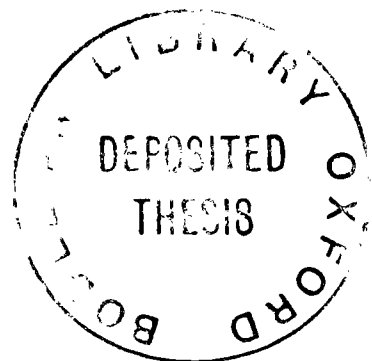


**The Mediation of Market-Related Policies for the Provision
of Public Second Level Education: An International
Comparative Study of Selected Locations in England,
Ireland and the USA.**

By

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the
University of Oxford



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For my parents, Carmel and Paudie Griffin, le grá agus meas.

ABSTRACT

This thesis is entitled *The Mediation of Market-Related Policies for the Provision of Public Second Level Education: An International Comparative Study of Selected Locations in England, Ireland and the USA*. The two key words in this thesis title are 'mediation' and 'comparative'. The focus of this thesis is on the phenomenon of mediation. The market-related policies that are being examined in the light of mediation are choice policies or open enrolment policies for the provision of second level public schooling. However, this is not a thesis about school choice but rather on the factors and stakeholders that affect the mediation of a policy. As the focus is on mediation, and not on policy analysis, this study is therefore, of necessity, a qualitative one. The researcher used semi-structured interviews, combined with documentary evidence, to understand both the contexts and the interactions in which mediation of various kinds takes place.

The second notable feature is that this study is a comparative one. The researcher chose three countries where market related policies were being implemented, albeit to different effect. The countries chosen were England, Ireland and the USA (Massachusetts). The comparative dimension enabled the researcher to challenge ethnocentric assumptions about the *modus operandi* of policy at the grass-roots level. In order to understand the operation of the market, the researcher selected comparable locations in all three countries. As 'markets' are intrinsically local, the researcher examined how policy is mediated at the local level.

The three conurbations were selected on the basis of their comparability, none of which are capital cities. Research was conducted in all three locations in three separate phases: pre-pilot to ascertain their suitability; pilot work to prepare the groundwork and then the main study. In all, over sixty interviews were held at local, regional and national levels, although the focus was primarily on the local. Documentary sources were collected simultaneously. The analysis of the data was ongoing during the entire research process and progress was presented at conferences in the host research countries where useful feedback was obtained.

The researcher used Bereday's comparative methodology and, by taking a factor approach, insights were gained into the cultures and contexts affecting the mediation of policy. The researcher hopes to add to comparative methodological theory through the use of multiple cross-national studies. The insights gained from the research questions: how, if at all, do the factors and stakeholders identified affect the mediation of policy, confirmed that this was indeed an area worthy of study. The outcomes, displayed in matrices in chapters 8 and 9, show that different combinations of factors affect how policies are mediated by the stakeholders and indirect factors involved in the immediate implementation of open enrolment policy. The cases also yielded idiosyncratic variants based on their particular educational histories and current circumstances. However, similar features were noted in all three countries in relation to enrolment issues. In brief, these were: increased political interaction at the local level; demographic changes on the rolls of high schools; *de facto* social segregation; differential funding mechanisms relating to enrolment; and different attitudes to public education on the part of interest groups in each location; and the significance of regulated space. This area is ripe for research, and there is a call in the literature for more in-depth analyses on such social interactions at the local level that affect different policy outcomes. It is hoped that this study will contribute to understanding the factors at work, both direct and indirect, which mediate policy in such a way that explain the potentially different outcomes of similar policies.

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I would like to thank the participants in the study who agreed to give their time and provide information in England, Ireland and the USA. Unfortunately, I cannot mention names due to the anonymity of the study, but my sincere thanks goes out to you for making this both possible and an enjoyable undertaking.

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Table of Acronyms

ASTI	Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland
AWPU	Age Weighted Pupil Unit
DES	Department of Education and Science
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment (now the Department of Education and Skills)
DOE	Department Of Education
EAZ	Education Action Zone
ERA	Education Reform Act
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GMS	Grant Maintained Schools
IVEA	Irish Vocational Education Committee
LEA	Local Education Authority
LMS	Local Management of School
MCAS	Massachusetts Curriculum and Assessment Survey
NCCA	National council for Curriculum and assessment
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OFSTED	Office For Standards in Education
REBA	Regional Education and Business Alliance
SEN	Special Educational Needs
TIMSS	Third International Mathematics and Science Survey
VEC	Vocational Education Committee

INTRODUCTION

The Research Topic

It is mainly through theorists that the maxims regulating the policy of advanced countries become known to less advanced countries. In advanced countries, practice inspires theory; in others, theory inspires practice. This difference is one of the reasons why transplanted ideas are seldom so successful as they were in their native soil (Russell, 1967, p.581).

This thesis is primarily a study in comparative education. The researcher alighted on the topic of mediation and market-related policies following a debate on postmodernism and the philosophy of education. This arose as a result of a seminar discussion, initiated by a fellow researcher and responded to by Professor Richard Pring and John Wilson. This provoked the researcher to read the book *Education Under Siege: The Conservative, Liberal and Radical Debate over Schooling* (1986) by Stanley Aronowitz and Henry A. Giroux. These authors compare different theories of schooling in industrialised countries and challenge the penetration of business values into education. From this, the researcher decided to investigate the extent to which this is affecting the English education system, and subsequently did her Master's dissertation on market-related *Educational Discourse: Teachers' Perspectives* (1998).

Fascinated by the effects of educational reform on everyday practice, the researcher wanted further to examine how these reforms were actually *mediated* by those expected to implement school reform. However, the researcher also wanted to compare how these were mediated in different places. This is why the researcher chose England, Ireland, and the USA as her selected locations. One reason for the

selection of these countries is that the researcher has lived in all three, and feels sufficiently familiar with them to gain an insightful understanding of the processes of mediation, given that these are necessarily culturally embedded. A second reason of equal importance was that similar reforms were being implemented, or considered in all three locations. This gave the researcher a unique opportunity to explore this issue in greater depth through a cross-national comparison.

This thesis is entitled *The Mediation of Market-Related Policies for the Provision of Public Second Level Education: An International Comparative Study of Selected Locations in England, Ireland and the USA*. The concept of mediation is the linchpin around which the thesis rotates. Bottery (2000) argues that the mediation of, for example, national cultures, plays an indirect but critical role which affects the operation and implementation of education policy. Citing Dale (1999), he points out that ‘if we limit ourselves to examining only those policies and practices that are of direct and immediate relevance to education policy or practice, we run the risk of neglecting the level at which the agenda for education policy is really set’ (Bottery, 2000, p.2-3), *i.e.* the local level. This sentiment concurs with Sander’s (2000) notion of taking a critical approach, as opposed to an affirmative approach, when investigating such processes.

There are many competing definitions of policy’ (see for example, Mitchell, 1980; Silver, 1990; Lawton, 1992 and 1994). However, for the purposes of this thesis, policy is to be taken to be interpreted as a ‘plan of action’ or ‘statement of aims and objectives’ (Taylor *et al.*, 1997, p. 1). The reason why detailed attention is not paid to the concept of policy is because this is not a study of policy analysis. This study is focusing on mediation, and is using a particular policy as a vehicle to exemplify the negotiation of policy with contextual elements. The broad *policy* of concern here

introduces, maintains or modifies a market-related approach to the provision of public sector schooling. The policy of interest is that which is designed to encourage competition and diversity within the public sector and includes open enrolment at second level. Such market-related policies are informed by a global discourse, which inevitably brings an *international* dimension to the study, and hence the opportunity for cross-national comparison. There are already some broad commentaries relating to this theme (for example: OECD/Hirsch, 1994 and Whitty, Power and Halpin, 1998). For the purpose of field research, it was necessary to select a limited number of countries across which to compare similar open enrolment or choice policies. Although there were other countries with similar policies, this study is confined to England, Ireland and the USA for the reasons given above and which are elaborated on in the text.

Market-related policies for public educational provision are not limited to *second level*, but, for reasons of the age/mobility connection and the significance given to secondary schooling, it was decided to concentrate on this level. For instance, secondary schools connect directly to employment or third level opportunities and so give the sector an added significance for both providers and users. Given the different age-breaks that exist at this level, only schools that include programmes leading to the terminal qualifications associated with this sector were selected. Consequently, junior high schools in England and the USA were not included.

The researcher had to choose between the structural and curricular dimensions of provision, in the interest of manageability, in order that a particular aspect of market-related policy could be identified for the purposes of examining the mediation of that policy. The essence of a market approach is to offer choice, and although curricular considerations may well influence choice, it is a policy of *open enrolment*

that enables some degree of choice to operate. It was decided therefore to focus on provision in the structural sense of *access*, and it is the mediation of those policies with which this thesis is concerned.

It is important to note that this is not a study of school choice. Such a study would have to involve the private sector (including parochial schools in the USA). The policies with which this thesis is concerned do not apply to that sector. Consequently, private secondary schools in all three countries are excluded from the research. The only exception to this rule is the brief reference to the assisted places scheme in England, which preceded the main reform of 1988; and some discussion of parochial schooling in the USA and related legislative challenges to the First Amendment (on the separation of the church and state). To summarise therefore, this study is firmly focused on the mediation of school choice policy in comparative and international perspective.

Aims and Objectives of the Research

There is a considerable body of contemporary literature relating to, informing, and influencing the international discourse on market-related school reform. This often cautions against cross-national policy borrowing (Le Métais, 2000). Whitty and Edwards (1998) note that reform is mediated through the particular ‘history, structure and cultural tradition’ of different countries and systems and operates at the national level. This is one of the points of departure for this research.

As markets are intrinsically local (Crang, 1998), a conceptual framework has been developed in order to examine the mediation process, focusing especially on the local level. This conceptual framework is partly informed by the analytical models of

related researches in this field (Gewirtz *et al.*, 1995; and Woods *et al.*, 1998) and in the field of comparative methodology (e.g. Bereday, 1964; and Bray and Murray Thomas, 1995). Given the discourse on globalisation and localisation in respect of education (McGinn, 1996; Watson, 1996) the research is conducted over a range of geographical scales as well as in a number of locations.

This is essentially a comparative study. A multiple case studies approach is adopted within this comparative framework. It is hoped that this approach will sharpen perspectives on the mediation of market-related policies for secondary schooling in each of the three selected locations: England, Ireland and the USA (Massachusetts).

Phillips (2000) argues that a comparative study can be illuminating in several ways: it can:

- *Demonstrate possible alternatives to policy 'at home';*
- *Provide insights into the processes of policy formation;*
- *Clarify means of successful implementation used elsewhere; and*
- *Serve to warn against adopting certain measures' (p.11).*

Rust (2000) in the same volume, *Learning from Comparing*, also suggests that:

It is becoming increasingly clear that the research tradition of separating social political and economic institutions from local groups, institutions and individuals in the form of macro-studies as opposed to micro-studies is not only arbitrary but it distorts our ability to understand the nature of social processes. The new paradigm requires that researchers simultaneously take account of the global, the national and the local (p.25).

This is exactly what the researcher has attempted to do through the use of her conceptual framework. The social processes referred to by Rust are best understood by using a qualitative approach. Therefore, the comparative methodology of Bereday will be adopted. In each location, the same combination

of qualitative and documentary methods were employed to investigate the main research questions. These are:

- *How do the **factors** identified affect the mediation of market-related educational policies for provision of public second level schooling at the local level, if at all?*
- *How do the **stakeholders** identified affect the mediation of market-related policies for the provision of public second level schooling at the local level, if at all?*
- *What **theoretical insights**, about the mediation of market-related policies on the provision of public second level schooling can be generated by a cross-national comparative analysis of multiple-case studies?*

How the Research was Conducted

The research commenced with theoretical and documentary study in October 1998 which satisfied the researcher as to the significance of the topic and the imperative of a field focus at the local level. By April 1999, initial explorations had already been made to the case study locations, and the necessary adjustments made for pilot work to be undertaken in England, Ireland and the USA in May and June, 1999. Following the outcome of this pilot work, and further review of the literature, the substantive fieldwork was conducted in the same three locations, during the period September through to January, 2000. In each location a considerable amount of local documentation was gathered, and overall over 60 semi-structured interviews were conducted, recorded, transcribed and prepared for comparative analysis. This proceeded, in harness with revisiting and enhancing the review of relevant literature into the drafting of component chapters, rewriting and ultimately, concluding the thesis.

Critiquing the Research

During the doctoral period, the researcher presented her work to a number of different national education research conferences in England, Ireland and the USA (see chapter 4). Other related international conferences organised by the University of Zurich, Switzerland and the Eastern Mediterranean University, Cyprus on the marketisation of education - were also attended and presentations made. This provided valuable feedback and opportunities to speak to others in the field. Partly as a result of this, certain gaps in this research were identified that required additional follow up.

From both the analysis itself and external review, it is clear that both factors and stakeholders have significant mediating effects on the policies in question, particularly at the local level. However, the factors vary in degree and significance as between all three locations. Indeed, this is one of the interesting features of this thesis: how different factors mediate similar policies to different effect, in different national and local contexts (Hirsch, 1997). Thus, it is hoped that by applying Bereday's (1964) method to the issue and accommodating the thinking of Crossley and Vulliamy (1984) as to the potential contribution of multiple case study approaches to comparative analysis, that this study may help to generate theory.

The Structure of the Thesis

The structure of the thesis is as follows. Chapter 1 elaborates on the focus of this research. It also explains terms of reference that will be used throughout the thesis. The first chapter also introduces the case locations and the main policy enactments in

each country. Chapter 2 pays particular attention to the global discourse on marketisation as well as to the historical and cultural roots of all three systems, giving special attention to the formation of the public secondary sector. These gives rise to different traditional practices in each location which lead to different approaches to educational provision and, indeed, reform. This contextual background is essential to the understanding of the mediation process. Chapter 3 examines selected literature on the theme of marketisation of public education and the findings to date. The literature is weighted differently according to the scale of the country or location. For instance, one of the weaknesses highlighted in the Irish system is the lack of empirical research, while the USA has a tendency towards macro-analyses. England on the contrary, appears to have more publications on both kinds of literature. The fact that the literature review reflects these differences of emphasis contributes significantly to the subsequent comparative analysis. Chapter 4 is the research methodology section. It is obvious from this chapter that the researcher attaches significance to the 'liberal process' which is supposed to correspond with openness and transparency (Annan, 2001). The researcher explores how she used and adapted Bereday's comparative methodology in order to cope with the aims and objectives of her research questions, as well as making use of the 'constant comparative method' for the analysis of data.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 each present and account for the research findings from all three countries. These analyses derive from the semi-structured interviews and documentary research, and comprise the first two stages of Bereday's method. Chapter 8 comprises the main comparative analysis, based on the conceptual framework and worked through the subsequent stages of Bereday's method to its conclusion. Finally, chapter 9 concludes the outline of the total analysis in the light of the hypotheses posed and research questions asked. It completes the comparisons with

the identification of key issues arising as well as emerging themes that have cross-national significance for the understanding of the issue in question. The whole is reviewed in the hope of adding to current theory and benefiting future researchers operating cross-nationally and at the local level. The thesis is illustrated with: relevant figures at appropriate points and a number of appendices for additional information; and an extensive bibliography is supplied.

CHAPTER 1: FOCUS AND DEFINITION

1.1 Introduction: Purpose and Problem

The main purpose of this study is to illuminate the connection between macro social and micro social processes in one aspect of educational change - the marketisation of public secondary schooling. LeVine and White (1986) relate these processes to mobilisation and motivation, respectively. In terms of the issue under investigation here, mobilisation refers to the enactment of policy while motivation is concerned with the implementation of that policy. Both are components of what LeVine and White term 'the cultural basis of educational developments':

For if policy-makers and ordinary people share cultural models of life, education and social performance, the possibilities for their collaboration are enhanced, whereas cultural divisions between them will inhibit the implementation of policies (Ibid. pp. 217-218).

In this study, the interaction between the micro and the macro is referred to as *the mediation of policy*. In focusing on the mediation of market-related policies in the provision of public schooling at the local level, the research responds to a need identified by recent workers in this field in England, whose key relevant publications are discussed below (Gewirtz, Ball, and Bowe, 1995; Woods, Bagley and Glatter, 1998; Levacic, Hardman and Woods, 1998). All recognise the potential value of qualitative work in local settings where the complex interactions of factors and players can be investigated, and call for more research at this level.

In reviewing the *mediation* market-related policy and the provision of public secondary schooling, the research considers the 'public market' in terms of provision

and access. There are, however, ways in which curricular aspects may relate to the market and affect customer choice, such as opportunities for interaction with local businesses and the influence of performance indicators. Such issues are addressed in the empirical research conducted at individual schools in each of the three case-study locations where they relate to the mediation of policy.

This thesis focuses on the investigation of the apparent hiatus between intended and actual outcomes of policies designed to introduce a market into the provision of public secondary schooling ostensibly to enable and increase active consumer choice. The policies in question were designed not only for the purpose of creating a quasi-market in public schooling, but also with the intention of constraining the influence of the teacher unions, local education authorities, and reducing educational costs (see for example Bash and Coulby, 1989; Berliner and Biddle, 1996; O'Sullivan, 1996). However, there are disparities between the 'intended' and actual outcomes of, for example, so-called open-enrolment policies. Whatever the outcomes, such disparities can be understood by examining the mediation of policy through identifying the factors and stakeholders involved and their different influences. The main objective in this research is to investigate the *mediation* of national market-related educational policies at the local level through the *influence* of key factors and stakeholders. In order to enhance understanding of this issue, a cross-national comparative approach is adopted, operating at different scales of analysis from international to local.

1.1.1 The Investigation

Given the objectives outlined above the empirical investigation centred on the influencing of mediation by eight selected factors. These were grouped into two sets: indirect and direct factors. Indirect factors are residual or spatial and have no obvious stakeholders operating on their behalf; they include cultural, historical, geographical and demographic factors. Direct factors include political, religious, economic and social factors. These may have a direct influence on the mediation of policy but they may be passive in particular situations. Stakeholders, in respect of this issue, include politicians, religious organisations, parental groups, teacher unions, and the business community. Although there may well be other interested parties (or 'indirect' stakeholders), the empirical research was limited to what appeared to be, from preliminary investigation, the main stakeholders relating to the 'direct' factors.

