages presented in examination



Source: Dept. of Ed. Annual Reports

FIGURE 5.3

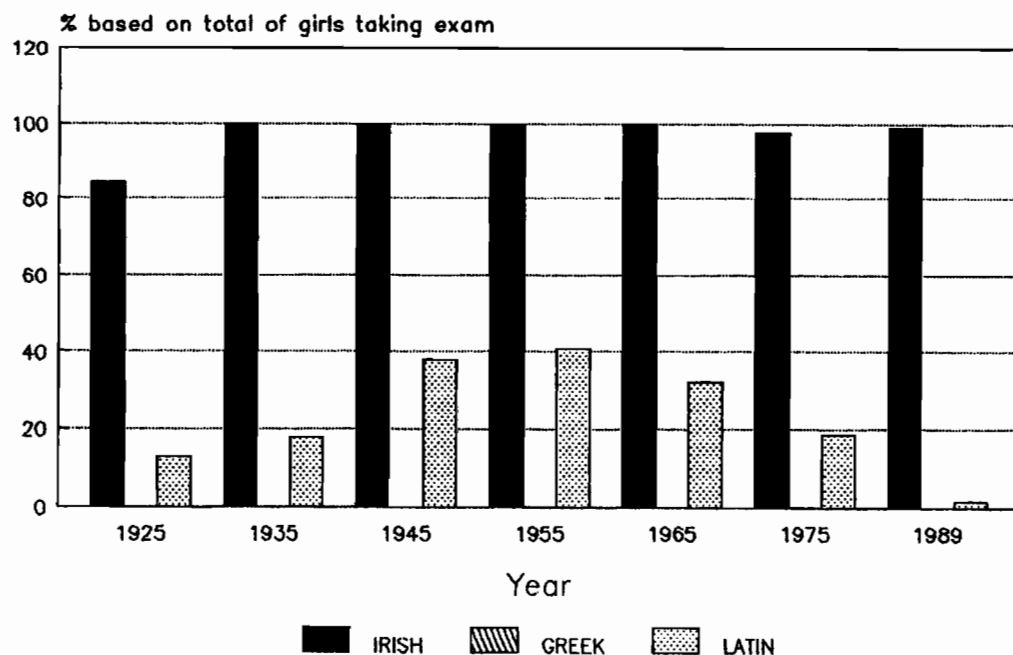
Girls' Leaving Certificate Languages presented in examination



Source: Dept. of Ed. Annual Reports

FIGURE 5.4

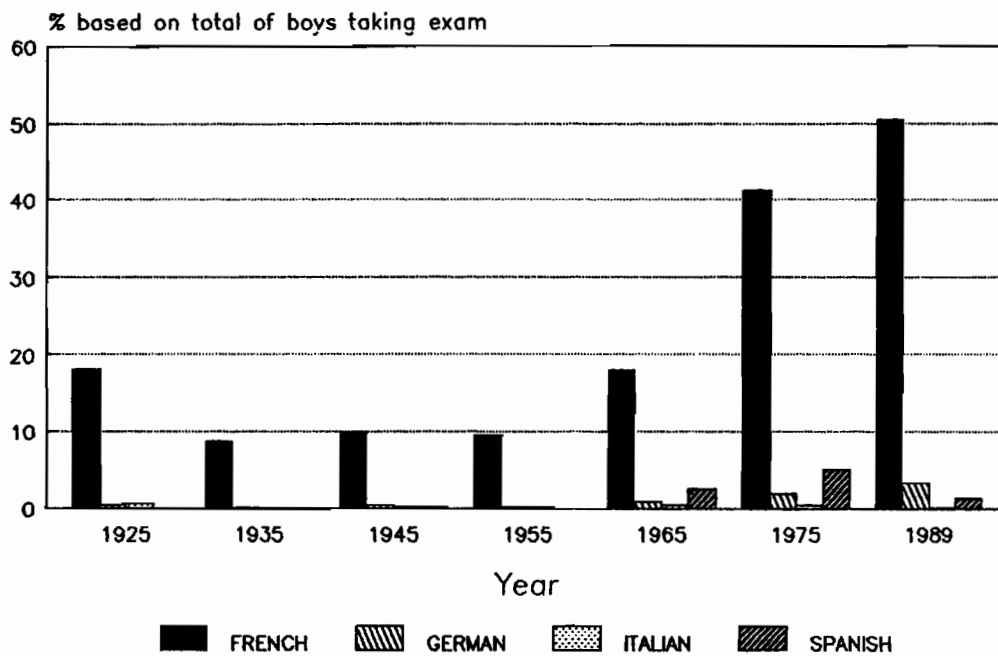
Girls' Intermediate Certificate Languages presented in examination



Source: Dept. of Ed. Annual Reports

FIGURE 5.5

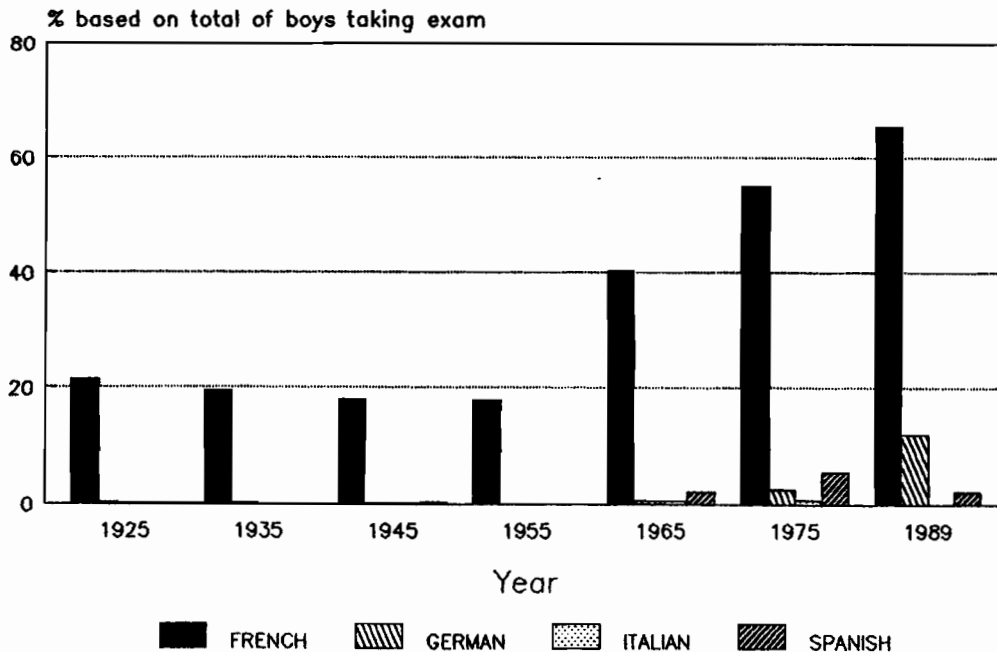
Boys' Leaving Certificate Languages presented in examination