The selection of indirect and direct factors was derived from a review of related literature and from pre-pilot and pilot work in the field. Further justification, as well as the limitations, of these choices will be discussed below. The investigation is also informed by the selection and review of primary and secondary literature which covers both contextual issues and related research. This assisted in the identification of factors and stakeholders. A distinctive component of the literature consulted is that concerned with the methodology of educational research, including comparative analysis.

It is necessary to explain the terms employed in this research at the outset, to avoid confusion due to different interpretations or cultural uses of the terminology applied here.

1.1.2 Explanation of Terms within the Context of this Study.

This section on the definition of terms will be divided into three categories: terms used in the thesis title; terms relating to issues of geographical scale; terms relating to people/organisations.

Terms Used in the Thesis Title

This thesis is entitled *The Mediation of Market-Related Policies for the Provision of Public Second Level Education: An International Comparative Study of Selected Locations in England, Ireland and the USA*. The key terms used are: mediation, market-related policies, provision, public, secondary education, local level (selected locations) and comparative.

Wilson (1995) advises the researcher to ‘clarify the relevant concepts’ when writing. He stresses that concepts ‘have to be thoroughly understood...and it is better to make them as explicit as possible, even at the risk of belabouring points with a persistence which may weary the reader’ (p. ix). Wilson clarifies concepts ‘in a style that is clear, so that it will be more obvious where what [he says]¹ is wrong’ (*Ibid.*, p.ix).

To achieve this, Wilson advises asking the question, ‘what do we mean when we say, for example, *local* or *at the local level*?’. This seems like a self-evident issue, but as philosophers of the linguistic analysis tradition point out, lack of clarity about the exact meanings of words, terms and statements leads to confusion and ‘muddled thinking’ (Wilson, lectures 1997/98).

¹ Anything written in closed square brackets, unless otherwise stated, is the researcher’s explanation or rephrasing. At no point is the essential meaning changed from what was intended by the original author.

The essence of this study lies in the word 'mediation'. *Mediation* is here defined as 'the function or activity of an intermediate means or instrumentality of transmission' (Webster's Third International Dictionary, 1971). In the context of this study, mediation refers to the interaction between the macro and the micro: how policy is filtered at all stages including formulation and enactment, and moderated by interest groups before, during and after the process of implementation. Drudy and Lynch (1993) indicate that 'the mediators of educational services are basically those groups that manage, oversee and administer the services at local level' (p117). It is mainly with aspects of this management of the public system of secondary provision that the empirical dimension of this research is concerned.

It is important to reiterate that the notion of *mediation* is the fulcrum upon which this thesis balances. All policies that are operational go through processes of formulation, enactment and implementation. Mediation may occur prior to, at, between or following all three stages. This process also includes the influence of indirect factors that do not necessarily involve negotiation between interested parties. For instance, demographic shifts can have significant influences on the take-up of places on offer in the public secondary sector.

In this thesis, the focus is on the mediation of *market-related policies*. The market-related reform policies of interest here are: in England, the 1988 Education Reform Act; in the USA, the Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993; and in Ireland, the Education (No. 2) Act of 1998. These have led to, or enhanced, the marketisation of public education in each country. Such policies are an attempt to improve educational standards by 'exposing it [education] to market pressures' (Beattie, 1999, p.125). This approach, applied since the late 1980s and 1990s, has had a major effect not only on the provision of schooling but also on the *modus operandi*

of the institutions for which it was intended, *i.e.* public secondary schools and related administrative offices operating at local, regional and national levels. Market-related policies are those that are said to encourage choice, diversity and increased competition between schools in respect both of the provision and of the content of education, the former being of prime concern to this study.

The third important concept is the phrase *local level*. The empirical focus is on how policy is mediated at the local level. By local, what is *not* meant is only the institutional level, but the local milieu or *locale*, defined as 'the setting' or 'the resource for social action' (Taylor *et al.*, 1996, p.13). The locale necessarily includes local actors, and factors (as indicated above) which play a role in the mediation of market-related school policies. The term local level thus includes both the school and its social and political environs.

The fourth concept to be clarified is 'provision'. The philosophical underpinning of market-related educational policies derives primarily from Milton Friedman's book *Capitalism and Freedom* (1962). He argues for the separation of the functions of *providing* schooling, and *paying* for schooling (Brighouse, 2000). According to Halsey, Brown, Lauder and Wells (1997), 'the defining element in the restructuring of education in Anglophone societies has been the imposition during the 1980s of economic and cultural renewal guided by what has become known as New Right (Levitas, 1986) or Neo-Conservative (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1986) ideology' (Halsey *et al.*, 1997, p.19). The 'new right' position links neo-liberal individual freedom and the free market with 'neo-conservative' views that a strong state is necessary for keeping both political and moral order (Gamble, 1994). The neo-conservative approach is concerned with curricular aspects of schooling, and with maintaining tradition, and thus, the *status quo*. The neo-liberal position is concerned

with the *provision* of education; with creating diversity within the public schooling system, and making privatisation a viable alternative. It is the neo-liberal aspects of policy with which this research is concerned, especially in relation to issues of *access*. As the essence of a market approach is to offer choice, the policy of *open enrolment* enables choice to operate, or not operate. The mediation of open enrolment policy is therefore at the centre of this research, which is not a study of 'choice' *per se*. The *policy* mediated, though of interest, is of secondary concern here to the *process* of mediation itself.

Two further terms with different connotations in each of the three countries are *private* and *public*. In England, some fee-paying schools are paradoxically referred to as 'public schools', while those funded by the government are known as 'state schools'. In Ireland, 'public' education refers to that which is state-funded. However, the religious 'voluntary' sector of the Irish secondary schooling system - which accounts for over two-thirds of secondary schools - is commonly referred to as the 'private' sector. Though these schools are privately owned, they are publicly funded. Religious Organisations may contribute anything from 5% to 15% to the school's budget.

Fully fee-paying schools do exist in Ireland, but they are in a minority of approximately 2% (Coolahan, 1995). In the USA, 'private' refers to fee-paying schools, but there is a difference between the parochial school and the private school. Parochial schools are religious-run schools whose fees are generally much lower than at (usually secular) 'private' schools. Neither of these two types of school is state-funded. To minimise the confusion of terms used in this thesis, the term *public education* will refer to education funded by the state from taxation. English private

schools, Irish private fee-paying schools, and American parochial and private fee-paying schools are, therefore, excluded from this study.

The sixth concept in the thesis title is *second level*. In all three cases, 'second level' means the formal education of students from the ages of 11/12 to 17/18 years of age. Compulsory education falls inside this age spread, ranging from 11/12 to 15/16 years of age, subject to the countries' regulations. In the USA, the secondary school is commonly known as the 'high school', whereas in Ireland and England it is referred to as 'post-primary' and 'secondary schooling', respectively. For convenience, these schools will be referred to as secondary schools or second level schools in this thesis.

Market-related schooling policies are, of course, not limited to second level education. However, it was decided to concentrate on this level because of the age/mobility connection and the particular significance given to secondary schooling. Therefore, this study completely ignores first level schooling, commonly referred to in the USA as elementary schooling, in England as primary schooling, and in Ireland as national schooling.

Given the different age-breaks that exist in secondary schools, it was decided, for the empirical work, to select schools with programmes that lead to final qualifications associated with this sector. These programmes lead directly to employment pathways or third level opportunities and so give the sector an added significance for both providers and users. Consequently, junior high schools in the USA and middle schools in England were not considered. Of necessity, this study focuses on enrolment procedures at the point of entry to secondary school, and so primarily the 11-12 year old bracket, but other points of entry to secondary schooling are also noted where they are subject to market influences.

Finally, the study is *comparative*. One might reasonably ask, ‘Why a comparative study?’ Comparative studies in education have potentially beneficial outcomes, not least being the re-examination of one’s ethnocentric assumptions in the light of other countries’ experiences (Noah, 1983). Prejudices may be identified, flaws highlighted, and different approaches elucidated by observing differences and similarities between countries’ practices. However, international comparisons have the potential of being abused, exaggerated, and used without appropriate contextual information (McLean, 1992). For instance, some Asian countries scored highest in the Third International Mathematics Science Survey (TIMSS) of secondary school performance. This is accounted for by the existence of heavily subscribed *Juku* schools, or extra-tuition centres, which take place after school (Kangmin Zeng, 1999), as well as public schooling. Other elements, such as traditional cultural responses to education, are also important and may well contribute to a country’s success on such tests (Sigler, 1997). Other researchers put forward hypotheses which attempt to show that success on the TIMSS study is somehow reflected in the economic success of a country. Such assertions are often based on limited empirical evidence (*e.g.* Prais, 1987), and so comparative work can be as beneficial as it can be harmful or misleading.

Finally, the word *selected* is important, as each case location and their schools were ‘typical’ in respect of each country. However, although typical, no case can be entirely representative and therefore no generalisation may be drawn, except in certain features or modes of operation.

Terms Relating to Issues of Geographical Scale

It is crucial to clarify terminology in respect of levels of comparison, as in different countries similar levels of geographical scale may be referred to differently. It is therefore necessary to explain clearly what is meant in the context of each of the three countries concerned, and to establish a common terminology for each level.

A useful model to consult is the geographic dimension of the 'Framework for Comparative Education Analysis' proposed by Bray and Murray Thomas (1995). The sequence of scales this provides does not, however, entirely suit the purposes of this study as it is - except for the level of the individual - based on administrative criteria. The current research is concerned with mediation. It looks at a multivariate situation, and needs to accommodate public education as a cultural phenomenon administered within regulated space. *Figure 1* illustrates a multilevel framework that makes this accommodation possible.

There are other spatial actors that have to be considered and related to this framework. In all three countries, the diocese and the parish contribute to educational provision in respect of faith-based schools. The diocese operates at the regional level, even though its geographical area and boundaries may not coincide with those of other regional level authorities, such as counties. Counties are a component of all three countries in this study, but they do not always play a role in the provision of public education. Where counties do have a role, it is at the regional level. This could be in the context of a school district in the USA, a local educational authority in England, or a vocational educational committee in Ireland.

Figure 1: Adapting Multilevel Analysis to the Research Context

BRAY and MURRAY THOMAS (1995)	GRIFFIN (2001)	
World Regions / Continents	Supranational space within which discourse influencing policy on educational provision disseminates.	Global / International
Countries	National units within which unitary or multiple systems of formal educational provision operate according to enacted policy.	National
States / Provinces	Sub-national units responsible for the provision of public education in different degrees of authority in different countries within which enacted policy is mediated.	Regional
Districts		
Schools	Local cultural milieu within which public education is delivered according to policy filtered down from national and regional levels, and further mediated at the point of provision by principals, management bodies and teams, interest groups and individuals all contributing to the milieu which is an organic combination of the residual and the dynamic.	Local / Locale
Classrooms		
Individuals		

So, in the context of this study, the ‘regional’ level is intermediate between the national and the local. It does *not* carry connotations of a wider geographical scale, which would be acceptable in other contexts, for example: New England, USA, and provinces in Ireland (*i.e.* Munster, Leinster, Ulster or Connaught) or the Midlands in England.

There are also relevant spatial entities operating at the local level. For example, *parishes* may be influential in the provision of public sector schooling, and are components of the locale. Individual schools’ catchments are also a component of the locale. Catchments, unlike parishes, do not have a separate identity outside the context of school enrolment.

Finally, in every locality (or locale), there are many types of community that overlap and interface with each other; therefore, the notion of ‘community’ is not easy to define. In certain contexts, the idea of community may relate closely to parish or catchment, or both. Such relationships will be discussed in terms of the case study locations below.

Terms Relating to People and Organisations.

Terms may denote groups, with general responsibilities in the provision or administration of public sector schooling, or, alternatively, individuals with a particular role or interest.

At the national level in each of the three countries involved there are organisations with a remit for public education: the Department of Education and Employment (DfEE), in England, renamed as the Department of Education and Skills (DfES) since 2001; the Department of Education and Science (DES) in Ireland, and

the State Department of Education (DOE) in the USA. The last named does not, unlike the other two, have any responsibility for the provision of public schooling. Nonetheless, for the purposes of this study, the term *Department* will be used for national governmental agencies involved in public education in some way.

At the regional level there are education authorities of different kinds in each of the three countries: Local Education Authorities (LEAs) in England; Vocational Education Committees (VECs) in Ireland, and both State and District Offices in the USA. The precise functions of each of these bodies differ significantly from country to country. The LEAs in England are still officially responsible for public education in their areas of jurisdiction, but their powers have been significantly reduced by the 1988 and subsequent Acts. The VECs, while based on counties, deal only with vocational education schools. The situation in the USA is the most complex, for reasons that will be explained in the following chapter. While the Federal Government has no role in the provision of public schooling, it does - through the State Department - exert significant influence through project-funding open to competition. Furthermore, other Federal authorities, such as the Supreme Court and the Office of the President of the USA, do on occasion act in ways that have a fundamental and widespread influence on public sector education. Consequently, although States and Districts share the rights and responsibilities for such provision, it is still acceptable to refer to them, along with the LEAs and VECs, as *regional* authorities, and that convention will be adopted for the purposes of this thesis.

At the local level, the terms apply to the management of public education on the institutional scale, that is, in individual secondary schools. The day-to-day running of the school is in the hands of one person under the title of head teacher, principal or

director. For the purposes of this study, and irrespective of the country concerned, the term *principal* will be used.

Principals of schools, public or private, are always responsible to an appointed or elected committee that has collective responsibility. With the devolution of power that typically accompanies the policy reforms examined here, this may well include total financial responsibility. The committees may be known variously as ‘Board of Trustees’, ‘Board of Governors’ or ‘Governing Body’ In the English and Irish institutions, such groups relate only to the one school, whereas in the American case, the ‘School Board’ has a collective district-wide responsibility, to which the principal of every public school in the district defers. The terms relevant to each country will be used throughout.

Within the institution of the school, the principal is assisted by a team of senior staff who are, in effect, managers for particular aspects of the school such as curriculum, physical facilities or discipline. This group will be referred to in the thesis as *the management team*. In the American case, the principal is supported not only by a ‘senior management team’, but also by a non-managerial, advisory ‘site-based management team’ representing interest groups such as parents, teachers, local businesses and community leaders.

Besides the principal, there are other individuals involved in influencing the internal policy, ethos and running of the school. They are not normally acting on a purely individual basis, but mostly represent interest groups on the ‘management board’. As they act on behalf of these groups, the term ‘actors’ is often used to describe them. In this study, the preferred term is *stakeholders*. A good example of ‘stakeholders’ would be teachers’ unions and their elected representatives who have an interest in, and actively influence, educational policy.

Individual stakeholders may represent interests operating on scales other than the local, and for this reason the researcher has interviewed national and regional level politicians with a direct interest in public secondary schooling, and administrators in regional authorities in all three countries. Administrators and politicians are also stakeholders. The majority of such stakeholders sit on the management boards of public secondary schools or are represented there.

1.1.3 The Research Questions

Following exploratory visits to the field, previously much broader and less focused research questions were refined, and three main research questions were selected:

- How do the **factors** identified affect the mediation of market-related policies for the provision of public second level education at the local level, if at all?
- How do the **stakeholders** identified affect the mediation of market-related policies for the provision of public second level education at the local level, if at all?
- What **theoretical insights** on the mediation of market-related policies on the provision of public second level education can be generated by a cross-national comparative analysis of multiple-case studies, if any?

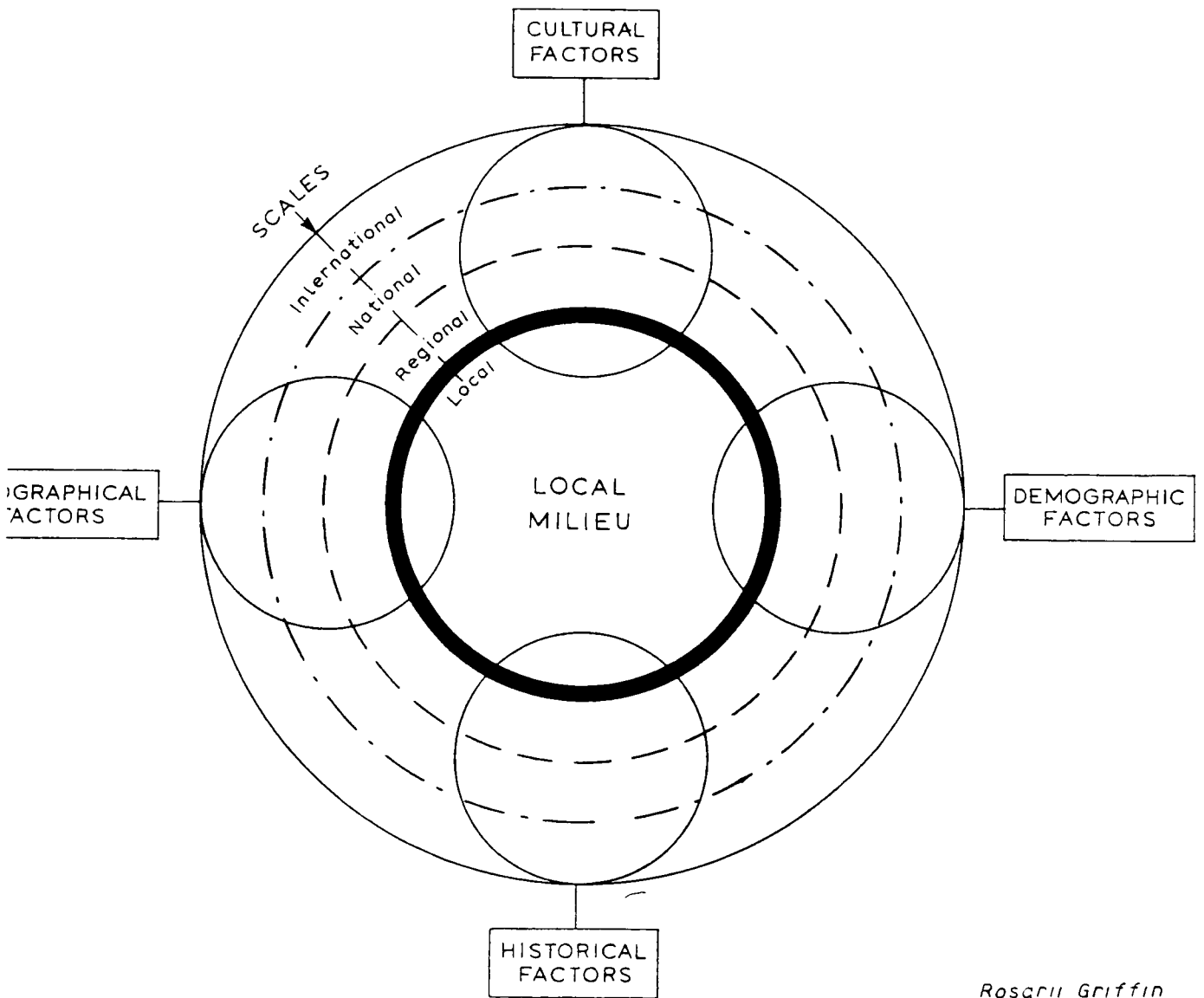
In order to tackle these questions in different contexts, a *conceptual framework* was developed through which the dynamics of the factors, stakeholders and their interactions were to be understood and investigated. The conceptual framework devised is illustrated in *Figure 2a, b and c*.

1.2 Charting the Conceptual Framework

Indirect factors included in the first research question are illustrated in *Figure 2a*, and, as shown, operate at all scales from global to local. This is also true of the direct factors, shown in *Figure 2b*. These indirect and direct factors are illustrated together in *Figure 2c*, which demonstrates the significance of direct factors to the research, and the direct impact on mediation of policy at the local level. The *Composite Conceptual Framework* has been influenced by elements of the multilevel analysis of Bray and Murray Thomas (1995), the 'model' of Gewirtz *et al.* (1995), and the 'domains' of Woods *et al.* (1998), all of which are referred to below. It aims to provide a more integrated connection between the global and the local, and a more direct focus on the latter (McGinn, 1996).

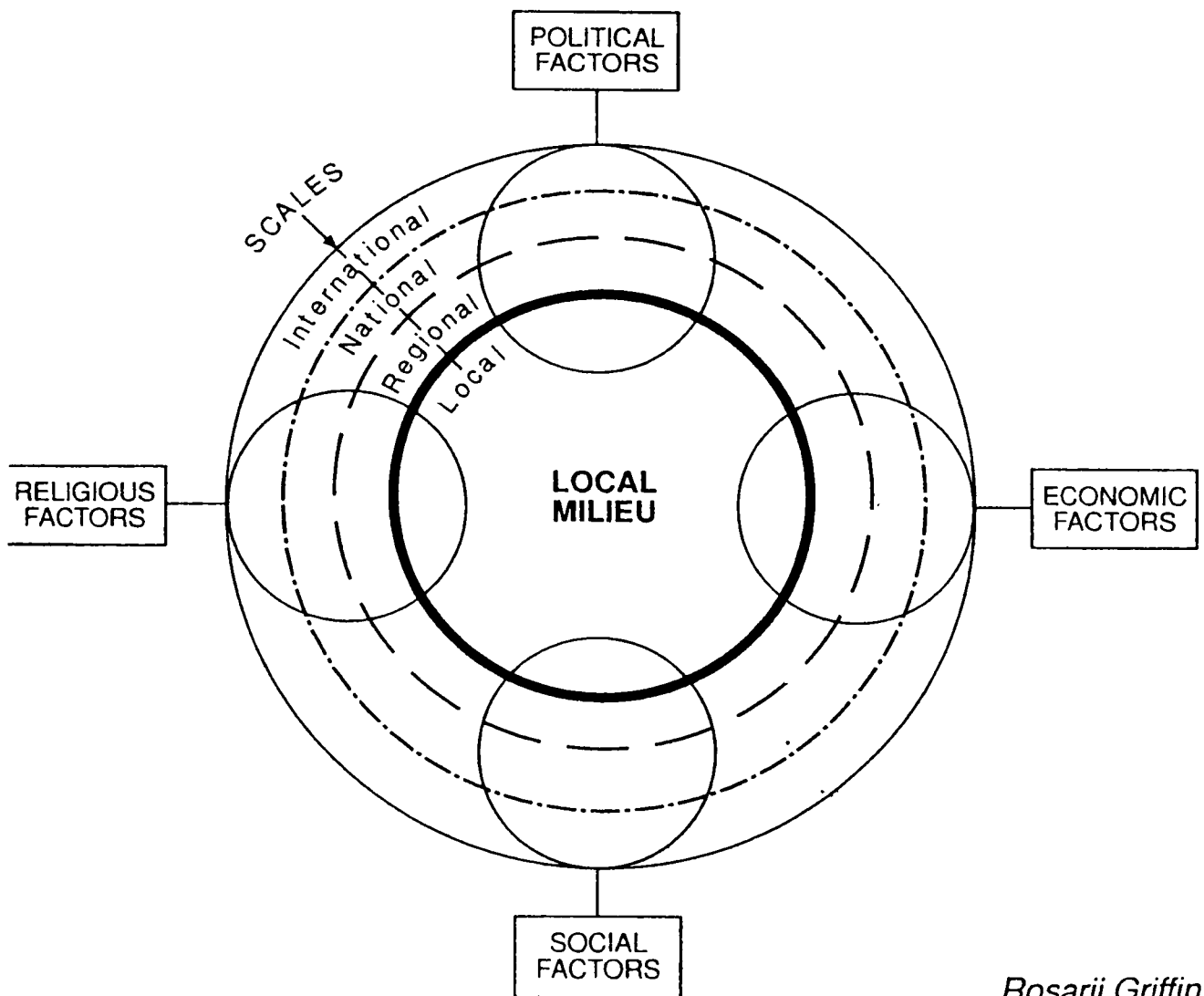
Necessarily, the factors overlap. They combine with other contextual features to produce a distinctive local cultural mix, of which a component is the milieu influencing the implementation of educational policy. For instance, the historical and geographical factors set the temporal and spatial scene, which is always shifting. The cultural factor is pervasive and operates at all scales of analysis, always evolving, and providing the essential connections for the operation of that process. Each of the factors is briefly introduced below and illustrated in *Figures 2* and *3*. Identification of the factors was made possible by documentary study and initial visits to field locations. The factors are believed to influence, collectively and individually, the mediation of policy. Policy mediation does not operate in a vacuum, but rather within the social context of any locality in which it is being implemented and operated.

Figure 2a Conceptual Framework : Indirect Factors.



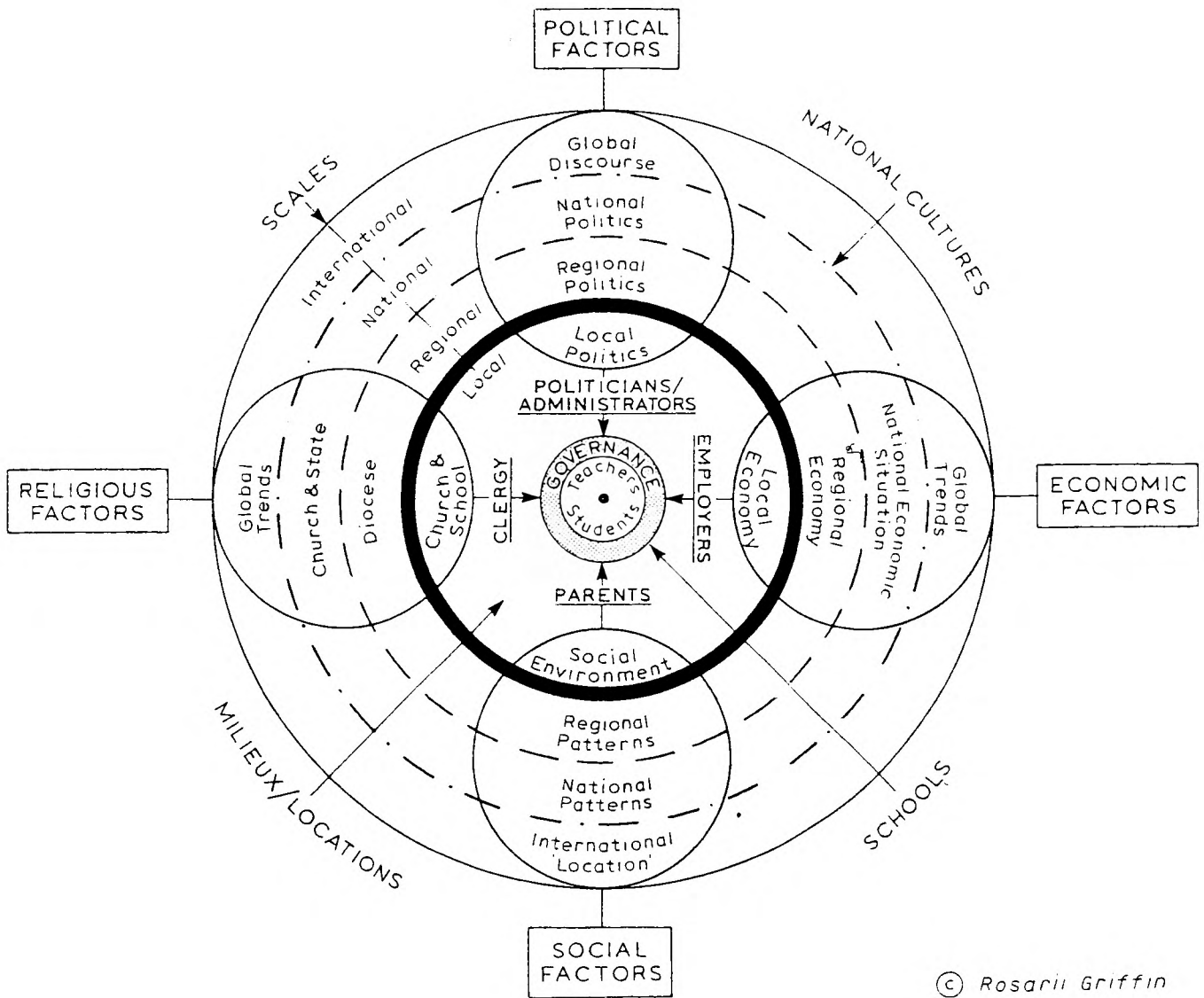
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Figure 2b: Conceptual Framework: Direct Factors.



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Figure 2c: Composite Conceptual Framework



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The conceptual framework illustrates the integration of the key research questions. It is broad enough to allow a theoretical understanding of the dynamic interaction of factors and stakeholders to be investigated in the context of a particular *milieu*. The conceptual framework also accommodates the constraints on the scope of the current research, and its particular focus on secondary provision. It operates on different scales of analysis to accommodate the value of the multi-level approach used above in *Figure 1*, and commented upon further in chapter four.

1.3 Introducing the Factors

1.3.1 The History Factor

This thesis resides within the field of comparative education. Comparative education owes a great deal in its establishment as a discipline to the work of such pioneers as Kandel (1954) and Hans (1949), who placed historical perspectives at the core of their interpretations of national systems. They recognised the residual influence of long-standing epistemological traditions (McLean, 1992a). Key historical influences formed what Mallinson (1975) used to call the ‘national character’, while Lauwerys (1959) believed such characteristics were also attributable to the formation of a ‘national philosophy’ of education.

The influence of the historical factor, even on contemporary issues like the operation of marketisation in public education, operates at a range of temporal scales, and therefore features as a key element in the contextual analysis explained in detail in chapter two. The temporal dimension, from which all other factors may be viewed both independently and in relation to each other, is an important aspect of comparative analysis. The historical scale of the formulation and implementation of

market-related policies presented here is of necessity relatively short and recent. Nevertheless, it is essential to have a firm understanding of the histories of education and society in each case-country, since these bear directly on the styles of second level provision where such market-related policies are being applied. Consequently, in documentary research, attention is paid to formative influences which affect the broad character of provision. for example, selection and non-selection, inclusivity and exclusivity.

1.3.2 The Cultural Factor

Education makes an important contribution to cultural and social reproduction (Bourdieu, 1997). This is not just simple replication, but is more like genetic mutation; that is to say, though cultures evolve, they tend to retain certain core values. As is true of the historical factor, the cultural factor has a bearing on the entire research project and operates independently on the different scales of reference. For instance, a particular cultural ideology may be supported at the national level, while at the local level it may be accepted by local people and yet adapted to meet local needs. Each location (illustrated by the inner-circle in *Figure 2*) will have a distinctive culture, or milieu, within which most mediation of policy on school provision takes place. The milieu relates to the concept of locale mentioned above. Milieu also refers to attitudes to education, shown by Robson (1971) to exist at the micro-level.

1.3.3 The Geographical Factor

The geographical factor incorporates the spatial dimension, and the issue of scale. All scales of operation affect the local. Crang (*Op. Cit.*) explains, 'market forces...are not big processes which set the parameters for local interaction, rather these 'big structures' are embedded inside local interactions' (p.121). Bove, Ball and Gold (1992) make it clear that we 'have to come to grips with at least three conceptual aspects of space in relation to the market'. These three aspects are, a) the historical construction of locality and community; b) the socially constructed limits and possibilities of the market; and c) practical and physical constraints on mobility (p.35).

The highly localised variations in attitudes to education were highlighted by Robson (*Op. Cit.*) in his classic study of Sunderland in England. More recently, Bradford (1990) demonstrated conclusively the effect of the local residential environment on students' attainment, and the differential ability of social classes to exercise choice. Similarly, Gibson and Asthana (2000) report increased polarisation of social class as one outcome of the marketisation of public sector schooling. Geography does therefore have a role in the mediation of enrolment policy, even if that role is an indirect one.

1.3.4 The Demography Factor

Demography is concerned with population change and structure. 'Population change' is the balance between births and deaths, in-migration and out-migration, in any given area over a period of time. For example, a demographic downturn might cause some

or all schools in an area to be under-subscribed, thus creating space for choice. Alternatively, such a scenario might lead to the closure or amalgamation of schools, leading to diminished or enriched possibilities for choice respectively. Recent population migrations, especially in relation to schooling, have been the subject of a DfEE funded study in England (Dobson and Henthorne, 1999).

The study of population structure looks at how populations in any given area are composed, according to set criteria such as age, gender, race, religion, ethnicity, socio-economic status and occupation. Patterns of age and gender may be significant in that an ageing population – living longer and not moving away on retirement – may simply not generate enough young people to sustain local schools on an economic basis. In the context of the American school district system, this has led, on some occasions, to voting down the allocations of local taxation to school budgets. This commonly occurs in areas with a predominance of retired persons.

1.3.5 The Political Factor

The political and economic factors merge directly when financial considerations are devolved to the institutional level, and responsibility for financial management falls to the management board and principal. However, the political factor operates in a number of ways: by formulating and enacting policy; and administering the public educational system within regulated space or, according to political geographies, on different scales from national to local (Bondi, 1991). In all three countries, certain regulations constrain choice of secondary school and at least in the English and American cases, local interpretations and procedures are in operation that form part of the mediation of market-related policies in respect of local polities. Such decisions are

increasingly made at the local level due to trends towards devolution and deregulation.

At the same time, there is interaction between the different scales of political activity. Globalisation permits cross-national discourse and opportunities for influencing policy that did not exist so directly or swiftly until the contemporary era (Finegold, McFarland and Richardson, 1993; Chubb and Moe, 1990). National intervention in local circumstances, such as the Education Action Zones in England, affects the mediation of local policy (Power, 2000).

1.3.6 The Religious Factor

The religious factor is an important issue in schooling for historical and cultural reasons. However, for the focus of this research on the mediation of policy, its connection with the politics and provision of public sector schooling is the primary interest. Within each country, and in the context of open-enrolment policies, the relative incidence and distribution of what are sometimes known as faith-based schools can be important factors (Walford, 1996d). The situation is distinctive in all three countries: in England, the major Christian denominations operate and run certain schools within the public sector, while retaining some significant powers; in Ireland, the Catholic church has long been a dominant force in the provision and operation of schools, while in the USA, the separation of church and state in public schooling has resulted in a parallel system of parochial schools which are privately funded. Recently, there have been a number of legal cases in the USA concerned with the

propriety of the flow of public funds to religious-based schools, through the introduction of voucher schemes².

1.3.7 The Economic Factor

The economic factor is evident on all scales of analysis - global and international, national, regional and local. The OPEC oil crisis, for example, affected the funding of public sector services worldwide in 1973. National reports conducted by international bodies, such as the OECD's 1967 *Investment in Education* report in respect of Ireland, can lead to major shifts in policy. In the USA, a national debate on the concept of public education in the late nineteenth century started, in large part, from a local initiative among a small community of shoe workers in Beverly, Massachusetts, who had been campaigning for free public education in return for taxes (Katz, 1987).

The economic factor directly affects the financial mechanisms in operation to support public schools. Most public schools are dependent on a basic level of funding, which is usually determined on a 'per capita' basis, and sometimes age-weighted. Schools thrive or struggle to survive, depending on their financial situation, which is itself dependent on enrolment and student numbers (Levacic *et al.*, 1998). Another element in the economic factor is the relationship, if any, between the business world and public education (Cuban, 2000).

² Voucher schemes operate when the government or private investors give parents an educational voucher, worth a certain amount of money, covering or subsidising the fees of any school of their choice, including private schools (Brighouse, 2000).

1.3.8 The Social Factor

The social factor relates to human groups and their interactions - for instance, relationships between and within social class groups and ethnic minorities. In respect of England, the significance of links between social class and education was established by the classic studies of Halsey, Heath and Ridge (1980) and Lacey (1970). In some places, issues such as urban social segregation (Peach, 1975) may have a significant impact on school catchments and, therefore, on school choice where it operates. Other social issues include occupational structure within the community, as well as family ties with the school, and schools' interactions with the local community.

In Massachusetts, many of the numerous small school districts comprise communities dating back to the days when they were pioneer settlements (McPartland, 1979). Even today, American schools are important centres of community life especially in suburban and small town settings. In Ireland too, despite the unitary system of public educational provision, the long-standing role of the Catholic church and its parishes has led to continued co-operation between schools and communities which is perceived as part of the social fabric of rural and urban life (Walshe, 1999).

1.3.9 Pairing the Factors.

All eight factors identified above are relevant to this study. In practice, they do not operate in isolation. They act differently in each national case, cross-nationally, and at each level of analysis. At the level of the locale, they create the *milieu*, so that, the

smaller the scale, the more multi-variate and dynamic the amalgam. This in turn creates the culture where the policies in question are mediated. It is possible to analyse the role and effect of all eight factors individually and simultaneously, especially the ephemeral ones such as culture and history. Hence, the grouping of these into direct and indirect factors, as indicated above, is an important first step.