Source: Dept. of Ed. Annual Reports

FIGURE 5.6

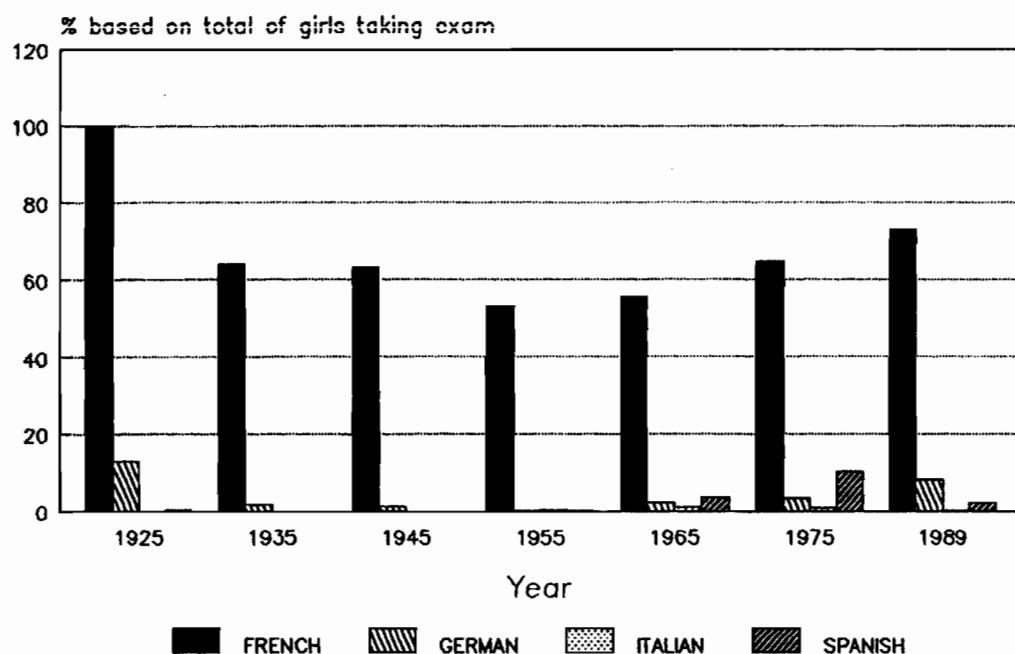
Boys' Intermediate Certificate Languages presented in examination



Source: Dept. of Ed. Annual Reports

FIGURE 5.7

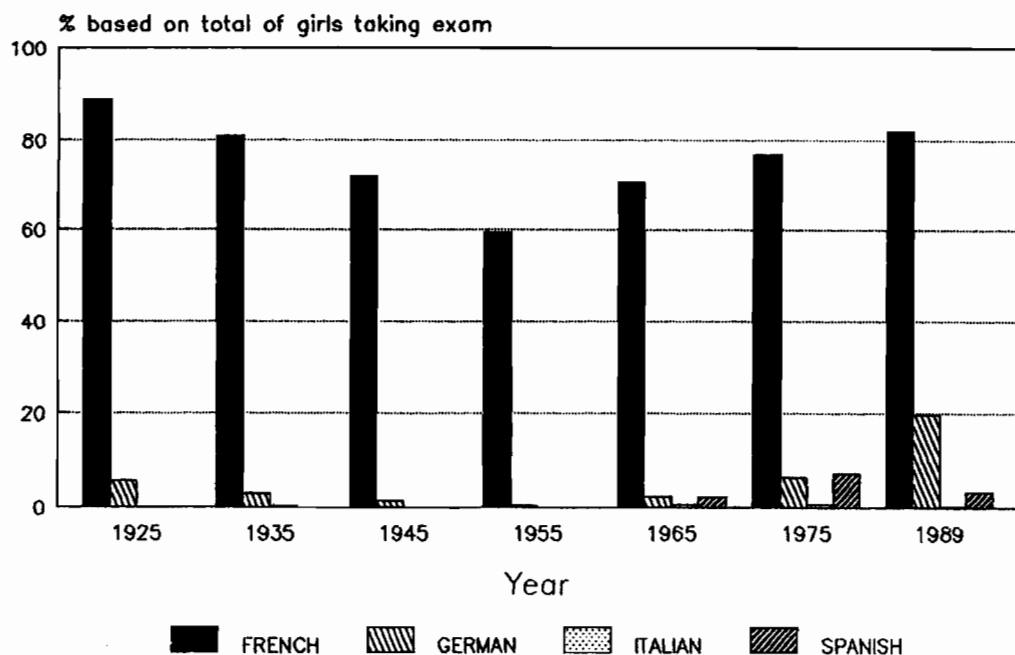
Girls' Leaving Certificate Languages presented in examination



Source: Dept. of Ed. Annual Reports

FIGURE 5.8

Girls' Intermediate Certificate Languages presented in examination



Source: Dept. of Ed. Annual Reports

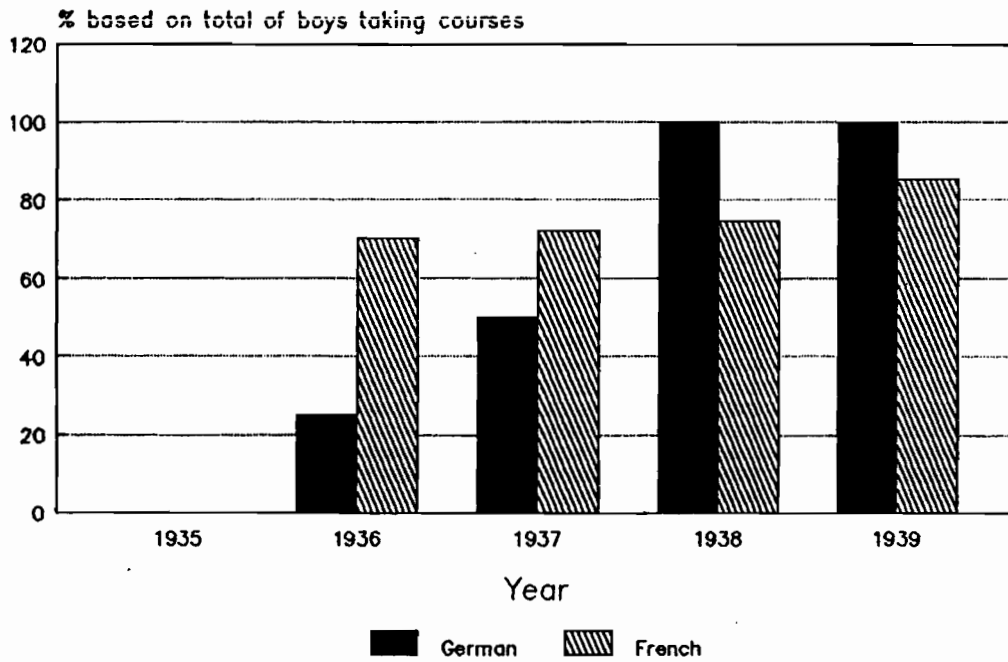
5.4 Pursuit of full and lower courses 1934-1939

Based on these findings, the author of this study analyzed presentation rates in French and German for 1934-1939. It was found that in these years, there was an unquestionable majority of girls who continued to pursue the higher level courses. The pattern in German was similar to French. A majority of boys also took the higher level paper in French. The only instance where the majority of boys did not take honours courses was in the German paper. As there were only a handful of boys presenting German, these low numbers may account for the difference.

The overall tendency to take higher level papers in languages would, on the one hand, appear to stem from the low extrinsic incentive associated with the lower level courses. Given that only 150 marks were awarded to the lower courses, they may not have been appealing. Considering the competitive nature of the examinations and the emphasis on high academic standards, it may have also been that the aims of the lower courses, to provide a practical rather than literary knowledge of the languages, discouraged their pursuit.