The next step involves the factors being further grouped into pairs that relate strongly to each other. The indirect paired factors are: history with culture, and geography with demography; and the direct paired factors are: politics with religion, and social with economic. *Figure 3* sets this out in diagrammatic form. These pairings are commonly associated with each other in the literature. This eases the cross-national analysis of data, especially at the local level. Once this is achieved, the factors are considered in their pairs within each country location (chapters 5, 6 and 7) and cross-nationally at the different scales of analysis (chapter 8).

1.4 The Stakeholders

The conceptual framework, illustrated in *Figure 2*, highlights the significance of the position of key *stakeholders* who are the focus of the second research question. A stakeholder may be identified as:

Someone who has a legitimate interest in the [educational] organisation and its activities and, as a result, may have some right to influence the direction of the organisation (Tuohy, 1997, p. 32).

Key stakeholders include politicians, educational administrators, educators, clergy, parents and the local business community or local employers. Each category of stakeholder is positioned in the inner circle of *Figure 2c*. Stakeholders are also linked to the 'direct' factors which they represent. As people do not operate independently,

Figure 3: Pairing the Factors in respect of Educational Provision

Factor	Discipline	Definition	Description	Pairings: in Respect of Education Systems
Cultural	Anthropology	The study of the total way of life including traditions, of a community of people.		Education systems are culturally embedded and have emerged in association with cultural change, historical trends – such as nationalism and events – such as major conflicts, that make ‘sea changes’.
Historical	History	The study of the past in terms of chronology and events.		
Geographical	(Human) Geography	The spatial and locational study of the Earth’s surface phenomena: human.		Education systems are ‘space adjusting mechanisms’ that locate the dissemination of knowledge and skills at places and through networks, through populations that vary in age numbers and other attributes and are capable of migration from one place to another.
Demographic	Demography	The study of population structure, distribution and change.		
Political	Politics	The study of systems of power and administration.		Education systems are the creatures of political decision in their formation, operation and reform. These often have formative roots in the work of churches and denominations which tend to retain a residual influence.
Religious	Politics			
Social	Sociology	The study of human groups and their interaction.		Education systems relate directly to the differentiation of human society into classes and occupational structures, and tend to support reproduction through both curricula and funding mechanisms.
Economic	Economics	The study of systems of production and exchange.		

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each stakeholder is assumed to be subject to the influence of indirect factors - geography, demography, history and culture - as well as the direct factors. The extent to which these individual factors influence stakeholders' perceptions or behaviour is difficult to determine. However, one insight we can get into this is through the interviewees' perceptions of the importance of such factors to the mediation of enrolment policy. The researcher does not claim to know the extent of these factors' influence. Instead, she aims to demonstrate the respondents' perceptions of the importance of the factors to school enrolment policies and practices, and to issues such as marketing.

Those interviewed were primarily at the management board level of all the case-schools, which places them within the inner circle of the conceptual framework. management boards were chosen as the study's main informants (or interviewees), since they have the capacity to be directly involved in the mediation of enrolment policy. The management board also includes stakeholders (as representatives of the direct factors) who are in a position to influence school enrolment policy. From a number of different perspectives, they are ideal informants for this aspect of the research.

The management board varies in its composition, depending on the type of school being studied, and the country in which the school resides. In England and Ireland it generally comprises the principal, parental representatives, business representatives, local government officials, members of the teaching staff or teacher unions, and the religious community. It was found to be primarily at the school level or local/regional authority that government policy was examined, discussed, internalised, reformulated and then implemented. By focusing on these groups of

respondents, the researcher was able to approach the issue of mediation where policies are implemented, that is, within the local milieu.

Comparable selections of stakeholders in each country were interviewed. The analysis of interviews informs the empirical outcomes of the research. Primary documentation was obtained from each of the schools, and local/regional education offices where applicable. Also contributing to the analysis are the outcomes of additional interviews, such as those with politicians not necessarily at the local level, but with an interest and experience in both local and national public educational provision.

1.5 Countries and Locations

A multiple case-study approach was adopted for this study. First, it is necessary to consider the dimensions of the exercise, and the selection of its component cases on different scales of reference. The selection of countries was determined by their attempts to marketise education, by the financial and temporal scale of the research project, and by the international background and experience of the researcher.

Replication logic arises with the examination of like phenomena occurring in multiple case-studies. Replication logic is strengthened by the possibility of achieving comparable outcomes when conducting the same study in more than one place. Multiple case studies' replication logic may benefit from an increasing number of cases being addressed; however, there is also the question of the optimum number of cases for the project in terms of both cohesion and manageability. It was decided to focus on transatlantic comparisons and not attempt national or local case-studies in

other arenas, such as Australia, New Zealand or Sweden, where the issue in question is also significant (Whitty, Power and Halpin, 1998; Mikuta, 1999).

1.5.1 The Selection of Case Countries

The selection of England, Ireland and the USA is regarded as the optimum. All three countries are influenced by the so-called *Transatlantic Market in Education and Training Reform* (Finegold *et. al.*, 1993). This selection was influenced by the case study sensitivity to context, and the opportunity provided through cross-national comparison for both internal and external perspectives, depending on the cultural identity of the researcher. The value of a cross-national comparison is 'to see schools of other countries not only as they appear in their own national contexts but in terms of other systems'; as it is important to 'appraise educational issues from a global rather than an ethnocentric perspective' (Bereday, 1964, p.6).

O'Sullivan's (1992) notion of the 'cultural stranger', resonant with the idea of insider/outsider interplay, is relevant. This notion is also discussed by Crossley and Vulliamy (1997), and, though they are studying developing countries, their observations are relevant to comparisons made in this thesis. The researcher is a native of Ireland and has extensive research experience in both the USA and England. This has had a bearing on the potential of this particular combination.

As the provision and operation of public education is a culturally embedded phenomenon (Sigler, 1997), the broad cultural and historical dimensions of provision are discussed in chapter 2, with special reference to the evolution of public secondary schooling in national contexts. When considering the micro-social dimension, it was

necessary to select case-study locations within England, Ireland and the USA on a scale appropriate for the research (see Walford, 2001).

1.5.2 Case Study Locations.

According to Crang (*Op. Cit.*), 'markets are embedded in local interactions and they work through these localised, spatially bounded cultures of exchange' (p.121). This is true also for the quasi or public markets relating to secondary schooling (Woods *et al.*, *Op. Cit.*). While localities are inevitably idiosyncratic, it is necessary to select cases for comparison that have sufficient similarities. Cross-nationally this can be problematic, especially when selecting three national cases where urban social development - with public education as a key component - needs to exhibit sufficient parallels (Smith, 1976 and 1977). For instance, distance and mobility are key issues in accessing the market in secondary schooling. There are significant differences between rural and urban areas in the delivery of the service and in the realities of exercising choice. As the majority of the population in all three countries reside in urban or suburban locations, the rural dimension has been excluded from this study. It would, of course be a perfectly valid context for the examination of this same issue in its own right, as illustrated by the work conducted in Maine by Maddaus and Mirochnik (1992). However, due to the limitations of what one researcher can hope to achieve in the scope of a three-year doctoral programme, it was thought unwise to include the rural dimension at this stage, though its situation is noted.

Although each case is unique, for a multiple case-study approach it is better to select locations with a high degree of comparability so as to maximise the potential value of replication logic that may arise from the analysis (Hammersley, 1987; Yin

1994; Wolcott, 1990). This in turn will enhance the potential outcome of the research in its contribution to theory.

Within England, Ireland and the USA (Massachusetts), it was decided to avoid capital cities, even though some of the relevant research literature had arisen from studies in such locations. Capital cities are peculiar cases, particularly if they are main cities. For instance, London, Dublin and Boston are all many times larger than the second city in their political domain by a factor of about ten. They exhibit economies and populations that are more diversified and subject to shorter term shifts than smaller cities; their *locus* as the centre of political power may have led to special considerations or reactions in respect of the implementation and mediation of policy. It was felt capital cities would provide suitable locations for self-contained comparisons of their component parts, but would not be suitable models for a cross-national comparison.

Now, the problem remained, where to conduct the field study? With respect to the micro-social dimension, it was necessary to select case-study locations within England, Ireland and the USA at the appropriate scale for the investigation of the phenomenon in question. First, the researcher reviewed public documentation illustrating the existence of a market-like situation in respect of public secondary schooling. Then, she made contact and discussed the potential access she had to records and institutions. Finally, the researcher made preliminary visits to these sites, following which the three case study locations were confirmed.

The English Location

The English case-location is a provincial city with a population of about 180,000 and has contiguous suburbs that extend into a total conurbation of approximately 250,000. In current political status the city itself is a 'Unitary Authority' and therefore an LEA. The neighbouring authority within which the other suburbs reside is a 'Shire County' and also an LEA. The conurbation has grown from a city established in medieval times and particularly through large expansions in the nineteenth century and then the late twentieth century. These periods of significant urban growth represent very different economic developments. Urban growth is associated with the establishment of a large working class population in traditional industries. More recent economic developments - electronic and modern manufacturing industries, and social and professional sectors - are associated with the growth of a middle class. There is the usual structural division between municipal estates and owner-occupier areas, though the situation is a dynamic one and not as spatially discrete as it used to be. However, the particular place of secondary schools in the phases of urban development here had a residual effect in relation to perceptions within the operation of a market-oriented provision, and this had to be taken into account in the selection of case study schools and the analysis of data generated.

In this case, it was decided after the preliminary and pilot visits to the field to select two schools from the Unitary Authority and one from the suburbs in the Shire County - all three, of course, being in the one conurbation. Within the city, one school is located on a large municipal estate but proximate to a smaller owner-occupier area and the other is a denominational school (Roman Catholic) which by virtue of its voluntary-aided status can operate differentially in respect of enrolment while still

being a public sector institution. The shire county school is located within a mile of the boundary between the two LEAs and is accessible to the city population.

The Irish Location

The Irish case-location is also a provincial city of about 150,000 population, with suburbs and exurbs. The total population relating to this conurbation is approximately 200,000. Again, it is an old established city with a similar history of nineteenth-century expansion based on a range of traditional industries, and the associated growth of a substantial working class population. Here two political authorities operate the provision and administration of public secondary schooling. Firstly, there is the national authority based in Dublin, which relates directly to the majority of such schools. Secondly, there is the county authority, responsible for vocational secondary schools, which mediates national policy down to the local. Given the role of the Catholic Church in the development and provision of secondary schooling, the Diocesan authority - based in the city - is also significant.

The existence of large municipal estates and substantial areas of owner occupancy make this comparable to the other cases in overall structure, and related patterns of employment and social class contribute to that comparability. Within the context of the overall experience of the Irish economy, this city and its suburbs exhibit both the legacies of traditional industrial decline and the impact of modern high technology and service sector expansion.

After the preliminary and pilot visits, three schools were selected for the main study - a co-educational community school, a single-sex boys' denominational secondary school and a single-sex girls' secondary school. The preliminary work

featured a vocational educational college which, though not represented in the main study, was most instructive in the pilot phase. At that point, the choice was either a vocational school or a community school for the main study. The three Irish schools were chosen on the grounds that they represented the range of types of school typically available nationwide, and were, therefore, representative of the availability of choice.

The American Location

The American case-location is a city within a conurbation in mid-Massachusetts. The conurbation largely comprises two political entities, each corresponding to a school district. Outer suburbs extend into neighbouring towns with their own school districts. The case selected comprises the larger of the two main political entities, which has opted into the market-related reform of public school provision instigated by the state in 1993. The smaller district within the conurbation has opted out. This distinction will be discussed further below.

Although the case study city has grown from a small 'colonial' town since the seventeenth century, it experienced major expansion similar to the other cases, during the nineteenth century industrial and commercial expansion. As with many other of the older industrial centres of New England, the traditional industries based on water power have declined and in recent decades there has been a diversification centred around modern technology and the service sector. This makes for the same range of socio-economic sectors as in the other cases but with a different ethnic composition. Besides the older ethnic groups of a variety of European immigrant communities, this

city has a majority concentration of Puerto Ricans and Afro-Americans plus a smaller and more recent influx of Russians.

Following the preliminary and pilot studies, three schools were selected for the main study. It was a difficult choice. There were six public high schools in the district, including two publicly funded Charter schools - the choice was more restricted than in the other cases. There were parochial schools of course, but these do not receive public funds and are not subject to the 1993 Education Reform Act of this state and so were exempt from this study. As one of the Charter schools had to be involved at the pilot stage, it was important to include the other in the main study as these schools represent an important innovative response to the type of legislation in question. For the other two case-schools, it was decided to take a high school with a technical and vocational orientation, and another with a commercial orientation. However, these are orientations, not specialisations, since the whole range of curricular options was available in both schools.

The final issue to be covered in this chapter is to introduce the three Education Acts that have brought these policies into the regular systems of the places concerned. While the thesis is not concerned with these documents *per se*, they are the 'carriers' of market related policies, the mediation of which is the main concern of this study.

1.6 Key Policy Documents in Public Secondary Education

The most significant recent legislation regulating the provision of public secondary education is, in England and Wales, the Education Reform Act (1988); in Ireland, the Education Act (1998); and, in Massachusetts, the Education Reform Act (1993).

1.6.1 The 1988 Education Reform Act, England and Wales

We know that the Education Reform Act of 1988 was strongly influenced by New Right ideology. It established the National Curriculum and the publication of performance indicators of individual institutions ostensibly to assist parents in their choice of school. Choice was to be entirely open, and existing catchments between schools and LEAs were to be deregulated. LEAs and schools were required to maintain the maximum number of places available in keeping with levels in 1979, a peak year for enrolment. This was to ensure capacity for the exercise of choice. At the same time, the Act legislated for a system of local management of schools, whereby the vast majority of funding (now well over 90 per cent) was devolved to individual schools. This made the management bodies of schools the responsible agency for virtually all operations, including the hiring and firing of staff and production of budgets to accommodate local demographic projections and expansion. One of the aims of the Act was to give management bodies, comprising stakeholders representing key interest groups, a more active role than before. Principals became, to use the managerial and market terminology, ‘chief executives’ leading ‘senior management teams’ of schools (Griffin, 1998).

1.6.2 The 1998 Education (No. 2) Act for the Republic of Ireland

The 1998 Education Act for Ireland was formed out of the White Paper of 1995, having been delayed by a change of Government in between. The Act pays particular attention to second level education. The consensual nature of Irish policy is self-

evident by the fact that the system has not been subjected to much legislation. The existing legislation has been more a means of legitimising current practice than a tool for instigating reform. In doing so, it seeks to respect the traditions and diversity of the school system while introducing more contemporary concepts such as partnership, transparency and accountability. This typifies the 'gradualist' approach to change, embedded in the culture, but some of the key provisions set in place a framework and mechanism for enhancing school performance within a market that already existed. The Act empowered the Minister to withdraw recognition from a school 'which is not effectively performing its functions'. Other key provisions are: direct public funding of schools, the institution of an Inspectorate, the recognition of the role of parents' associations and the establishment of boards of management for schools with corporate status.

While these powers devolve educational management, in the final analysis such power is subject to Ministerial regulation. A major shift towards the Centre is represented by the provision in the Act for the establishment of a National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), staffed by persons appointed by the Minister on terms and conditions determined by the Minister. Nonetheless, the Constitutional rights of parents in respect of school choice remain, and the recognition given by the Act to the role of parents' associations is a powerful encouragement to increased consumer participation.

1.6.3 The 1993 Education Reform Act for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts

The 1993 Education Reform Act for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts was declared ‘an emergency law, necessary for the immediate preservation of the public convenience’. This direct quotation from the text reflects the determination of state authorities to implement a market-related reform, especially in the provision of secondary schooling. The Act sought ‘to encourage and facilitate partnerships between schools and businesses to improve the delivery of educational services’. It also aspired to ‘articulate goals for accountability in consultation with parents, students, business representatives, community officials and the public at large’.

The Act required school districts to move towards participatory school-based management systems. It empowered the board to publish profiles of achievement at institutional and district level, as well as to declare situations of under-performance and act accordingly. An open enrolment policy allowed for movement between catchments and districts. This was subject to certain regulations and limitations, including the flow of public funding. Districts had the option to withdraw from this arrangement.

The Act set up parental information centres, intended to assist parental choice (see *Appendix C*). These centres provided information about schools’ performance and ‘quality’. To avoid discrimination, selection from applicants for places outside their area of residence was on a random basis. Transportation was provided to encourage and enable mobility. The Reform Act also legislated for the creation of charter schools, so as to encourage diversity of provision at primary and secondary level.

1.7 Summary

This thesis focuses on the influences responsible for the apparent hiatus between policy enactment outcomes, in relation to introducing a market-orientation into the provision of public secondary schooling, ostensibly to enable and increase active consumer choice.

One theme explored is the mediation of national market-related educational policy at the local level, and the influence of key factors and stakeholders on this process. A second theme of interest is how these compare cross-nationally and at different levels of analysis. Both themes are influenced by a wide range of factors which themselves overlap and interconnect to provide a dynamic context. The purpose of the conceptual framework is to identify, if possible, such connections. For the purpose of analysis, each factor is dealt with individually, in pairs and in clusters.

Documentary evidence was collected, which constituted the first component of primary data gathered. Interviews with stakeholders representing the interests of the direct factors constituted the second component of primary data collected. Interviews were later analysed using the constant comparative method as reported below.

Finally, the three case locations were chosen on the basis of similar recent market-related legislation, the outcomes of which may be as a direct result of how these policies were mediated at the local level: mediation being the prime topic of this research. It is now necessary to consider the context of the study in terms of 'informing issues' deriving especially from philosophical, historical and cultural forces on global and national scales. This discussion comprises chapter two.

CHAPTER 2: INFORMING ISSUES

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is concerned with a number of issues that *inform* aspects of the context within which market-related public sector school provision policy in England, Ireland and the USA operate. These are the global influences of the market discourse; the historical context of public secondary schooling in the three countries involved; and the relevance of social and political geography. In view of the global discourse playing a significant role in the dissemination of market related approaches to public education, this will be treated first.

2.2 Global Discourse

2.2.1 The Macro View

Globalisation has been described by Giddens as the transformation of space and time as a result of instantaneous global communication and mass transportation (1992, p.4). The globalisation process has resulted in the creation of large-scale systemic reform, but necessarily it transforms the local and even personal contexts of social experience also, hence the prevalence of the term, 'global village'.