FIGURE 5.9

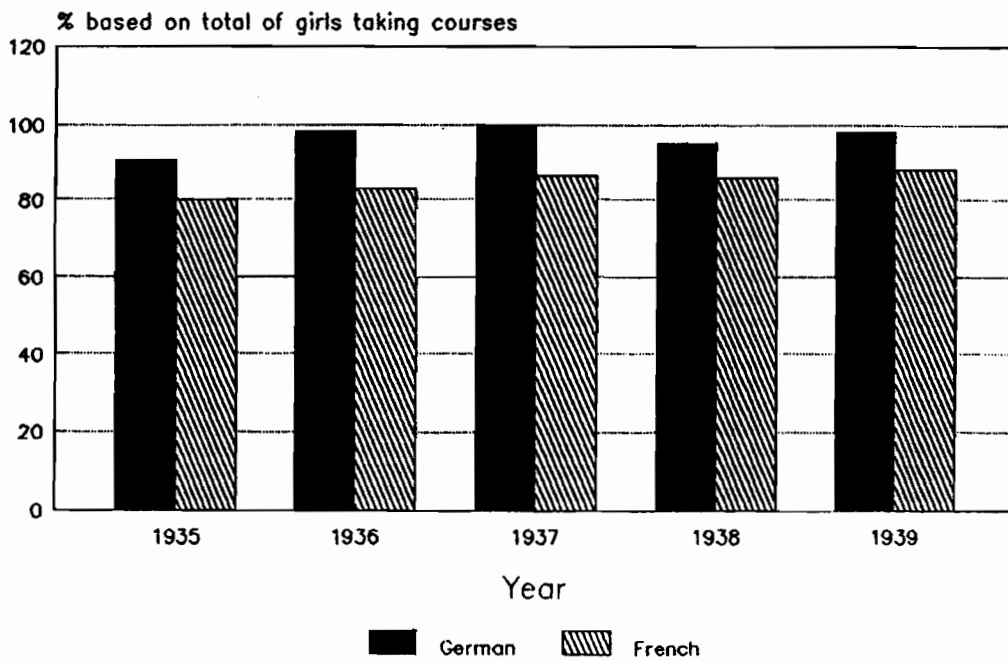
Intermediate Certificate Boys taking full courses



Source: Dept. of Ed. Annual Reports

FIGURE 6.0

Intermediate Certificate Girls taking full courses



Source: Dept. of Ed. Annual Reports

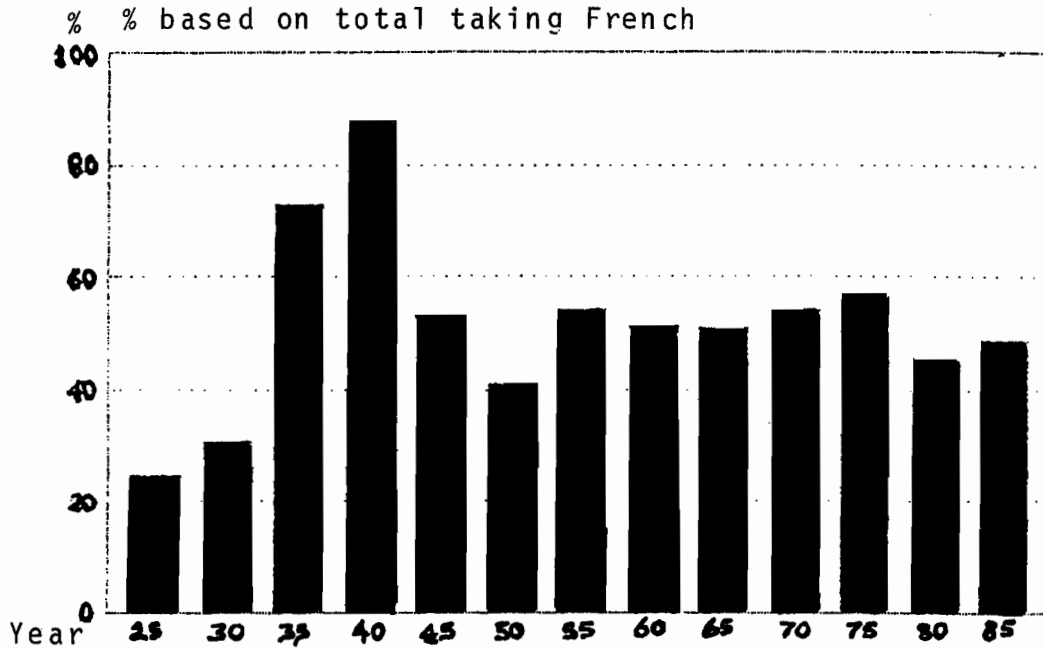
5.5 Presentation of honours papers in languages 1925-1989

As a result of the apparent academic orientation of the curriculum evidenced by the pursuit of higher courses in the 1930's, an analysis of presentation rates in the higher courses in modern continental languages in the Leaving Certificate was also made. In all cases, the analysis was based only on the total number of students taking that language and not the total number taking the public examinations.

In the girls' Leaving Certificate Examination, a majority took honours German and Italian. Until 1945, the majority also took honours French. This evened out since then, but except for 1980, the figure has never dropped below 40% for honours French and in most cases is closer to 50%. The percentage taking honours Spanish only dropped below 40% on two occasions in 1960 and 1965. From that time, there has been an increasing tendency to take the honours paper. In the boys' Leaving Certificate Examination, there has also been a definite tendency to take honours papers in French and Italian. The percentage taking honours Italian only dropped below 50% once in 1960. In German and Spanish, the figures have been more erratic. Up until 1965 a majority took honours German but in 1950, 1955 and 1960, the honours papers were not favoured. Thereafter, a majority took honours in German. In Spanish, in 1955, 1960 and 1965, the lower papers were favoured.

FIGURE 6.1

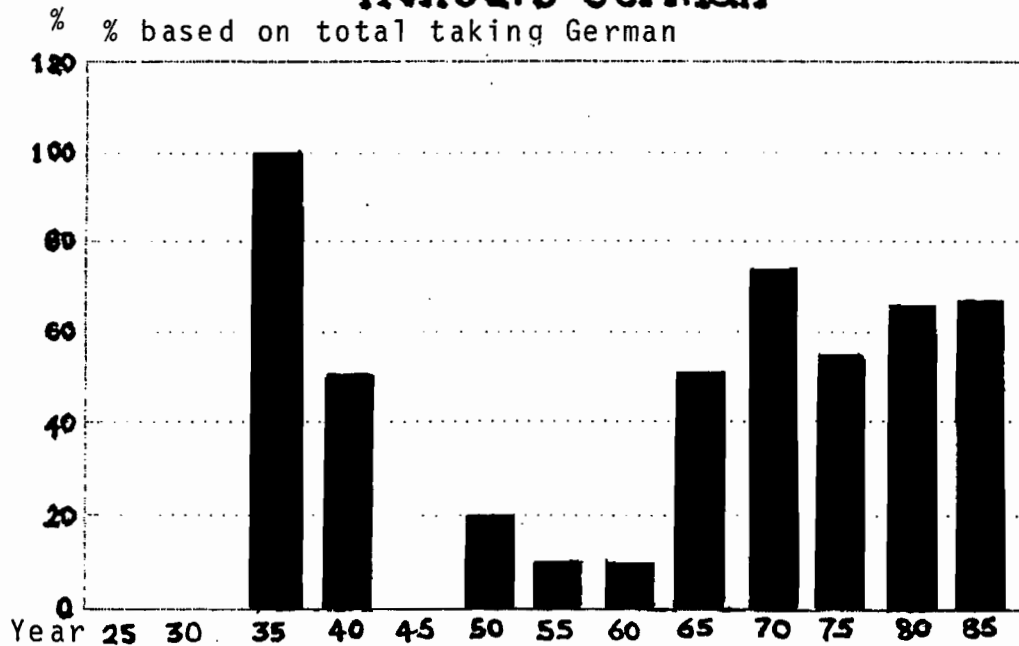
Boys' Leaving Certificate Honours French



Source: Dept. of Ed. Annual Reports

FIGURE 6.2

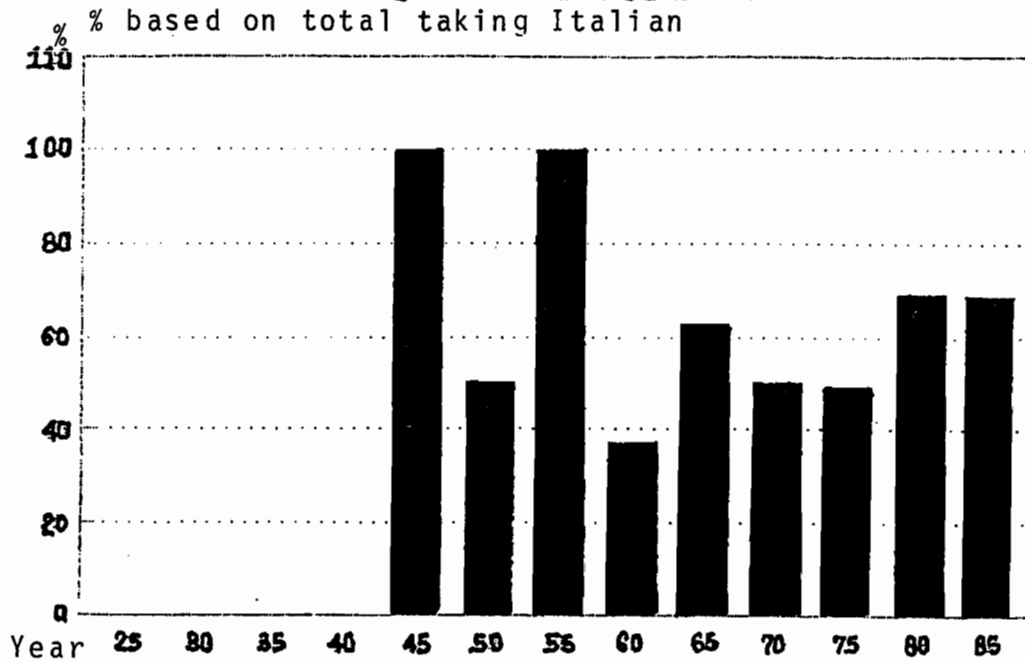
Boys' Leaving Certificate Honours German



Source: Dept. of Ed. Annual Reports

FIGURE 6.3

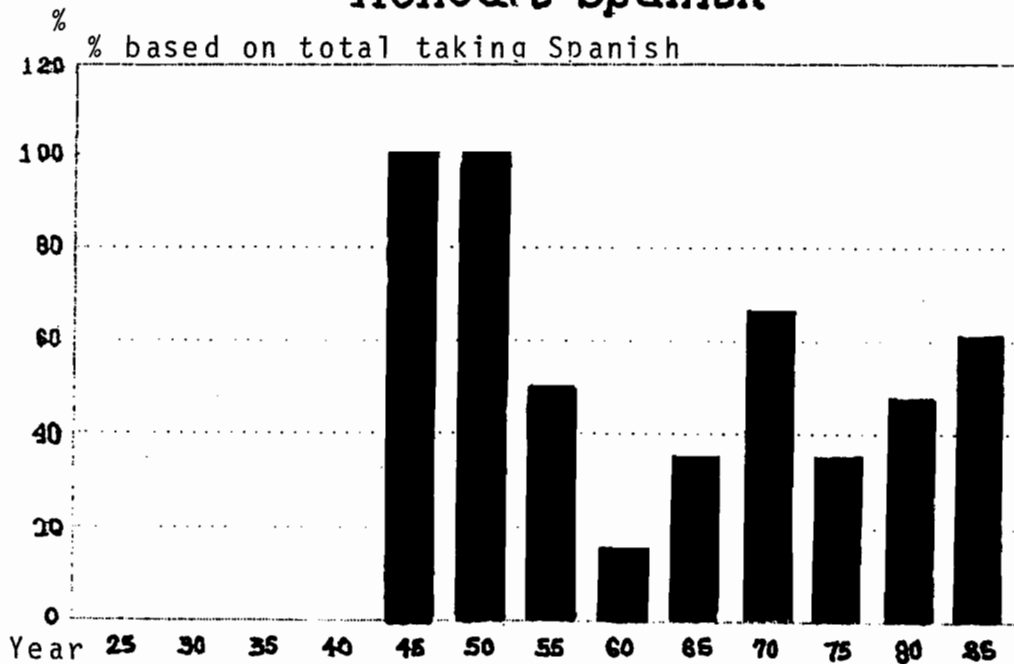
Boys' Leaving Certificate Honours Italian



Source: Dept. of Ed. Annual Reports

FIGURE 6.4

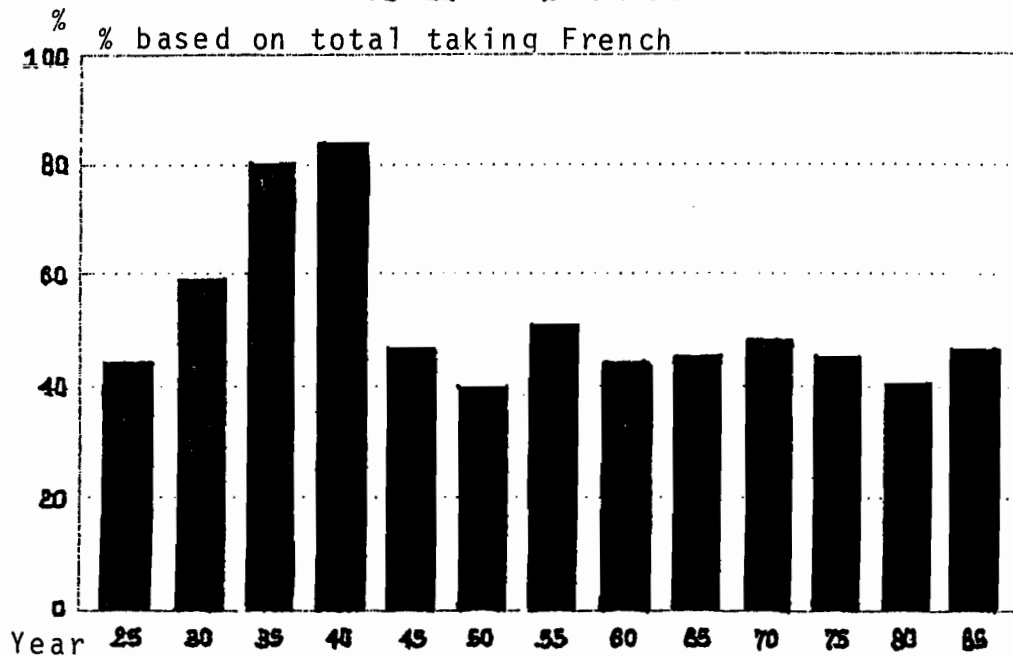
Boys' Leaving Certificate Honours Spanish