Globalisation has encouraged both global integration and national fragmentation (Taylor *et al.*, 1997). The phenomenon of globalisation has entailed global economic interdependence, a process fostered by multi-national corporations.

This has entered social, cultural and political spheres also, resulting in situations where the global and the local compete for expression. Barber's (1996) *Jihad Vs McWorld: How Globalism and Tribalism are Reshaping the World* and Friedman's (1999) *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Fast Food and Fanaticism - the World We Live in Today*, are two popular accounts, from personal observation, reading and experience, of the tension created by the effects of the global on the local. For instance, Barber focuses mainly on ethno-political tensions created by globalisation at all levels of governance but particularly at the local level. He concludes by saying that 'with *mediating* civic institutions firmly in place and democracy once again the sovereign preserver of our plural worlds, Jihad can yield to healthy forms of cultural difference and group identity while McWorld can take its rightful and delimited place as the economic engine of a world in which economics is only one crucial dimension' (Barber, 1996, p.300, *italics* researcher's emphasis). On the other hand, Friedman, who takes an economic-political view, has, overall, a more optimistic view of the globalisation process. He argues that globalisation is inevitable, but he fears the effects of its homogenising processes, and asks the loaded question, 'Was the Tower of Babel the original version of the Internet?' Again, he argues for balance between 'the lexus and the olive tree', or the impetus of modernisation and technology and concerns for the community and local tradition (Friedman, 1999, p.378). Although such viewpoints have been contested, both authors offer enticing arguments to support what they believe to be the democratic conundrum of the modern day, or as Mouffe (2000) would describe as the democratic paradox.

There are many books which deal with globalisation. They range over a number of different perspectives (often related), including economic, cultural, political, social, religious and philosophical, each giving different weight to different

concerns. In the words of Burbules and Torres (2000), 'globalisation' has become 'an ideological discourse driving change because of a perceived immediacy and necessity to respond to a new world order' (p.2). They suggest that while educators:

...must acknowledge the force of these trends and see their implications for shaping and constraining the choices available to educational policies and practices' they must also discern when to resist 'the rhetoric of "inevitability" that so often drives particular policy prescriptions (pp. 2-3).

Also, contrary to popular opinion, it is well documented that the globalisation process is in reality global, and the gap between developing countries and developed countries is widening. This is highlighted in Denise Egea-Kuehne's (2001) paper, 'The Commodification of Knowledge: Ethno-Political Issues and Re-Thinking the Nature of Knowledge' where, citing a recent report to the United Nations (June, 2000), she highlights the fact that less than five percent of the world's population is currently benefiting from modern technology (such as computer networking, the Internet, electronic mailing). This report stresses that the majority of people in these developing countries are being marginalised, and are at risk of being completely bypassed by the global communicative network. This issue was addressed by seven industrialised countries (G7) and Russia in July 2000, who declared that such countries should have access by 2005. Egea-Kuehne, citing the prominent French political philosopher Michele Serrés, who authored *Atlas* (2000), believes that such ambitions are 'utopic'. That said, the 'globalisation' issue is relevant to this research, as it examines three 'developed'³ countries, also classified as 'western'.

The impact of global influences mentioned above influenced the nature of educational policy and formation in England, Ireland and the USA. Concern first

³ 'Developed' is in inverted commas, as to develop is an ongoing process, and to say 'developed' might suggest that a society has reached its optimal state which is clearly not the case.

became widespread in the late 1970s, most prominently with the Ruskin Speech (1976) in England; the report *A Nation at Risk* (1983) in the USA; and the OECD report on *Reviews of National Policies for Education, Ireland* (1969), which questioned the ability of education to deal with the technological revolution and the demands of a modern economy. On the whole, modern forms of technology are 'knowledge-based' and require a highly skilled workforce. This has caused older forms of 'Fordist mass production' to be inefficient by comparison, and Ashton and Green (1996) argue that these new forms of production 'utilise the skills of the full range of the workforce, rather than just those of an elite managerial caste' (p.3). Ashton and Green further add that the twin forces of global integration and technical change 'have rendered education and training of paramount importance in the competitive process' (p.3). Hence, the international tendency of nation states to reform educational policy with a view to maintaining economic competitiveness is pervasive. While Kazamias gives an excellent account of cultural changes in education in his article, 'General Introduction: Globalisation and Educational Cultures in Late Modernity: the Agamemnon Syndrome' (2001), Lawton and Cowen (2001) characterise this era as 'hedonistic individualism', whereby the process of education has focused on the 'vocalisation of education', with 'an increased tendency to see the benefits of education purely in terms of improving industrial and commercial efficiency and a desire to measure educational efficiency in terms of pupil performance on a range of arbitrary targets or benchmarks' (p.24). They question the value of transforming education into a 'dismal science of economics', whereby everything we know has to be utilised. A tendency has been observed recently moving away from this view of education, particularly by countries which are 'top' of the international league tables in Maths and Science, towards a 'less materialistic' view of

education (Lawton, 2001, p. 320) and towards a people-centred education, as proposed by Deming (Holt, 2000).

The three countries in this research reacted to the influence of globalism at the national level by passing particular Education Acts as already indicated. These reforms were similar to those of other so-called 'developed' and 'developing' countries. They employed the instrumentalist rational approach, and were driven largely by the newly embraced neo-liberal ideology, which was influencing national policies on a global scale. Educational policy had to be reformed according to this ideology, as it was now popularly perceived to be the driving force of a new economy. Similarly, the education establishment, long perceived as left-wing, unionised and resistant, had to be streamlined, downsized, and, as far as possible, privatised along the lines of a free market economy.

Li Xing's article, 'The Market-Democracy Conundrum' (2001) argues that liberal democracy - the 'pillar' of the capitalist society - also appears to imply a commitment to free market capitalism, because 'it is believed that only the free market can guarantee individual freedom and rights that lead to liberal democracy' (p.76), and yet this implication does not necessarily follow. The author points out that free market interaction results in the inclusion of some sections of society and the exclusion of others. Xing argues that a liberal democracy is based on notions of justice, rights, equality and freedom, 'aiming at horizontally embracing all political ideals' (2001). This means issues outside the free market framework, such as class, race, gender, inequality and ethnicity, tend to be ignored. In the long term, Xing concludes, liberal democracy will be defined and weakened by the free market, and in the final analysis, the 'magic "invisible" hand of the market may eventually rule every aspect of human life and may marketise all individual human rights. It will no longer

be invisible' (Xing, 2001, p. 92). Thus, while some people believe the free market to be synonymous with the principles of a liberal democracy, Xing claims this is clearly not the case. In fact, the free market may be incompatible with liberal democracy. Some market ideologues insist on the reverse, precisely that they are compatible. Tooley, in his book *Education without the State* (1996) argues that 'markets in education are justified in terms of equity and democracy', and that 'for too long, government intervention has deadened and subdued the enterprise of education. Moving towards markets will enliven and liberate the educational endeavour' (p. 111). Yet Tooley gives no empirical evidence for his claims, and when challenged on this by the researcher at a conference in Cambridge entitled, *The Moral Foundations of a Free Society* (1998), merely replied that it was 'a thought experiment'.

2.2.2 Globalisation and Education Policy

Across and between the three evolving systems and philosophical traditions of England, Ireland and the USA (described below), market ideology has pervaded public educational policy through global discourse. The following is a brief discussion of these interactions and their subsequent effects.

The New Right movement was primarily an Anglo-American political movement grounded in large North Atlantic corporations (Marginson, 1997, p.55). Its ideas grew in popularity particularly following the OPEC crisis of 1973 when the Keynesian economic consensus could no longer sustain government policies, economies, businesses or public life (Galbraith, 1992). Keynesian welfare policies were attacked by Hayek (1980) and Friedman (1980). They argued against the interventionism of neo-classical economics, rejecting Keynes' argument that full employment could not be guaranteed on the basis of the free market alone. They

argued that the market would regulate itself by operating on the basis of competitive individualism. For example, Buchanan and Tullock's work, *The Calculus of Consent* (1962), is often referred to as the founding text in public choice theory (Marginson, 1997). As public choice theory has clearly played a significant role in guiding the restructuring of education, its fundamental tenets will be addressed briefly.

The theory is ambitious, in that it tries to explain the economic crisis in the West over the past few decades and how it can be solved. It claims that the crisis is political and results from the growth of the welfare state. According to Halsey, Lauder, Brown and Wells (1997), public choice theory has arisen because of an increase in state involvement in welfare. The democratic process has enabled stakeholders and interest groups to exert pressure on the state to trade its wider and more prudent economic interests, and to increase expenditure in exchange for votes. According to Halsey *et al.*, (1997) such groups 'have been abetted in this process by middle-class state workers who have an interest in the expansion of jobs and opportunities in the public sector', the result being 'increased government expenditure and debt ending in high levels of inflation' (p. 255).

Furthermore, it has been claimed that increased expenditure, especially in education, has not assisted those it was designed to help (Chubb and Moe, 1990). Hanushek's (1986) controversial study claims that educational costs have risen, class sizes decreased, and numbers of certified teachers have increased, yet still educational standards have dropped. The inference of Hanushek's work, according to Halsey *et al.*, is that 'while most of the increase in educational expenditure has been as a result of rises in teacher income, such rises have been unwarranted in terms of results'; and this, they claim, 'provides an excellent illustration of the application of public choice theory to education' (Halsey *et al.*, 1997, p.255). The 'solution' therefore, is to expose

teachers to the rigours of the market, to dismantle the power of the teachers' unions which protect 'bad' teachers from dismissal, and to have some kind of performance indicators and bench-marking procedures that reward 'good' teachers. In any case, public choice theory 'assumes that educational expenditure can be contained or reduced if education is deregulated and market discipline imposed' (p.256). The introduction of market mechanisms into education appealed to the New Right governments of the 1980s, especially conservative political parties. Many governments, attempting to modernise their economies, began to pursue the tenets of market liberalisation with new policies on tax minimisation, fiscal constraint and deregulation, at the same time diminishing the influence of trade unions.

According to Marginson (1997), market liberals prioritise the freedom of the individual from outside interference, *i.e.* the state. The economic decline of western countries during the 1980s was perceived to be the fault of the state, insofar as excessive state involvement curbs the competitive instincts and drive of individuals. State financial intervention allegedly diminished levels of investment by the private sector; and stifled entrepreneurial efforts by imposing punitive taxes on the wealthy and encouraging dependence on social welfare among the poor. Some authors, such as Herrnstein and Murray (1994) believe that the state should not have to compensate for individual failure. In other words, the state had no role to play in alleviating poverty through policies of full employment, which were the ideas advocated by Keynes's economic policy.

Brown *et al.* (1997) believe 'New Right or Neo-Conservative ideology couples a neo-liberal view of the virtues of individual freedom and the free market with a traditional conservative view that a strong state is necessary to keep political and moral order (Brown *et al.*, 1997, p.19 *citing* Gamble, 1994), but not necessarily

economic order. It has been suggested that neo-conservatism merely reconfigures state involvement in peoples' lives, rather than reducing it. Issues of class, gender and race are marginalised by the New Right groups, who account for disparities among minorities in terms of incentives in individuals' lives, so refuting structural, provisional or other biases in the *modus operandi* of everyday life. Only in a society where individual enterprise is cultivated will such disparities become insignificant (Brown *et al.*, 1997, p.21). Neo-liberal ideals were reflected vividly in Margaret Thatcher's suggestion that there was, in fact, no such thing as society, there being only individuals motivated by self-interest (Hobson, 1999). Market liberalism, the main argument for the 'global market', took on political and cultural, as well as economic characteristics, and, as expressed by Thatcher, social order in this new economic model was based on linking individuals through contracts and exchange mechanisms, not through trust and tenure.

The neo-liberal position is distinct from John Rawls's liberalism, *A Theory of Justice*, the latter of which defends two principles of justice: a liberty principle and a principle concerning 'the distribution of opportunities and resources (Brighouse, 2000, p.2). What Brighouse points out is that, while Rawls argues individuals have a 'higher order interest in being able to develop and exercise a sense of justice', he does not elaborate on how to implement such principles. As a result, some advocates of choice merely think that the best scores at the lowest cost are the most desirable outcome, and forget other necessary functions of schooling, including the nurturing of students' personal and emotional needs. This leads Brighouse to distinguish between three types of 'ethical individualism', all of which go beyond the notion of the individual motivated by self-interest alone.

Ethical individualism was reflected in the 1960s to 1970s, when economic growth had become a priority of governments worldwide and investment in education was perceived as an investment in economic growth. However, the human capital theory paradigm lost popularity with the crisis of the 1970s, as expansionism could no longer be sustained. Public choice theory resurfaced in the 1990s, but this time through the lens of the market liberal. By then the economics of education was perceived as an exchange process: a consumer-producer contract, where knowledge and skills were the object of exchange and education was thought of more as a commodity (Alexiadou and Brock, 1999). Knowledge-production began to dominate the occupational structures of more developed countries (McGaw, 1999).

The cornerstone of New Right educational policy was the introduction of market competition to all educational sectors (see Lauder, 1997, Brown, 1997). This was achieved in a number of ways. Firstly, funding, decision-making, and staffing to individual institutions had to be devolved. This would force schools to become more effective, so as not to lose 'customers' to other 'businesses', or schools. Secondly, irrespective of intake, schools had to be made to compete and raise educational standards accordingly. The success or failure of any school would ultimately be determined by the schools' managerial staff (see, for example, Chubb and Moe, 1997). Under-performance is divorced from its initial intake of students, and citing social deprivation as a reason for educational failure is perceived to be an evasion of responsibility by the managerial board (Grace, 1997). Thirdly, competition needed to be engendered by parental choice. Parental choice is often considered unproblematic, however, sufficient evidence exists to show that such an assumption is deeply flawed (see Edwards *et al.*, 1992; Walford, 1990; Whitty *et al.*, 1998). Unfettered parental choice has had consequences for democracy, overall academic achievement, equality

of opportunity for students and the restructuring of the teaching profession (Brown *et al.*, 1997; Brighouse, 2001; Ahier *et al.*, 1996; Woods and Jeffrey, 1996; Glatter *et al.*, 1997c).

The notion of the 'effective' school derived from these market theories, and so 'effectiveness', became the object of educational research in the late 1970s and 1980s (*e.g.* Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore and Ouston, 1979; Reynolds and Cuttance, 1992). Clear goals and high academic expectations were found to be the defining characteristics of effective schools. Factors which have influenced effectiveness, but were largely excluded from their methodologies include social class, ethnicity and school resources. Chubb and Moe's *Politics, Markets and America's Schools* (1990) characterises effective schools as those with strong, effective leaders. They excluded external influences, and concluded that it was the autonomy of schools which determined their success. This leads to what Postlethwaite has called 'the ecological fallacy' *i.e.* the contexts in which schools operate is not taken into account. Chubb and Moe advocate private schools as ideal models of effectiveness. Private schools' academic performance is an immediate determinant of success in the marketplace. However, Chubb and Moe's argument is fundamentally flawed because private institutions are, by their very nature, a product of a particular socio-economic group. As Marginson (1997) points out, if we ignore social class as an issue, we ignore what is potentially the most significant factor in student achievement, and therefore, in schools, effectiveness. In terms of policy-making, the 'effective school' syndrome served the purpose of holding the school to account for its outcomes, thus creating favourable conditions for corporate reform and marketisation (Ball, 1990).

Bryck and Lee (1992) also criticised the work of Chubb and Moe, believing that they selectively sought evidence to prove their thinly disguised ideologically

driven preconceptions. Nonetheless, Chubb and Moe are thought to have made a significant impact on government policies in the transatlantic sphere of the 1980s and 1990s. The right-wing Conservative government was in power in England under Thatcher; the right-wing Republicans were in power in the USA, under Reagan, and a right-of-centre government, Fianna Fáil (the Republican Party) in Ireland was led by Haughey. Issues of social class, traditionally associated with left-wing politics (the Labour Party in the UK; the Democratic Party in the USA and the Labour Party in Ireland), were considered *démodé*. Such left-wing ideology rang of anti-market sentiments associated with social democracy and socialism. According to the new neo-liberal ideology, privatising schools and subjecting them to market conditions was the best way to eliminate poor academic performance. This approach was connected with the school choice lobby, exemplified by the Friedman Foundation - an American-based right-wing think-tank - which sought to introduce market regulation to public education.

A 'quasi-market' was then introduced, in varying degrees, to education. The term 'quasi-market' refers to the market-like environment formed in education, including school responses to that environment, as well as parental perspectives on choice and school preferences (Woods *et al* 1998, p.13). The introduction of a quasi-market into education is achieved through both restructuring and deregulating state schooling. Centralised schooling bureaucracies are dismantled, while simultaneously institutional autonomy is granted. Although educational services continue to be funded through taxation, they are often 'privatised' through the involvement of business which 'entails making public services behave more like the private sector' (Whitty *et. al.*, 1998, p.3). According to LeGrand and Bartlett (1993), the term 'quasi-market' is being used 'to characterise such attempts to introduce market forces and

private decision-making into the provision of education and welfare' (*cited in Whitty et al.*, 1998b, p.3). Attempts to introduce the quasi-market included the aforementioned Education Acts in England (1988), in Massachusetts, USA (1993) and in Ireland (1998). In Ireland, the initial Green Paper (1992), informed by market principles, was considerably diluted by the time the Education Act of 1998 was implemented.

Many consider the term 'quasi-market' a misnomer (see Levacic, 1995; Grace, 1997, Whitty, 1997; Codd, Gordon and Harker, 1997). Market advocates such as Tooley (1996), Chubb and Moe, (1997), and Rinehart and Lee, (1991), complain that education is still highly regulated, and that without total discretion over their income, schools will find it difficult to compete, or even to become profitable. While not necessarily advocating markets in education, Levacic (*Op. Cit.*) suggests that the separation of the purchaser and provider and 'the element of user choice between providers', are the distinctive characteristics of a quasi-market in education (p.167). It is for this reason that Bottery (1999) argues that 'education in the UK has never really been in a true market situation, nor is it likely that it ever will be' (p.21). He illustrates this assertion by setting the essential characteristics of a market against the operations of state schooling in comparative form (*see Figure 4a*).

Similarly, Gewirtz (1996) describes, by means of a 'values drift' chart, how the values of the market place undermine the comprehensive ideals of the existing education enterprise at that time (*see Figure 4b*). She argues that the market culture automatically polarises groups along social class and ethnic lines. The welfare of the school now depends upon market share. Schools that are oversubscribed were able to resist the market and, ironically, these schools are in a position to choose their pupils.