Source: Dept. of Edu Annual Reports

FIGURE 6.5

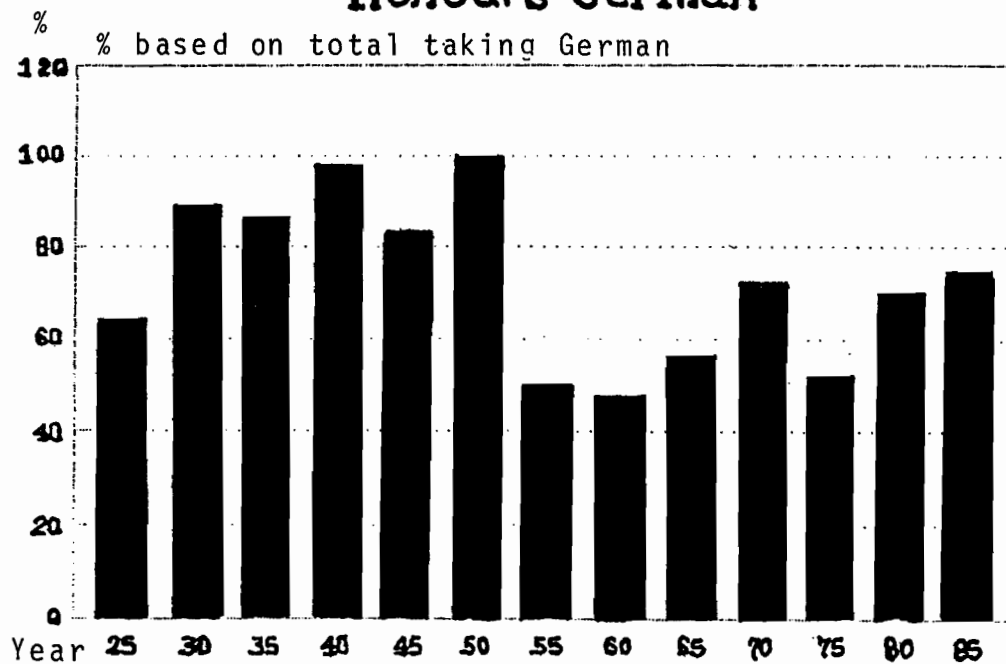
Girls' Leaving Certificate Honours French



Source: Dept. of Ed. Annual Reports.

FIGURE 6.6

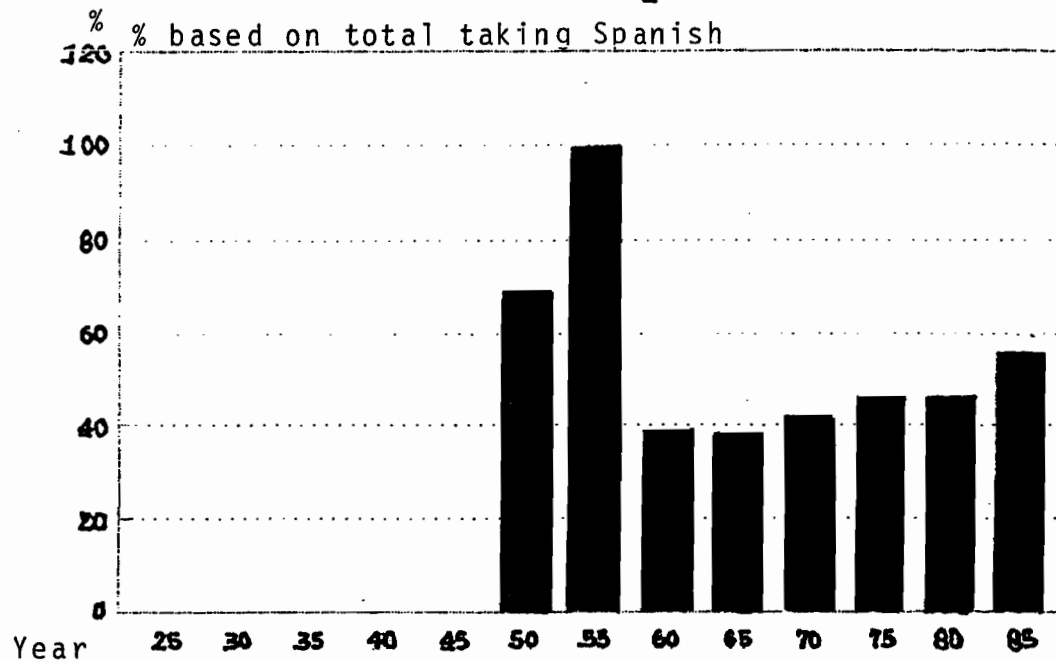
Girls' Leaving Certificate Honours German



Source: Dept. of Ed. Annual Reports

FIGURE 6.7

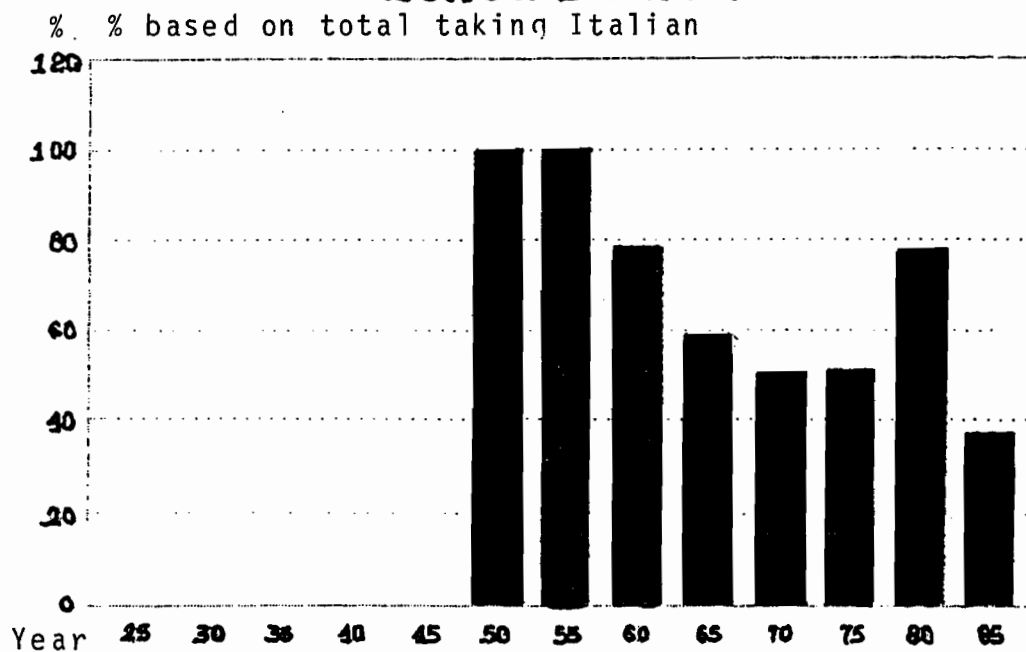
Girls' Leaving Certificate Honours Spanish



Source: Dept. of Ed. Annual Reports.

FIGURE 6.8

Girls' Leaving Certificate Honours Italian



Source: Dept. of Ed. Annual Reports

From this analysis, it seems clear that where students do take modern continental languages, the general tendency has been to take the honours course. This clearly goes against the average trend where only a minority take higher papers. It may be that the students go on to further study and wish to fulfil a language requirement for matriculation. It may also be that students who show facility with languages are encouraged to do the higher papers. It is assumed that this streaming takes place after the Intermediate Certificate Examination. The one thing that can be said of the public external examinations in languages is that they are highly competitive at the higher levels and are apparently, academically oriented.

5.6 The oral component

The academic orientation of the curriculum raised questions about the oral component in examinations. The oral has been recognized as important for at least the last one hundred years. O'Tierney commented,

...in fact, speaking was hopelessly neglected. Perhaps nowhere has this anomalous system of teaching living languages been carried to further extreme than in this country: and this state of affairs will continue until the Intermediate Board devises some more rational method of testing knowledge of living languages than by an exclusively written examination. In this respect, Ireland has woefully lagged behind the Continent, and more especially behind Germany (1913, p.10).

On a frequent basis in the late 1920's and early 1930's, the inspectors in the Annual Reports of the Department of Education complained about the defective oral work in French

(Annual Report, 1929, p. 74). In 1962, the Report of the Council recommended that oral tests should be introduced in Irish, but no such tests should be considered for the other languages. An oral test was introduced into the Leaving Certificate Examination in 1960 and accounted for one sixth of the allocated mark. This was later changed to one quarter. The Annual Reports subsequently noted an improvement in the standard of oral Irish (Annual Report, 1963, p. 55). Oral tests in modern continental languages have since been introduced into the Intermediate and Leaving Certificates. However, the oral test is not compulsory and the emphasis continues to be on the written component. The oral test is worth 15% and 20% of the total marks obtained in the respective examinations of the Intermediate and Leaving Certificates. Further, apart from the public external examinations, there is little extrinsic incentive to take the oral examination. The matriculation requirements of the National University of Ireland holds an oral examination for Irish which accounts for a maximum of 20% of the final mark. No such provision for an oral test exists for French, Spanish, Italian or German (National University of Ireland, 1989, p.11).

The differential treatment of the written and oral aspects of language learning have serious consequences for those students wishing to gain an oral command of the language. Jordan reported that some university graduates who

had taken honours papers in the Leaving Certificate Examination, but who had not taken languages at university took a French test in Europe. The test revealed that the graduates had no more than a three to four week start over students who had never studied a modern continental language. Additionally, those who retained enough academic knowledge to advance to the practical stage of the examination, failed the oral interview (Jordan, Languages for 1992, p. 1 & 2). Hence, the traditional emphasis on the written and literary aspect of language learning appears to be very inappropriate given the current need for a practical knowledge of languages in Europe.

5.7 Dominance of a core group of subjects

The emphasis on the academic aspects of language learning is not isolated from the general trend in the curriculum. Up until 1960, the secondary curriculum in Ireland had a strong academic and literary bias. As indicated in Chapter 4, policies were implemented in the 1960's to ensure a widening of the curriculum to include non-traditional subjects, such as those normally associated with the vocational sector. In 1984, Kellaghan and Hegarty (1984) made a study of the impact of these policies and identified a positive relationship between policy and practice. They found that students were more likely to take a more varied choice of subjects in 1980 than in 1960 in the Leaving Certificate.

In 1961, the six most popular subjects (Irish, English, Geography, Mathematics, History and Latin) were all taken by over 60% of those who took the Leaving Certificate. The next most popular subject (Drawing) was taken by 31% (1984, p.101).

This researcher considers the difference to actually be quite slight. In 1980, the four most popular subjects were English, Math, Irish and French. Biology, Geography and History followed as the next three most popular subjects. The noticeable difference, as Kellaghan and Hegarty do point out, is that increased presentation in Biology represents greater participation in the Sciences and increased presentation in French indicates a bigger interest in modern continental languages, which is what the policies encouraged. However, this researcher considers that on the basis of tables compiled for 1989, the differences are negligible.

TABLE 5.5
TOP 15 SUBJECTS PRESENTED IN INTERMEDIATE CERTIFICATE 1989

Mathematics	= 61,059
English	= 60,450
Irish	= 58,684
Geography	= 55,918
History	= 55,091
Science	= 45,853
French	= 45,310
Commerce	= 39,367
Art	= 25,150
Home Economics	= 21,062
Mechanical Dr.	= 17,516
Woodwork	= 12,093
Music	= 10,303
Metal Work	= 7,910
German	= 6,082

Source: Statistical Report, Dept. of Education, 1989, p.119).

As can be seen in table 5.5, the seven most popular subjects in the Intermediate Certificate are the same as those presented in Kellaghan's study of the Leaving Certificate in 1980. It is noted that the "academic" subjects dominate with respect to presentation rates and that subjects which were the traditional domain of the vocational schools like Mechanical Drawing, Woodwork and Metal work are considerably lower in popularity on the list.

TABLE 5.6
TOP 10 SUBJECTS PRESENTED IN THE LEAVING CERTIFICATE 1989
Male and Female

		Ordinary	Higher	Total
Mathematics	=	45,205	6,909	52,114
English	=	26,584	24,386	50,970
Irish	=	35,513	11,249	46,762
French	=	17,875	15,983	33,858
Biology	=	12,049	15,413	27,462
Business Org.	=	9,286	11,374	20,660
Geography	=	7,596	11,256	18,842
Home Economics	S&S	5,378	11,071	16,449
History	=	6,889	7,666	14,555
Accounting	=	6,190	8,665	14,855

Source: Statistical Report, Department of Education 1989, p.122 & 125).

As indicated in table 5.6, Math, English, Irish and French continue to be the first four popular subjects in the Leaving Certificate Examination. This is the same as those found in Kellaghan and Hegarty's study. With the exception of Business Organization, which was in sixth place, the remaining subjects of Geography and Biology were still amongst the first seven subjects. What is particularly interesting about table 5.6 is that Biology is a sub-division of Science which was

also an option in one of the required courses in the Intermediate Certificate. Business organization is a sub-division of Commerce which is also an option in the Intermediate Certificate. As indicated, earlier, Geography is required in the core subjects in the Intermediate Certificate. Therefore, subjects which have been taken in the Intermediate Certificate are still likely to be taken at the Leaving Certificate level, despite the option to choose and specialize in groups of subjects. Subject hierarchies continue to be maintained, independent of the policies adopted in the 1960's to encourage specialization and freedom of choice in the Leaving Certificate. These hierarchies favour the academic over the practical subjects.

5.8 Provision of modern continental languages in schools

Based on the fairly conservative changes that have occurred, the following table (5.7) was compiled to see the degree to which schools were actually helping to widen the curriculum with respect to language provision.

TABLE 5.7
NUMBER OF SCHOOLS PROVIDING LANGUAGES BY CATEGORY
OF SCHOOL 1988/89
Intermediate Certificate

	Total	Secondary	Vocational	Comprehensive Community
Latin	73	71	1	1
Greek	5	5		
French	762	488	209	65
German	330	267	30	33
Spanish	82	71	6	5
Italian	7	6		1

TOTAL				
POST-PRIMARY	795	490	238	67
OFFERING				
INTERMEDIATE CERT.				

Leaving Certificate

	Total	Secondary	Vocational	Comprehensive Community
Latin	62	57	2	3
Greek	5	5		
French	747	486	197	64
German	214	177	15	22
Spanish	90	75	10	5
Italian	14	12	1	1

POST-PRIMARY	777	487	225	65
OFFERING LEAVING				
CERTIFICATE				

Source: Statistical Report, Department of Education, (1988/89).

As indicated in table 5.7, the patterns of provision of languages in schools mirror the patterns of presentation found in the earlier analysis. French and German are the most frequently provided subjects and they were also the 3rd and 4th most frequently presented languages, after Irish and

English. The noticeable thing about this table is that Latin is offered in almost as many schools as Spanish. The provision of Latin is presumably due to tradition and not attributable to the current attempts to revive it. What is dismaying about this is that many newspapers in Ireland have pointed out that Italy is one of Ireland's more important trading partners (Kerby, Irish Times, 3rd March, 1988). Despite this fact, Italian is seldom provided in many schools.

Another noteworthy feature of table 5.7 is the distinction amongst the various schools providing languages. The traditional secondary type school is more likely to provide a modern continental language than any of the vocational, community or comprehensive schools. This is understandable with respect to vocational schools which had no history of providing languages. However, the only explanation with respect to community and comprehensive schools which came into effect in the 1960's and 1970's, is that the schools are bound by the language requirements of the curriculum and public external examinations.

Unfortunately, it is not clear if this imbalance of language provision will be corrected. In 1988 Crooks noted that due to financial cutbacks,

the minority subjects such as languages (Italian, Spanish and German) are less likely to be provided (Crooks, 1988, p.4).

If any language is likely to be promoted, it seems that it will be German. In 1988, the Minister of Education remarked,

I intend to strongly press for direct European aid for our language initiatives here at post-primary level, particularly for the teaching of German (Irish Press, 6th April, 1988).