**Figure 4a: Essential Characteristics of a Market Against the Operations
of Public Schooling**

DOES EDUCATION IN THE UK RESEMBLE A MARKET IN BUSINESS?		
Features	Has this happened?	Is this much closer since 1988?
Private ownership	not seriously entertained	no
Take-overs	not seriously entertained	no
Institutional price for tuition	no	possibly
Ability to make a profit	not for non-school benefit	only ability to raise funds
Institutional determination of product	not seriously – too large an input by NC and OFSTED	marginal – Dearing input
Institutional determination of adequacy of employees qualifications	no	minor – new ways into teaching
Institutional negotiation of level of pay	no	some possibility of local variation
Market determination of quality and standard	limited – heavy OFSTED input	open enrolment
Institutional determination of clientele	not significantly (except via exclusions)	possible
Market determination of success and failure	only partially	possibly
Flexible finance	strongly (LMS)	yes
Market and advertise	for many, yes	yes

Source: Bottery, M. (1999) 'After the Market: Have We Ever Been in One?' in Alexiadou, N. and Brock C. (Eds.) *Education as a Commodity*, Great Glemham: John Catt Educational Ltd. (p. 24).

Figure 4b: Values Drift

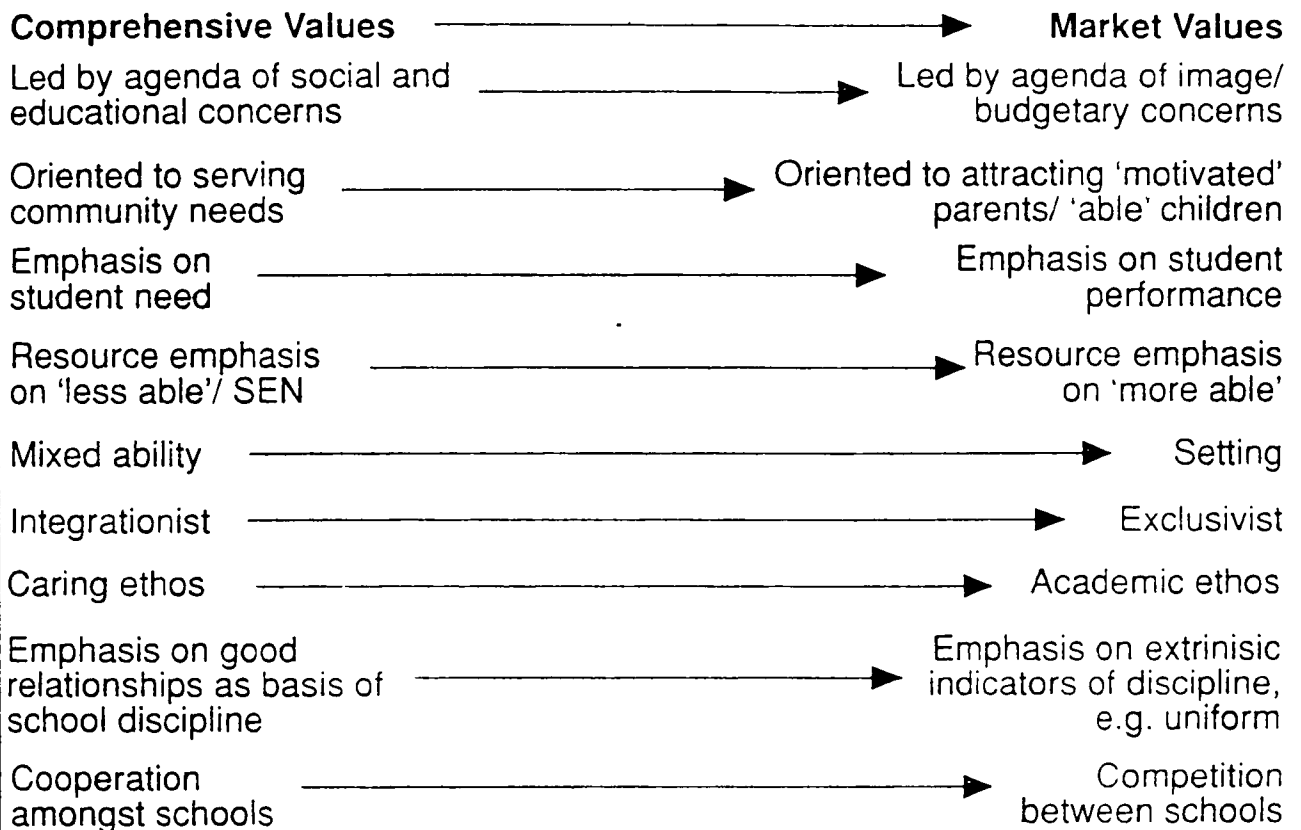


Figure 17.1 Values Drift

Source: Gewirtz, S. (1996) 'Market Discipline versus Comprehensive Education' in Ahier, J., Cosin, B. and Hales, M. (Eds.) *Diversity and Change: Education, Policy and Selection*. London: Routledge (p. 294).

In other words, only the extrinsic factors involved in education are rewarded, and consequently, are attended to. Intrinsic aspects are neither recognised nor rewarded within the marketplace of education.

Woods *et al.*(1998) agree that the term ‘quasi-market’ is inadequate and that it would be more appropriate to refer to it as a public-market. (This concept will be discussed further in section 2.5.2.) In any case, linking school self-management and parental choice to engender ‘quasi-markets’ in education seems to have become the driving force behind the educational reform movement. Although quasi-markets in education have become the ‘big idea’ behind recent reforms, they are not without their critics. Brighouse (2000) for instance, argues that it is difficult to have markets in education, and questions the extent to which one can ‘experiment’ with schools, which also raises ethical questions. Other difficulties cited by Brown *et al.* (1997), but which will not be elaborated on at this point, are the clash of priorities between different values of what counts as a ‘good education’; the difficulty, philosophically and logically, in clarifying the language of the debate (see Griffin, 1998); and the legitimacy and effectiveness of fitting theoretical models to changing social and empirical realities (Brown *et al.*, *Op. Cit.*, p.26).

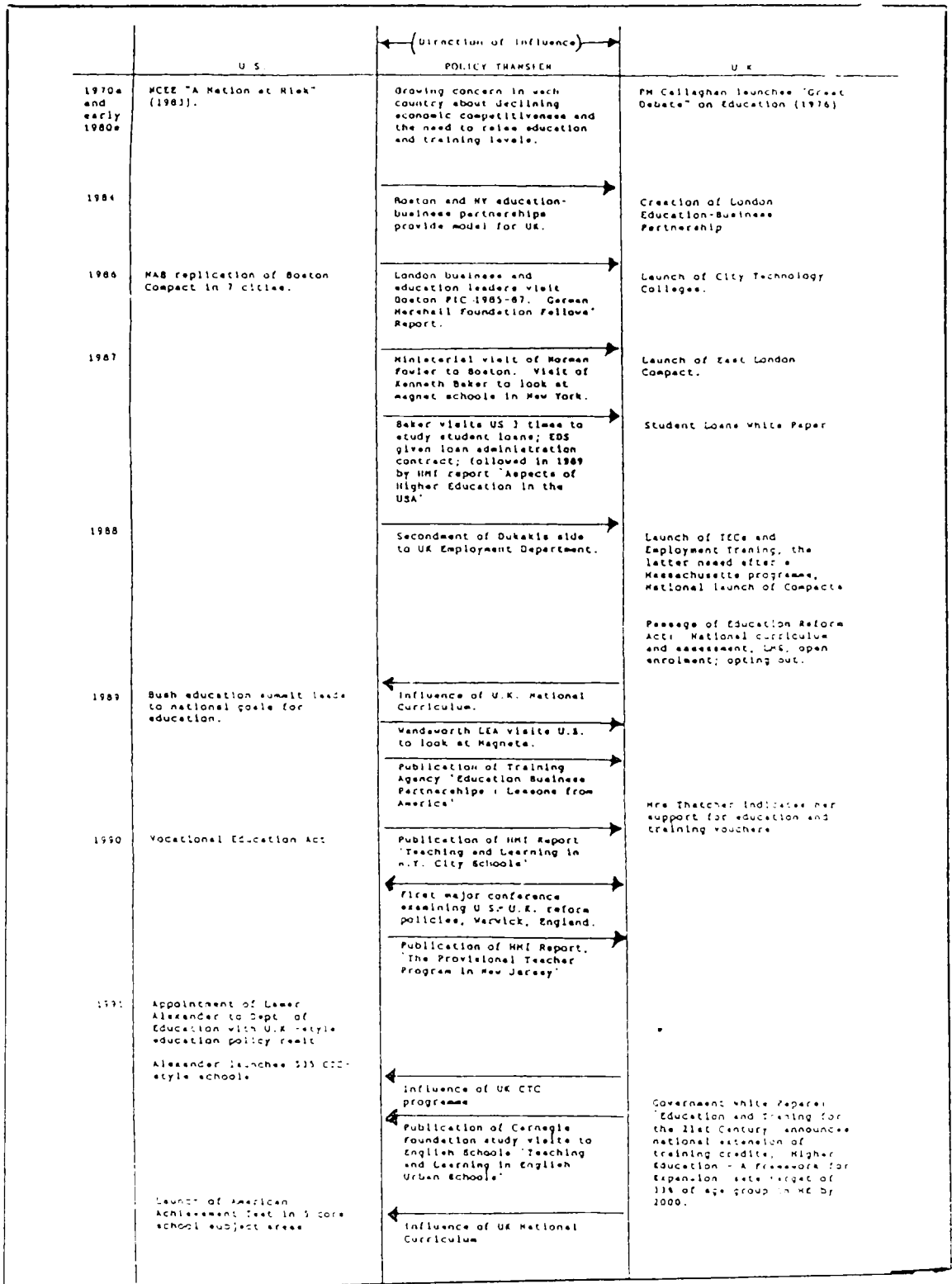
In short, ‘quasi-market’, in the sense of a full free market, was impossible in a public domain. Education, as a public good, still had to be funded through public means, and could not be deregulated in the same manner as, and to the same degree as, a private business. Research on the outcomes of the introduction of the market to education is explored in chapter 3. Suffice it for now that the introduction of markets into education did not come without repercussions in educational settings.

2.2.3 The Transatlantic Dialogue

The so-called transatlantic dialogue refers to the special relationship between the USA and the UK. Close historical connections were found in New England in particular. A common language and cultural inheritance retained ties between the two nations and, these were strengthened through being allies in two World Wars (Finegold *et al.*, 1993). Political friendship was enhanced during the 1980s, when Reagan and Thatcher held similar 'New Right' ideologies (Smith, 1995). The possibilities for a symbiotic relationship of policy-sharing and borrowing extended to the field of education. Publications and events in both countries in the 1970s had, in effect, prepared the ground for its acceptance. For instance, Bowles and Gintis' *Schooling in Capitalist America* (1976) suggested that US schools were instruments of 'social control', which maintained the 'power structures' or *status quo* established in society, rather than stimulating learning and raising standards. The aforementioned report, *A Nation at Risk*, was another damning account of America's 'falling' educational standards and 'rising tide of mediocrity'. In the face of increasing economic and educational advances in east and south-east Asia, especially Japan, the USA became concerned about its competitiveness in the world economy. This was indicated in the 'Great Debate' on education initiated by the then Prime Minister, James Callaghan, as well as by the publication between 1969 and 1977 of the five UK Black Papers (Chitty, 1992).

From 1979, in the UK, Thatcher immediately set about addressing the problem by implementing policies endorsing Chubb and Moe's market model for education. A cross-national dialogue had developed on this issue, as illustrated by Finegold *et al.*,

Figure 5: US/UK Education and Training Policy Borrowing



Source: Finegold, D. et al. *Something Borrowed, Something Learned? The Transatlantic Market in Education and Training Reform*, Washington DC: The Brookings Institute, p. 9).

1993, p.9). *Figure 5* charts the transatlantic ebb and flow of educational policy borrowing between the USA and the UK from the late 1970s to the 1990s.

Phillips (1993) warns of the danger of 'educational borrowing' without taking socio-cultural, political or historical aspects into consideration. Initiatives can become devoid of meaning or ineffective when implemented without considering the milieu in which they are expected to operate. Thatcher, for instance, introduced an entrepreneurial approach into British education but failed to give sufficient attention to the 'tactics and contextual changes' necessary for it to be effective and widespread (1993, p.18). Such structures did not restrain Chubb and Moe (1992), as reported by Halpin and Troyna (1995) when they stated:

The fact is virtually everything....about the politics of British education applies straight across the board to the politics of American education. Only the names have to be changed...What is happening [in Britain]...is happening in the United States: the problems, the reforms, the conflicts, and the alliances are roughly the same. The only difference is that Britain...has been able to move further and faster towards a radical overhaul of its educational system and is far more likely to succeed. We can only hope it does, and that America can someday follow in Britain's footsteps (pp. 49-50).

Whitty and Edwards (1998) question the real effects of 'policy networks as an explanation of policy convergence', and their transatlantic workings. They come to the view that:

Detailed 'borrowing' of specific policies and practices was much less in evidence, however, than policy makers working within similar ideological frames of reference producing parallel policy initiatives (p. 221).

And, in conclusion, they feel that:

Despite the existence of some identifiable policy 'networks', policy exchange, in its more tangible forms, seemed to be at least as much a matter of funding expedient examples of ideologically desirable reforms 'working' somewhere else as of direct borrowing of other countries' policies (p.224).

Bondi (1991) indicates the value of a comparative approach: it increases our understanding of contrasting experiences when implementing similar policies in different contexts. Her appreciation of the significance of scale in comparative study enhances the quality of the analysis. In her paper comparing choice and diversity in school education in the UK and USA, Bondi illustrates the value of taking a serious comparative approach. She sets out to contrast policies and then explain differences. With respect to the UK, she finds that market-oriented legislation 'has been designed to minimise scope for local variations in policy implementation' (*Ibid.*, p.129). This was, essentially, a centre-led approach operating at the national scale, driven through to the local level by by-passing LEAs. In the USA, because of severe constraint on Federal (national) policy implementation, market-related initiatives emerged 'at three levels of government, and display much greater variety' (*Ibid.*, 1991, p.129). Bondi contends that school choice is more controlled in the USA, due to legislation on desegregation, and the significant powers of school districts. On the other hand, schemes to diversify provision are more numerous in the USA. This, she believes, is partly due to the different levels of government involvement; but also to the variations of politics within a larger federation. Bondi concludes that two dimensions of the political factor explain differences between choice and diversity in the two countries: systems of governance, and political culture. While the former may be more easily compared at a technical level, the latter derives from centuries of social and cultural development within which the emergence of schooling is embedded. The essential

localism of American politics as well as relationships between school and community are significant factors.

Levin and Riffel (1997), having conducted similar research in Canada, believe that schools' responses to parental choice policies can only be short-term, limited and conservative. They argue that 'economic incentives alone are insufficient to induce schools to make changes of the scale the context demands' (p.2). This would require attention to 'deep-seated institutional and cultural factors' as well as a fuller understanding of 'contemporary social changes' (p.2). As a result of these market-related policies, Grace (1995) believe that:

...the very meaning of democracy is being radically transformed from a political concept to an economic one. Citizens are no longer classed, or gendered, or raced. Instead they are 'consumers', individuals whose purchasing power provides them with their social identity (p.115).

Nonetheless, such a transformation is politically driven, and where cross-national comparisons are involved to justify it, they rarely have, as Halpin and Troyna (1995) observe, 'much to do with the success, however defined, of the institutional realisation of particular policies in their countries of origin; rather it has much more to do with legitimating often related policies' (p. 303). This is a view with which McLean (1992) and Noah (1983) agree in respect of the abuse or misuse of comparative education.

2.2.4 Quasi-markets and National Educational Policy

The impact of market forces on national policy, especially education, became so evident that the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD,

1995) undertook an international comparison of sixteen countries (including Ireland, England and United States), analysing in a 'snapshot' their policy responses to the global market discourse and their modes of application (Hirsch, 1997). This report found that the results of similar policies were extremely varied, largely as a result of 'decisions taken by a large number of producers and consumers', which led to an 'unpredictability of outcomes' (p.164). In other words, similar policies were differentially mediated according to context. For example, real difficulties emerged when parents became increasingly aware of 'choice', leading to the polarisation of reputations among schools, and frustration where parental choice was not met. Hirsch (1997) argues that there is no clear understanding of how quasi-markets impact on schools, as these they have such varying effects in different countries.

One of the cited advantages of the free market is its self-regulation according to consumer choice. However, it appears this mechanism does not always live up to consumer expectations in education, nor indeed meet consumer needs. This is illustrated by Gordon and Whitty's (1997) account of schooling markets and their effects in England and New Zealand, the latter country having experienced market-related reforms from 1989. They argue that the rhetoric of neo-liberal schooling policies is far removed from the reality of their implementation, since governments contend with a tension between 'fiscal imperatives and the need for legitimation' (p.453). Their findings show that parents are making choices for their children with a view to perceived social gains, and not according to educational ideals (*see* Ball, 1993; Dale, 1997). They also corroborate Xing's view (2001) that schools actively exclude some groups from 'meaningful choice'. Therefore, the claims of neo-liberalism that choice leads to diversity, are hard to sustain (Whitty, 1997). Certainly,

they seem to lead to greater disparity - a very different outcome to the claims made by market ideologues (Tooley, 1996a; West, 1994; Rinehart and Lee, 1991).

Whitty, Power and Halpin (1998), conducted important international research, in *Devolution and Choice in Education*, with an investigation involving five countries: Australia, England and Wales, New Zealand, Sweden and the USA. After considering the role of providers, the state, and, where applicable, a regional level authority, their study selects three aspects for detailed study: the effects of market-related reforms on teachers' performance; the impact on the curriculum and classroom operations; changes in the governance of schools. The last category concerns 'stakeholders' and is of particular relevance to this research. Of measures for 'community involvement', they point out:

Where they exist at all, they usually involve representation on the school councils and boards of governors or trustees of existing schools. But even this involvement is highly delimited, usually of a managerial or administrative nature, rather than entailing significant degrees of consultation on matters of policy. The increasing need for professional, particularly business-related, expertise is leading to an even greater marginalisation of those lay members of boards who do not have these attributes (p. 13).