Although Ireland has been a member of the European Community since 1973, as can be seen from the above tables, there is a very strong overall imbalance with respect to the provision of languages. If the "equality of opportunity" rhetoric is to become a reality, it seems that this imbalance will have to be dealt with quickly.

There is concern amongst some quarters, that if German, Italian and Spanish are provided in schools, that they may be subject to the pressures of the public external examinations. Consequently, in 1989, the National Youth Council of Ireland suggested special courses for modern continental languages.

It is emphasized that these courses should not be geared to either the inter or leaving cert. They should be designed specifically to give people a working knowledge of a foreign language, with the issuing of a certificate of attendance and assessment at the end of each coursesuch provision should be made out of school hours so that school going young people can avail of the opportunity outside "mainstream language teaching" (NYCI, European Election Manifesto, p. 5).

Comments such as these come as a sad reflection on the education system in Ireland. However, given the findings in this study it seems that the public external examinations have not only actively discriminated against certain languages, but the reality today suggests that if this imbalance continues, it will represent discrimination, at the level of country, of gender and of class.

5.9 Summary

In the last one hundred years, at least four separate attempts were made to encourage the provision and pursuit of modern continental languages in post-primary schools in Ireland. The first attempt was under the Intermediate Board of Education, while the second, third and fourth were under the Department of Education in the 1930's, 1960's and 1980's. This study concludes that the system of public external examinations which were established in 1878 and re-introduced in 1924 stratified languages in accordance with the interests of the universities, the church, employers and proponents of the Irish culture. This was done through a number of measures, none of which supported the inclusion of modern continental languages in the curriculum.

The most deliberate act to create a hierarchy amongst languages was in the nineteenth century when differential marks were allocated to languages. The Classics and English were favoured over the modern continental languages and Irish. Although this practice was abolished by the Intermediate Board of Education, it was resumed by the Department of Education and differential marks were allotted to languages. For cultural reasons, Irish was attributed the highest marks. The Classics and English were second in preference, while the modern continental languages were least favoured.

As marks were used for the purpose of gaining scholarships and for calculating points for entry to

university, they appear to have influenced students' pursuit of the various languages. All of the tables compiled, indicated that the pursuit of German, Italian and Spanish lagged far behind the presentation of Irish, Latin, Greek and French.

The differential marks may have also affected the lack of interest in the lower courses which were introduced in the 1930's in French and German. There was a majority of students who took the higher level papers at this time. The study found that there was a greater interest in higher courses in modern continental languages in the Leaving Certificate Examination throughout. This was attributed to the competitive nature of the examinations at the higher levels and the requirements of the third-level institutions.

The study also found that subject hierarchies were reinforced by specific requirements of third-level institutions. Until 1973, the subjects, most often required by the latter were Irish, English and Latin. These requirements were paralleled by the core requirements in the Intermediate Certificate Examination. Despite the fact that Irish was the only required subject in the Leaving Certificate, Irish, Greek and Latin were inevitably taken by the majority of students until 1960. As a result of the dominant status of these languages, the modern continental languages were seldom presented. However with the abolition of Greek and Latin in 1950 and 1973, presentation rates in French began to climb rapidly. Presentation rates in German have also increased,

however, they do not equal French and are not considered adequate given the current need for a knowledge of two modern continental languages in addition to the mother tongue.

The study also found that the public examinations themselves supported the dominance of a core group of subjects in the curriculum. Examination requirements at the Intermediate level were similar to the core subjects required to receive capitation grants. As schools depended on these grants, the core group was offered at both the junior and higher levels. The domination of a core group of subjects was also reinforced by the duration of courses and numbers of subjects required in the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate courses. The need for specialization which is reinforced by the examinations, appears to have supported the subject hierarchies.

Despite major changes in the curriculum, there has been a consistent emphasis on the more academic aspects of language learning. This was reflected by the unequal weighting given to the written over the oral component. Since oral examinations in modern continental languages are not required by the universities, they receive very little weighting in the public external examinations. The academic emphasis was also reflected in other ways. The top ten subjects in the curriculum have changed very little over the years and have not included German, Italian or Spanish. They were also likely to exclude practical subjects which had once been the domain

of the vocational schools.

As a consequence of the conservative trend in the curriculum, tables were also compiled to see which schools were providing non-compulsory languages in 1989. These tables indicated that, as tradition would have it, French was the most widely offered subject, German was second, and Spanish and Latin were third and fourth. Despite the demand for Italian, it was hardly ever made available. Even where languages were offered, they tended to be given more in the traditional secondary as opposed to the vocational, community or comprehensive schools. Thus, twenty-five years after Ireland's entry to the European Community, the traditional languages of Irish, English and French continue to dominate and the modern continental languages of German, Spanish and Italian, while on the increase, continue to be marginalized.

In closing, then, it seems that Layton's and Goodson's theories of subject evolution in the curriculum are correct with respect to the overall dominance of the academic subjects in the curriculum. However, as languages are theoretically "academic", their theories do not hold. The hierarchy which has occurred with respect to the promotion of languages has been for cultural, religious and economic reasons and not because of their embrace of theoretical or abstract knowledge. However, there is some truth in their theories in that with the marginalization of Italian and Spanish and the reappearance of Latin in the curriculum, it may be that

languages, in fact, continue to serve as "formal disciplines" whereby the more "difficult" languages of French and German currently rank highest as non-compulsory subjects, while the "easier" languages of Italian and Spanish have much lower status in the curriculum.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This researcher has concluded that, with the exception of some minor successes, most of the attempts to promote modern continental languages have met with resistance. This resistance to change has been attributed to the power of the public external examinations to create and maintain subject hierarchies.

Subject hierarchies were created under the Intermediate Board of Education by awarding different marks to subjects, which were subsequently used for the calculation of scholarships and entrance points for university. This practice was continued under the Department of Education. Although different languages were favoured under the Intermediate Board of Education and the Department of Education, the modern continental languages were discriminated against as a whole. French and German were favoured over Italian and Spanish. The actual requirements of the public external examinations also helped to perpetuate subject hierarchies. They demanded that a fixed number of subjects be presented which limited students' choice. They also confined students' choice by having courses of study of three and five years duration.

From a theoretical perspective, this study has concluded that curriculum change has resulted from the efforts of diverse groups in society. The promotion of Irish was due to

the efforts of the Gaelic League and the Department of Education. While Greek and particularly Latin were promoted by the Catholic church, the deciding factor on their demotion in the curriculum was the National University of Ireland. The promotion of the modern continental languages of French, German, Italian and Spanish in the curriculum was originally due to the efforts of the Intermediate Board of Education prior to 1924. French and German were later promoted and subsequently demoted by the Department of Education in the 1930's. All languages were promoted through official and non-official reports in the 1960's and the recommendations of the European Community in the 1980's.

Although there have been diverse influences affecting the status of languages in the curriculum, the major determinant appears to have been the universities which exerted pressure through the public external examinations. This would appear to confirm Goodson's and Layton's theories that subjects are promoted on the basis of their theoretical knowledge. With the exception of their application to Irish, Latin and Greek, these theories seem to hold. The emphasis on academic standards was evident at the end of the 1930's when lower courses were abolished in French and German and at the beginning of the 1970's when the oral examination in modern continental languages was made optional rather than compulsory. Although it can be argued that the abolition of the Greek and Latin requirements for matriculation in 1950 and 1973 can be seen as an easing of the academic orientation of

the curriculum, the fact that these languages have been replaced by French and German and not Italian and Spanish would seem to attest to the perpetuation of the academic ideal. With the abolition of Greek and Latin, French moved into third place and German into fourth. Just as they had lowest status in the curriculum prior to 1924, Spanish and Italian were again ranked lowest.

This study found that there was a general emphasis on the academic end of the continuum throughout the history of curriculum in Ireland. This was reflected in the provision and presentation of academic subjects overall, by the greater interest expressed in full courses in the 1930's and the overall pursuit of higher level courses in modern continental languages at senior level. The academic emphasis in the curriculum was also indicated by the greater marks awarded to the written rather than oral component. Therefore, as indicated at the outset, the current interest expressed by the National University of Ireland to be more active in the Leaving Certificate Examination is considered to represent a further threat to the promotion of Italian and Spanish, in particular, and the comprehensive curriculum, in general.

The academic orientation of languages in the curriculum has been challenged on at least five occasions, by O'Tierney (1913), by two reports in the 1960's, and by two reports in the 1980's. The major criticism was that a written public external examination was an inappropriate method for

evaluating living languages. The first solution was to include an oral examination in the public examinations. However, it has not been made compulsory and the marks attributed to it are very low. The second recommendation was to exclude modern continental languages from the public examinations altogether. As yet, there has been no move to adopt this measure.

Therefore, given the unlikelihood of change with respect to evaluation procedures, this study proposes that as Ireland is now being funded by European sources, like the Lingua programme, it may be possible to ensure the provision of "extra curricular" or "intensive courses" focusing on the oral aspects of language acquisition in the second year of post-primary education. These courses would be taken in addition to the regular classroom instruction in German, Spanish or Italian. The oral aspect of the course would be evaluated only on a formative basis. If this proposal were implemented, it would ensure that students receive an oral knowledge of the language as well as develop their written skills. It would mean that students who were weak on the written component would not be exempt from the opportunities which the single European market has to offer.

In summary, it can be seen that, since 1878, there have been at least four attempts to ensure that the curriculum in post-primary schools has met the needs of industry and commerce. As yet, there has been little success. The manifestation of that debate has been witnessed in the

conflict over academic and practical subjects. This battle has been a long one and the battle over languages even longer. In the foreseeable future, Irish will undoubtedly be kept and English, the majority mother tongue, will remain. But the future status of modern continental languages with the exception of French is uncertain. German may gain a firmer footing in the curriculum, providing it is offered more widely. However, the status of Italian and Spanish still remains to be negotiated. This writer believes that if "equality of opportunity" is to be achieved and high standards are to be maintained, the responsibility for language training should remain with the schools. However, the current connection between languages and the public external examinations has to be broken to ensure that provision and pursuit are ensured and proficiency is acquired.

NUI to have say on Leaving exam after Matric goes

By Michael Foley, Education Correspondent

THE SENATE of the National University of Ireland is now almost certain to abolish its Matriculation examination, following an agreement with the Department of Education which would give the NUI a major say in the Leaving Certificate examination.

The details of the procedures for the consultation process between the NUI and the Department of Education are contained in a confidential memorandum prepared for the senate of the NUI, which has been seen by *The Irish Times*.

It allows for representatives of the NUI to see draft Leaving Certificate papers and make comments; it allows the NUI to have representatives at the marking conferences and allows for the marking scheme to be made available to the NUI. It also allows the NUI representatives to "select and read a number of candidates scripts".

The agreement, which has

place with the Department of Education on the feasibility of initiating reforms of the Leaving Certificate examination. The Department told the senate that "it was not envisaged that the Leaving Certificate would be changed significantly in the foreseeable future."

The NUI have been under considerable pressure in recent months to abolish the Matric. Practically all teachers' organisations have called for its abolition and it is known that the Minister for Education has requested that it be abolished. The decision to allow greater involvement in the Leaving Certificate is no doubt a *quid pro quo* for abolishing the Matric.

former Taoiseach, Dr Garret FitzGerald. However, the Minister has ensured that the vote will be for abolition by appointing her four nominees earlier this year to seats which have been vacant for over a year.

The only factor which could delay the now inevitable decision to abolish the Matric is that the senate will not want to be seen to be acting on the instructions of the Minister.

There is likely to be some disquiet in education circles over the agreement. Currently, fewer than 20 per cent of Leaving Certificate candidates go on to universities. The regional technical colleges and the Dublin Institute of Technology account for

The Irish Times, March 27, 1989.

No languages for two-thirds of VEC Leaving students

By PAT HOLMES, Education Correspondent

ONLY one Leaving Certificate student in three and less than half of Group and Intermediate Cert students in vocational schools are taught a foreign language, according to a study launched yesterday.

The National Youth Council of Ireland's discussion document, "Young People and the New Europe," warns that our ability to speak a second language is very low compared to other countries in Europe. "Ireland must not become the 'languageless' of

"Immediate attention must be given to the need for intensive crash courses in European language proficiency, so that by 1992, Ireland is no longer confronted by the language barrier that most European countries have surmounted years ago," says the Council, which is the co-ordinating body for voluntary youth organisations representing over half a million young people.

Mrs. Máire Geoghegan-Quinn, Minister of State for European Affairs, speaking at the launch, said that languages were a priority

Losing lira for lack of language

By Jill Kerby

IRELAND should be exporting goods worth £1 billion a year to Italy but is not mainly because manufacturers and marketing personnel here cannot speak Italian. (This was the blunt message delivered at the launch yesterday of the fourth European Orientation Programme, the CII-sponsored foreign language work experience scheme for Irish industry.

Total exports to Italy in 1987 reached £392 million, double the amount from just two years ago but still far behind the £1.2 billion to Germany and £994 million to France.

The director of the EOP, Mr Paddy Jordan, described resources given to the teaching of Italian in Irish schools in comparison to French and German as "inconsequential". By not having access to Italian speakers, he said, Irish industry is not able to take advantage either of the size of the Italian population — 57 million — or the fact that, for the first time, per capita incomes in Italy have exceeded those of Great Britain.

According to Mr David Hedigan of Coras Trachtála, who was involved in the setting up of the Milan CTT office, Italy poses a number of logistical difficulties for any exporter, particularly in the area of payment, customs clearance and delivery. But without a knowledge of Italian, he said, these problems are magnified.

Of our total exports to Italy last year, just 27 per cent were generated by Irish indigenous companies, he said, mainly represented by the food sector. The remaining 64 per cent of exports came from foreign multinationals here who exported mainly high technology and scientific equipment.

However, one company which has benefited through participation in the European Orientation Programme is Anglo-Irish Beef Packers. Their first EOP trainee in Italy, Mr Brian Moran, said yesterday that Anglo-Irish is now sending 20 tonnes of Irish beef every week to Italy as a result of overcoming the language difficulties. This is a huge increase over previous sales, he said.

The Irish Times,
March 3rd, 1988.

Move on foreign language studies

THE Minister for education, said in Cork last night she intends to make a strong case for direct European aid for new initiative in the teaching of foreign languages at post primary level.

Mary O'Rourke, T.D., told the annual conference of ASTI that there was strong Government support for an overall foreign language policy.

The Minister said this would cover the post primary and third level sectors, as well as the commercial and industrial world.

She said in recent months, important steps towards curricular initiatives in the area of languages and technology had been taken.

"The passing of the Single European Act and the proposed European integration date of 1992 have given added impetus to Ireland's case for major diversification in language teaching.

Her Department was particularly interested in the introduction of new language teaching programmes at post primary level, particularly for the teaching of German.

"We are identifying the numbers of in-quota teachers who have qualifications in foreign languages, but who are not currently teaching these languages, and also the projected demand for these languages in schools.

We will then outline a three to five year programme of diversification in language choice with the co-operation of the school management authorities."

The Irish Times, Monday,
March 27, 1989, No.41, 329.

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