While acknowledging that members of management bodies, or their equivalent in the three countries in this research, have little influence on policy-making as such, the researcher is interested to discover whether or not they have a role in policy *mediation*, and, if so, how. School management boards represent the closest manifestation of power in the delivery of market-related schooling provision to the consumer. They represent the institutions for which they are responsible and the power relations between those institutions and other stakeholders, such as local or regional authorities, religious bodies or commercial interests. In effect, they represent the reality of policy implementation on the ground.

At points in their analysis, Whitty, Power and Halpin refer to the commodification of education, where 'the distribution of educational goods is linked to material condition, and has material implications' (1998, p.141). This leads directly to another international source, a collection of essays edited by Alexiadou and Brock (1999) under the collective title of *Education as a Commodity?* In this volume, individual authors report on their own discrete research relating to aspects of the marketisation of education. For instance, Bottery (1999) is at pains to point out that English market-related policies in public education are really used 'as a ploy to increase the "productivity" and responsiveness of the teaching profession through the encouragement among 'producers' for a more entrepreneurial attitude'. Consequently, 'the market then is seen as merely a means to an end, not as the defining character of how the service should be run' (p.21). So, while a market as such was never intended, competition is certainly involved, sharpened by financial imperatives (Ozga, 1990). Clearly the economic factor is to the fore in this analysis. Elsewhere in this volume, analytical studies of the commodification of education in Greece, New Zealand and Switzerland concur, illustrating near ubiquitous manifestations of reform led by the competitive market discourse, even though the new operations may be highly regulated. The impact of the global on the local, in terms of national policy and the 'choice' issue, will now be discussed.

2.2.5 Ideology, National Policy and Choice

The link between ideology and policy is, like the relationship between policy and change, 'an ambiguous one, given that change almost certainly occurs regardless of policy interventions, and that policy can result (intentionally or otherwise) in little or

no change' (Taylor *et al.*, 1997, p.153). In fact, governments typically use public policy as an instrument to manage change (Elmore and McLaughlin, 1988). Indeed, as Deem, Behony and Heath (1995) point out, it goes even further than that:

In liberal democracies, the overwhelming purpose of policy formulation is not the solution of perceived problems in education or whatever, but keeping the governments in power (p.19).

This was particularly obvious, for instance, with the revelations of Kenneth Baker (*The Guardian*, September, 1999) when he revealed the government's motives for introducing such radical reforms in the mid-1980s: the deliberate undermining of the teacher unions and local education authorities as well as the closure of failing schools and the hiring and firing of teachers. This places the state at the centre of analysis of educational policy (Ozga, 1990); or, viewed from the perspective of mediation, policy may be mediated through its hidden meanings. Taylor *et al.* (1997), fascinated by the relationship between policy and change, devised three general categories of factors and circumstances. These categories are:

- a) *external pressures for change* (such as legislation, policies, *etc.*);
- b) *internal dynamics of change*, (including the role of leadership, strategies employed in organisations to facilitate change, *etc.*);
- c) *institutionalisation of change* expressed as a dialectic between external pressures and internal dynamics (p.163).

A Venn diagram, with external pressures and internal dynamics as two circles, and institutionalisation as the area of intersection, could illustrate this. Woods *et al.* (1998) have made similar distinctions in attempting to portray the relationship between

policy and change. They refer to external pressures as *systemic*, and internal pressure as *operational*. 'Systemic' includes:

- a) *prescriptive* modes of engagement (e.g. legislation);
- b) *persuasive* modes of engagement (e.g. pressure or lobby groups);

And 'operational' refers to:

- a) *internal producer* actions and processes (e.g. internal school policies as a means of adapting to change);
- b) *consumer* actions and processes (e.g. external political decisions as a means of adapting to change) (p.140).

Such observations and distinctions helped to formulate the theoretical underpinnings of this research.

According to Taylor *et al.* (1997), traditional literature on organisational change tends to neglect the content of, and even the desirability of, change. Instead it focuses on strategic issues of implementation (*see* Huse, 1992; Caldwell and Spinks, 1988; Dunford, 1992). In their case studies, Taylor *et al.* have outlined the significance of *contextual factors* in the implementation of policy and maintain that 'though the economic, social, political and cultural aspects of context are interrelated, they may be separated analytically' (p.164). Elmore and McLoughlin (1988) argue that 'the political culture of some settings make them immune to certain reforms and highly susceptible to others' (p.12). Their analyses have helped the researcher not

only to conceptualise isolating individual factors for this research, but also to identify an appropriate range of factors for the conceptual framework.

Witte (2000), in his book *The Market Approach to Education*, has noted that if the debate over educational choice issues is to have meaning, ‘the specific context and conditions of the choice arrangements must always be defined’ (p.7). Certainly, this is an aim of this study. School vouchers, for example, and their part in recent attempts to reform education, will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3.

Traditions of reform at the national, regional and local level are noted by Taylor *et al.* (1997, p.165). In *Schooling Reform in Hard Times*, Lingard *et al.* (1993) describe these traditions in the context of Australia and describe how, at each level of policy implementation, there are conflicts of interest. These conflicts relate to the social and cultural context involved in the mediation of policy in a particular location, which is of interest to this study. Lingard *et al.*’s work also helped to inform the construction of the ‘scales of analysis’ illustrated in the conceptual framework (*Figures 1 and 2*). However, Taylor *et al.* argue that it is possible to separate out ‘the local from the national from the global’ in ‘interconnected politics’, since change is not simply linear in character (p.174). However, they believe that social, economic and political considerations combine local circumstances in terms of local agendas, key players and groups who operate therein. In other words, policy analysis is, by definition, inherently political. The conceptual framework developed for this study shows the researcher’s perception of these interactions.

2.3 The Roots of Public Secondary Education

2.3.1 England

In England, it had been a common practice since medieval times to found charities for educational purposes. Wardle (1970) writes that an important factor in the development of popular education was evangelicalism in the Church of England, which was particularly active in the latter part of the eighteenth century. The provision of popular education moved during the nineteenth century from being a voluntary activity towards a state system. Initially, moves to establish legislation for state-provided education were largely based on the ecclesiastical parishes already established. Government intervention in social problems really only began around the 1830s, especially with the Great Reform Bill of 1832, but the predominant philosophy continued to be that of *laissez faire*. Prior to the Forster Education Act of 1870, the organisation of mass elementary education proved to be too great for voluntary efforts. The move towards mass elementary education arose from the need to generate a more productive and efficient workforce in the face of increasing competition from other industrialising countries, especially Germany, France and the USA (Green, 1990). For all those countries, the creation of systems of state education was part of the process of nation building. In England, there was no such central philosophy. Even the individualism of Locke, advocated for a friend in an essay on private tutoring, cannot be claimed to belong to a central philosophy, though it was subsequently evoked in this light (Jeffreys, 1967).

It was not until the latter part of the eighteenth century, through to the mid-nineteenth century, that social reformers challenged such thinking. The philosophical

radicalism of Bentham and Mill was significant in changing attitudes, as was the influential novelist, Charles Dickens, whose books effectively documented the social conditions of the day. It is not surprising that the 1870 Act, which created School Boards, attracted opposition from the established Church (Stephens, 1998). Indeed, the Act was not popular with parents or employees, as it removed a source of cheap labour.

Industrialisation and urbanisation in the nineteenth century boosted private sector secondary education. The great 'public' schools were already well established (Wardle, 1970). A proliferation of endowed initiatives followed. The Taunton Commission of 1864 examined these initiatives and their outcomes are mapped by Bamford (1974). Commenting on the class-based nature of secondary schooling, the Commission recommended wider access, the inclusion of girls, and raising local taxes to support an emergent secondary sector (Maclure, 1965). The 1870 Act led to universal primary education; this boosted demand in secondary education in which some saw the potential for universal provision and raised the aspirations of poorer students. The promise of scholarships for bright children was especially attractive (Roach, 1991). As Stephens (1998) puts it:

By the mid-1880s, a system of publicly financed, locally controlled secondary education was emerging piecemeal, with an intake of mainly lower-middle class and artisan-class children from public elementary schools. But it was a system lacking in homogeneity and geographically patchy, with responsibilities divided untidily between school boards and technical instruction committees (p.102).

Liberal traditions worked against the strengthening of the scientific and technical components of the grammar school curriculum. One 125 'science schools' of 1896, created in response to international competition, were subsequently absorbed into this

sector. The rationalisation of such schools into a unified system of public secondary schooling had been recommended by the Bryce Commission of 1895 (Evans, 1975).

By the end of the nineteenth century, official opposition to the creation of an open secondary sector was made clear in the Cockerton Judgement of 1899. This led directly to the creation of a selective grammar school sector with the Education Act of 1902 (Wardle, 1970). It became the model for public secondary schooling, informed, as it were, by the traditions of the so-called 'great public schools' established before the revolution for the liberal education of young gentlemen. According to Stephens (1998):

Until 1902, England had no centrally organised and financed system of state secondary schooling and British governments felt less obliged than leading European countries to provide one. The traditional view was that secondary school should not be vocational nor an extension of elementary schooling, but middle-class, and thus not to be publicly funded or controlled (p.101).

The creation of a selective system of fee-paying and publicly funded grammar schools proceeded within LEAs which were also founded by the 1902 Act. It was not until the 'Great War' of 1914-1918, that a new spirit of 'cross-class' co-operation supporting the growth of the Labour Party emerged. Its spokesperson on education was R.H. Tawney, who published the book, *Education for All*, in 1922. However, with the collective influences of the Hadow Report of 1926, the Spens Report of 1938, and the World War of 1939-45, a selective version of a universal secondary schooling emerged, which was far from what Tawney had envisaged. It was influenced by the growing interest in the eugenics debate, and the scientific credence given to the IQ test and the purely hereditary nature of intelligence (Griffin, 1997).

Consequently, secondary schooling emerged from the 1944 Education Act within an hierarchical tripartite framework which retained selection. This comprised technical, secondary modern and grammar school tracks. The Act set up a system

commonly referred to as 'a national system, locally administered', which effectively meant a tripartite 'partnership' between central government, local government and individual schools and colleges (Chitty, 1992, p.12). The Act satisfied liberal ambitions and achieved broad popularity because many different interests were represented. This Act became a cornerstone of the post-war welfare state. It provided, in the mid-1960s, the framework for the creation of a non-selective or 'comprehensive' sector by the then Labour government. This non-selective sector would be similar in ideology to the American common school ideal. However, a significant difference was the formative influence in the English system of some schools' earlier existence as grammar, technical or secondary modern schools, or amalgamations of these.

2.3.2 Ireland

The beginnings of the secondary school system in Ireland have been traced back to the 'Act for the Erection of Free Schools' of 1570, which made provision for the establishment of secondary schools on a diocesan basis. The aim of this inaugural initiative by the state⁴ was to 'foster English and the Protestant faith'. Under the Stuarts, this initiative proceeded with the establishment of the Royal Schools of Charles I and the Royal Schools of Ulster. Private endowments, however, were the main force driving a major expansion in secondary education in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Initially, the diocesan schools were open to all; but, according to Barry (1983), in practice, 'they were denominational schools, thus initiating a tradition which continues to the present day' (1983, p.1). Eighteenth-century anti-

⁴ At this time, Britain still occupied Ireland, and ruled it from London.

Catholic legislation reinforced the denominational character of these schools. Meanwhile, the only outlet for Catholic education in Ireland was 'the hedge school', where classes were held illegally in fields, conducted usually at great personal risk, by a local cleric (Gannon, 2001). In 1782, the Education (Ireland) Act allowed 'persons professing Popish religion to teach schools in the kingdom', thus, 'regulating the Education of Papists'. This led to an expansion of secondary schools, particularly those managed and run by the religious, which has lasted to the present time (Barry, 1983).

The government commissioned two reports (1838 and 1858) which recommended an integrated educational system. The Roman Catholic Church was opposed to an integrated system since the Catholic diocesan schools provided the formative education for future clergy. The Church thus opted to retain its schools as private institutions.

A national system of education was established in 1831 in Ireland, and four new universities were founded in 1849, which now form the National University of Ireland (NUI). The 1878 Intermediate Education Act was passed subsequently. This indirectly funded denominational secondary schools, bringing in a 'payment by results' remuneration scheme (Hyland, 1997). The curriculum remained academically oriented, with subjects such as Classics and English given higher 'payment by results' fees, while vocationally-oriented subjects were given a lower payment weighting. The system remained stratified along academic lines until the mid-twentieth century. However, the 1878 Act marked a break with *laissez-faire* ideology: secondary education was now publicly funded. While the State was anxious to get more control of the education system, the Church resisted its efforts. By now, secondary schools were strictly denominational and managed by Catholic clerics. Education became

somewhat stagnated at this time and the system was subsequently criticised for its failure to plan. This resulted in:

An inadequate geographical distribution which was compensated to some extent by the number of boarding schools...only a small proportion of the age-range availed of secondary education....there was no general demand for the expansion of secondary education. It was meant to serve the limited social and educational objectives of the middle class (Barry, 1983, p.2).

The 1892 (Ireland) Education Act enforced compulsory schooling and set up local committees to ensure attendance (McKinnon, Statham and Hales, 1995). The Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction was established in 1899. Developments between 1831 and 1900 still have residual implications for the current system of education. Following the First World War, the Intermediate Education Act came under considerable criticism for its irrelevance. A new Bill was proposed in 1920, but was defeated, primarily because of the opposition of the Catholic Church.

After independence from Britain in 1922, little was changed in the structure and provision of education, though a government department was set up to oversee education. The Intermediate Education (Ireland) Act of 1924 established an Intermediate Education Board, which was charged specifically with promoting secondary education. The Board made no attempt to interfere with the management or control of schools. In Barry's words, 'whatever control it [the state] had over the curriculum, by means of its examinations, was confined to secular subjects' (1983, p.3).

In spite of the Act, less than four percent of secondary school pupils were receiving free education by scholarship in 1929. This had risen to a mere sixteen percent by 1964. On the whole, students left school on completion of primary education (O'Connor, 1971; Canniffe, 1993). Consequently, the country did not

develop 'a coherent concept of equality of educational opportunity, even to the stage where secondary education would be available on the basis of merit' (Coolahan, 1981, p.178).

One positive outcome of the 1924 Act, under the new Irish Free State government, was that it made the 'Teachers Salaries Grant' part of the 'Capitation Grant' payable to recognised schools. This effectively abolished the much detested 'payment by results' scheme which caused examination results (and fiscal concerns) to dominate educational matters. Even so, the state continued to play a minor role in education. Ministers of Education saw their role primarily as administrative (Hyland, 1997; Barry, 1989).

In 1930 the Vocational Educational Act established a decentralised local authority framework for vocational schools, which was intended to benefit the 'less able pupils and correspondingly the socially disadvantaged' (Byrne, Cremin and Griffin, 2000). These schools were thus 'not regarded very highly as institutes of profound learning and were seen as places of preparation for those entering trades or apprenticeships' (Canniffe, 1993, p.3), and brighter children were guided towards their local academic secondary school (Hennessy, 1987; Owens, 1989a). However, the education system did attempt to match political freedom with cultural freedom, and the Gaelic language became a compulsory subject for all school-going students.

2.3.3 The USA

The roots of schooling in America predate the formation of the USA and the Constitution of 1789 - following their independence from Britain in 1776. These roots lie in the highly localised community traditions of English colonial settlements in

early seventeenth-century Massachusetts and Virginia. These settlements were imbued with a strong Christian ethos (King, 1965). As colonisation of the interior took place, community traditions continued in the pioneer settlements (McPartland, 1979). More townships were founded, and societies were formed with responsibilities for local schools, which led in turn to the creation of numerous school districts (Daniels, 1979).

Laws passed by the Massachusetts Bay Colony in the mid-seventeenth century provided funding for elementary schools from local taxes, which marked the beginning of state-level interest in public education (King, 1965). The exclusion of provisions for state education in the Federal Constitution of 1789 confirmed the responsibility of state governments for this function. A tension resulted at regional and local levels of funding and control, which survives to the present day. One of the earliest proposals to create a public education system in America was by Jefferson in 1779 in his *Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge*. In this, he proposed three years of free education for all children. The talented would be selected for further education, to become the modern day 'kings' of society. Jefferson's ideas on selectivity in education were different from those of Horace Mann, who wanted educational opportunity for all, and subsequently became a prominent educationist in the nineteenth century. Mann's influence was particularly strong in the formation of public education. A lawyer by profession, and Secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education (1837-1848), he saw public education as the key to achieving a reformation of society. He set about creating a 'common school', attended by all children, irrespective of social class, creed or colour. Mann felt that this common education, where common republican principles would be taught, would become a great unifying force in society. Jefferson had advocated a strict academic and rigorous

training to ensure basic literacy and good citizenry, but for Mann citizenship had to be taught through a common political creed in school. Although Mann is commonly referred to as the 'father of American education', some feel that his dream of the public common school never really came into existence in the United States (Spring, 1976, p.7).

Nonetheless, the ideal of the 'common school' - educating children from all social classes together had become widespread by the 1830s, and became incorporated in an increasingly assertive state governance in Massachusetts from the mid-nineteenth century (Kaestle and Vinovskis, 1980). Katz (1987) identifies five 'critical developments' that reshaped American society and profoundly affected public education during this period:

The emergence of democratic politics; industrialisation; urbanisation and the formation of a working class; the state's assumption of direct responsibility for social welfare; the invention of institutions as means for solving social problems; and the redefinition of family (pp. 6-7).

Public schools increased in size with industrialisation and urbanisation, but continued to retain the tradition of the common school. The pace of urbanisation quickened after the civil war as increasing numbers of black Americans migrated to northern cities (Hummel and Nagle, 1973). Urban school systems expanded and the state systems sought to maintain their control. The period also witnessed massive immigration from Europe, and the mission of the public schools which evolved in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has been described as 'Keeping America American' (Pai, 1990, p.55; Cuban, 2000).

Meanwhile, Mann's ideal of the 'common school' and its political function in engendering citizenship was undermined during the two World Wars by rampant

nationalism. William Goodwin, an English political theorist, had already predicted the dangers of combining political and educational objectives. Mann's vision presumed a democratic consensus; but attempts to achieve this have encountered difficulties (Spring, 1976).

Mann perceived that the political function of schooling - its custodial function - would reduce crime and delinquency, as children would be schooled in behaviour and motivated to achieve. The custodial nature of schooling was highlighted by an American sociologist of the late nineteenth century, Edward Ross. He argued that there were two main forms of social control, internal and external. The family, the church and the local community exercised internal control; and the school and work place exercised external control. Ross argued that traditionally the church and family were responsible for instilling moral values and social mores in the child, but increasingly the school was taking over this role: 'as the state shakes itself loose from the Church, it reaches out for the school' (Spring, 1976, p.11).

Despite strong traditions of community schooling, the separation of church and state in public education - enshrined in the First Amendment of the Constitution - ensured that a system of parochial schools developed separately to that of the state system. The Catholic Church was, and continues to be, the most significant provider of parochial schooling, whose origins are traced to diocesan foundations in Philadelphia (Good, 1962). Parochial high schools were, like the common schools, inclusive.

By the early twentieth century, the USA had become a major industrial and economic power. Larger corporations began to call for greater efficiency in both public and parochial systems of schooling (Katz, 1987). Structures and operations were advocated that emulated industrial organisations, also a standardised curriculum

and new assessment procedures. Economies of scale were sought through the enlargement of high schools. The difficult decades of the early to mid-twentieth century began with an increasingly bureaucratic approach designed to contain problems associated with the Great Depression, Two World Wars and continued mass immigration (Button and Provenzo, 1989).

2.4 Mid to Late Twentieth Century Public Second Level

Education: Towards a Market

2.4.1 England

Economic recession hit Britain as a result of many circumstances including the oil crisis of 1973. This exposed the underlying weaknesses of Keynesian social democracy, which declined. Few alternatives remained to the discourse of market liberalism, which was emerging as a new and exciting ideology in right wing circles (Griffin, 1998). Ironically, a turning point in British politics came in 1976: Rhodes Boyson, a former comprehensive school head teacher and powerful media figure, drew the public's attention to an educational system 'in crisis', typified by poor standards and limited accountability. The beleaguered Labour Prime Minister, James Callaghan, gave a speech at Ruskin College, Oxford, in which he proposed greater teacher accountability and centralised control of the curriculum, in order to standardise education and prepare young people for the demands of the economy (Pring, 1995). According to Pring, many of the changes in education since then might be seen as a footnote to that notable 'Ruskin Speech' (1995, p.7). This speech

followed the publication of the early and influential 'Black Papers'. Together with the Ruskin speech, these papers were the main catalysts in reconnecting neo-liberal ideology to education policy in England. The first three papers advocated a return to the model of traditional grammar school education. The later two introduced market-related proposals for greater parental choice, and argued for privatisation of education. Privatisation would be broadly similar to that of other public utilities, such as electricity or water, which were to follow. In respect of education, it would lead to a system where schools would be privately run and be able to raise fees. The transformation would be achieved through the gradual introduction of a voucher scheme, establishing consumer sovereignty in education. In other words, all parents would be issued with a coupon worth the price of their child's education, allowing them to 'shop around' for what they perceived to be the best education on offer. The Callaghan government was unable to arrive at any new policies by the late 1970s and in 1979 the Conservatives came to power, with a massive majority and a new leader: Margaret Thatcher.

Once in power, Thatcher set about reforming education. Between 1979 and 1988 a good deal of legislation on education was passed (Lawton, 1992, pp. 62-63), all of which could be seen as 'a drift away from local planning to the consumerist position of enhancing parents' choice' (p.48). The most notable early change was the Assisted Places Scheme which, by subsidising fees, gave parents of modest means with 'bright' children access to a private school (Lawton, 1994). This, Lawton suggests, implied that state schools were second-rate.

In 1987, parents gained the right to be represented on the school management board and to have access to greater information on the school's progress and activities; however, teachers lost their pay negotiating rights which had been set up in

1965. Local education authorities' powers were significantly reduced (see MacKinnon *et al.*, 1995, pp. 58-59). While parental choice was the major principle behind most of the legislation in this decade, another principle had come into play by 1988: the discourse of 'accountability' or value for money (Lawton, 1992 and 1994).

The Education Reform Act (ERA) of 1988 introduced open enrolment, parental choice, Local Management of Schools (LMS), formula funding, a single national curriculum and an assessment system (Mackinnon *et al.*, 1995). Prior to this, Local Education Authorities (LEAs) controlled all of the school's budget. Under Local Management of Schools, a school could assume responsibility for 75% of its budget (Ball, 1990a), a figure that has since risen to over 90%. The Act also included legislation for the creation of Grant Maintained Schools (GMS), whereby a majority vote by parents would allow a school to opt out of local government control and assume total responsibility for its budget. The school's budget would come directly from a new quango, the Funding Agency for Schools.

Margaret Thatcher was deposed as leader of the Conservative Party and Prime Minister in 1990. John Major succeeded her and won the 1992 election thereby extending Conservative control over public education for a further five years. During this time, provisions of the 1988 Education Act were implemented and additional legislation, notably the Acts of 1992 and 1996, further extended neo-liberal policies in education. The idea of vouchers resurfaced with a trial scheme for supporting pre-school education in a number of LEAs. The voucher system was never implemented due to the level of costs and administrative complications identified by these pilot schemes, but the idea was not completely abandoned by the Major administration.

The Thatcher-Major period introduced changes to the education system of England and Wales, which saw the neo-liberal agenda (that is, the comprehensive

ideal of open access) replaced by the market discourse of 'choice' and 'diversity'. As Gewirtz *et al.* (1995) observed, 'the framework of market discipline is set by parental choice, open enrolment, devolved budgets and formula funding' (p.2). Legislation was put in place to ensure that these reforms would be virtually irreversible. As a result, from 1988 onwards, education underwent 'the most radical transformation since the 1944 Education Act' (Pring, 1995, p.5).

In summary, Thatcher wanted greater centralisation of policy and power over public education. To achieve this, she reduced the power of the Local Education Authorities (LEAs). Indeed, the Inner London Education Authority was abolished and replaced by a cluster of small LEAs. The 1988 Education Act brought about a number of reorganisations to the political geography of schooling: the abolition of catchments, including LEA boundaries. The power of national government increased at the expense of local authorities. Management of all maintained schools was devolved to the principal and governing bodies. Schools' funding mechanisms changed, making competition attractive to those already enjoying popularity (Levacic and Hardman, 1998).

The election of a Labour government in 1997 did not significantly affect policy on secondary schools apart from Grant Maintained schools, now called 'Foundation Schools', which were brought back under the control of their local authorities from September 1999 and the creation of Education Action Zones (EAZ) which redirected resources to support schools in some disadvantaged areas.

2.4.2 Ireland

Following the publication of several OECD reports including *Second Programme for Economic Expansion*, (1963), *Investment in Education* (1965), the government invested heavily in education. In 1967, in an unprecedented move by the then Minister for Education, Donogh O'Malley, free secondary education was introduced. Between 1963 and 1991 there was a three-fold increase in participation (O'Flaherty, 1992).

Reforms in the 1980s and 1990s included the quantitative expansion of the secondary education system. Many curricular changes were incorporated into the secondary school programme: the Junior Certificate⁵ became broader and less prescriptive; and the Leaving Certificate⁶ was broadened to encompass a more technical and vocational orientation to meet the range of students' abilities and interests.

In keeping with international trends during the 1980s, concern was expressed for greater accountability, transparency and quality assurance in education. These concerns were finally articulated in the Green Paper of 1992, entitled *Education for a Changing World*, in which tighter controls in public education were proposed. Measures included restructuring the role of the inspectorate; the introduction of standardised tests for primary schools; the use of performance indicators; increased accountability on school management boards; greater transparency in the Department of Education and higher education institutions, with reports published annually; and regional boards, equivalent to the English LEAs (Coolahan, 1995).

⁵ Students' first official State examination at age 15/16, following 3 years of secondary education.

⁶ Students' final State examination, at the end of secondary school, following 5/6 years of secondary education, age 17/18.

However, the OECD Report of 1991 *Review of Educational Systems – Ireland* had returned a favourable review of the educational system. It recommended a ‘more formal monitoring and reportage on the system’ by the Department, in view of the importance of education and the high costs of its delivery (p.459).

Educational discourse became more concerned with the human capital than the revival of Gaelic and cultural nationalism. Already the marketisation of Irish schools had its ‘paradigmatic groundwork done for it by the dominance of commercialised schooling and vocationalised curriculum in Irish educational discourse’ (O’Sullivan, 1992). For instance, the National Economic and Social Council published *A Strategy for the Nineties* (1993) which clearly endorsed consumer rights in education, and concluded by recommending ‘a need to consider the role of information systems and performance indicators’, so that parents might obtain ‘factual and evaluative data about schools’ (p.134).

In her 1991 address, the Minister for Education, Mary O’Rourke argued that ‘we need to openly address the issue of ‘parent power’ alongside ‘teacher power’ and ‘church power’. To achieve this end, she recommended the following: active parent associations; full representation on the board of management in school decision-making; and a strategy for parental involvement built into the policy of individual schools. These were communicated via circular 24/91 entitled *Parents as Partners in Education* (Department of Education, 1991).

There was also a move to strengthen the ability of schools to respond to demand by devolving total funding to them. (Presently, teacher salaries are paid separately by the Department of Education.) According to O’Sullivan (1999), this would be likely to have strong local implications for, he writes, ‘as the marketisation of schooling becomes a significant feature of the Irish educational scene we are likely

to see the emergence of a sociological phenomenon almost unknown in Ireland - the politicisation of schooling at the local level’.

Potential for localisation was paralleled by efforts from the centre to raise standards. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) was set up in 1987. The modernised Junior Certificate replaced the Intermediate Certificate in 1995, and efforts continued to link schools to local businesses, notably through the introduction of the ‘Transition Year’.

Following the publication of the Green Paper in 1992, the Minister for Education called for a National Convention, where key partners would discuss the Green Paper from which the White Paper would emerge. The Convention was held in 1993, where all interest groups were invited to contribute to the development of Irish Education for the twenty-first century. Following this unique consultative process in the history of Irish education, *The Report of the National Convention* (Coolahan, 1994) was published. The Report was critical of the Green Paper’s attempts to introduce market-driven initiatives supporting quantitatively informed parental choice (Byrne *et al*, 2000). Based on the outcome of the report, the *White Paper* of 1995 dropped some of the initiatives and instead set out a ‘comprehensive agenda for change and development’

The Education Act envisaged for 1997 would amend the Intermediate Education (Ireland) Act of 1878. However, with a change of government, the Bill was replaced by the next Minister Micheál Martin’s ‘Education (No. 2) Bill, 1997, which was enacted in 1998. Overall, the provisions of the Bill aim to strengthen existing practice rather than to effect radical reform.

Presently, Ireland has one of the highest levels in Europe of secondary students in education at seventeen or eighteen years of age (Ardagh, 1994), and huge

increases were predicted for enrolment at third level (Hyland, 1997). This growth in participation was aided by a 'bussing' system which provided a free bus service to students to bring them to their nearest school. The system further strengthened the school-neighbourhood tradition.

Between Irish political parties there has been little ideological conflict regarding education, and consequently changes of government have not led to major changes in educational policies. Coolahan (1995) believes that there is a general commitment to 'all-round balanced education of the individual for his or her individual or social purposes' and that this meets commonly accepted goals of the system as they reflect 'economic, cultural, egalitarian, administrative and partnership concerns' (p.453).

From the period of the 1960s well into the 1990s public interest has continued to grow in education. The aforementioned OECD Reports, which linked investment in educational attainment with economic prosperity, proved to be a watershed in this regard. The existence of an educated and skilled population has contributed to the economic boom (with GNP rising between 6-8% each year since the 1990s), currently referred to as the 'Celtic Tiger Economy' (O'Sullivan, 1999). Ardagh (1994) claims that the ambitiousness in education, which cuts across all classes, is 'a source of national pride in Ireland' (p.215).

2.4.3 The USA (Massachusetts)

Challenges to schooling in 1950s America included the implementation of desegregation, and a technological progressiveness in Soviet education. The latter was especially evident in the Soviets' advanced space programme. Concerns about

technological progressiveness were heightened by criticism that US schools were not teaching 'patriotism' (Spring, 1978). Interest in US education was revived quite suddenly with the launch of Russia's *Sputnik* in 1957. The feeling that America was not as progressive as its Cold War counterpart prevailed caused a resurgence of interest in education, especially in the sciences and mathematics. This interest found expression in popular culture: 'The Quiz Kids' was one of the most popular television programmes of the day, and parents would foster hopes of their child becoming a 'quiz kid' (Griffin, 1997). However, fear began to pervade society that the educational system itself was failing.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, education was perceived as a means of ending poverty and enhancing social mobility. The political climate of the 1960s was progressive and experimental, and federal funding for curricular innovation was increased. During President Lyndon Johnson's⁷ term of office, many of Kennedy's 'New Frontier' social reform proposals won Congressional support. Johnson declared his famous 'war on poverty', supported by great social legislation. However, the results for education were disappointing, as indicated in the critique of the 'contradictions of liberal educational reform' by Bowles and Gintis (1976). Johnson passed the 'Economic Opportunities Act' and the 'Elementary and Secondary Education Act', which placed an emphasis on the primacy of education in the elimination of poverty. The Council of Economic Advisers backed the legislation. The cycle of poverty, it was thought, began with a poor educational foundation and poor occupational prospects. These led to poor housing, diet, health, medical care, and poor education again for the next generation. The vicious cycle would be broken by the injection of 'a good education'. The notion of a 'good' education is yet a matter of

⁷ Vice-President Lyndon Johnson took over as the USA's thirty-seventh President upon the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963.

ongoing philosophical debate. For instance, White (2001) argues that a good education should be defined in terms of personal development, whereas Durkheim (1976) defined it in terms of social and cultural processes and responsibilities.

In any case, the raw academic grade results were disappointing, as indicated by Bowles and Gintis's (1976) critique of the contradictions of liberal educational reform. Educational inflation was not envisaged at this time, when college graduates in the late 1960s and early 1970s were driving cabs and serving in restaurants. Meanwhile, the economy and occupational structure had not expanded in time to meet the increased educational output of the labour force. This problem demonstrated that the labour force, and not educational requirements, was the determining factor for employment. The cycle of poverty could be broken by changes in both the organisation of labour and the structure of the economic system, but not by education alone. Johnson's support declined, and he did not seek re-election in 1968 (Hutchinson, 1999).

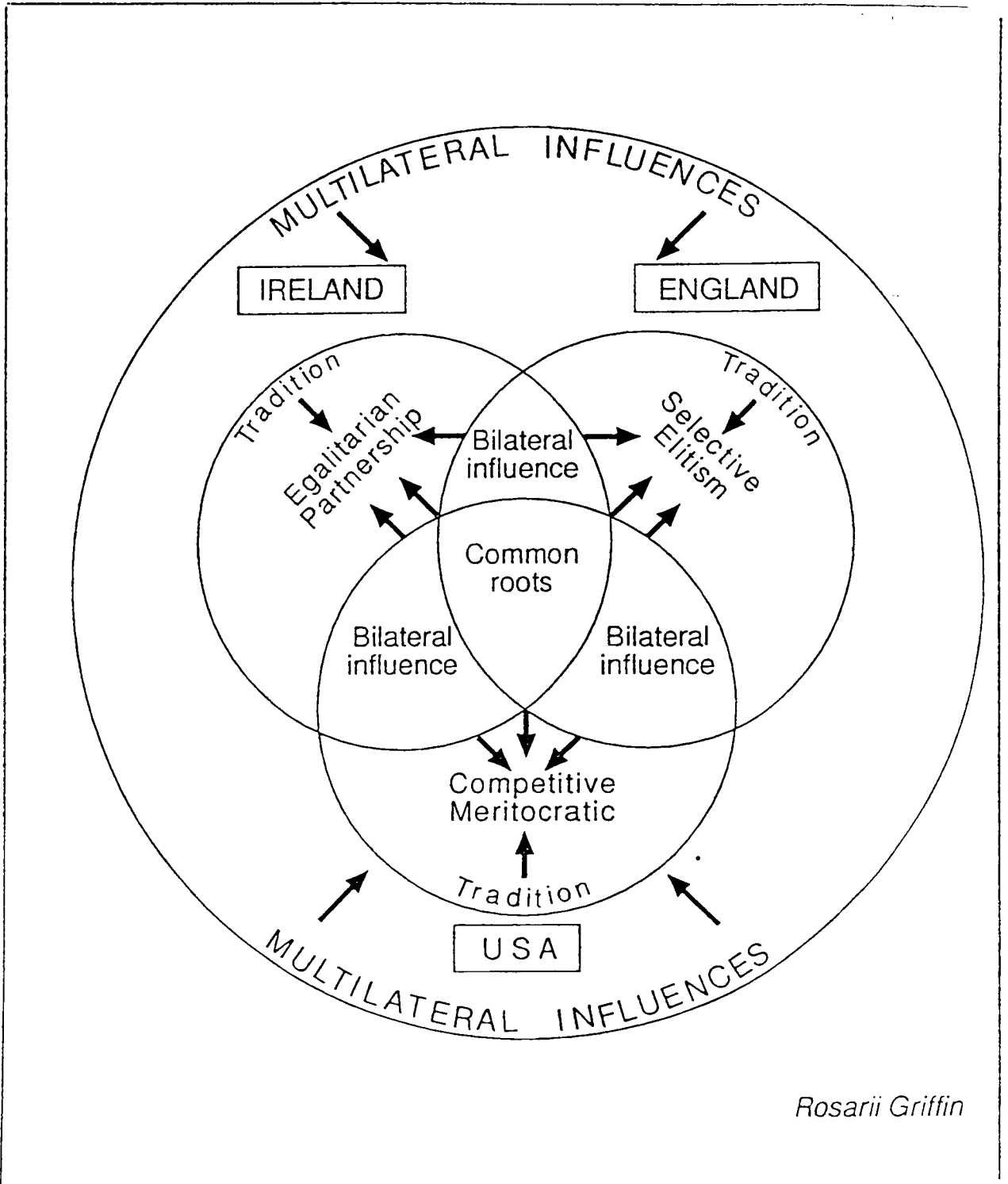
Disenchantment with education was exacerbated by the OPEC oil crisis in the 1970s which caused a depression in the economy. A succession of critical reports culminated in the National Commission's *A Nation at Risk* (1983). With the election of Ronald Reagan in the early 1980s, a profound change in the political climate was confirmed. An attack on intellectual standards by Bloom (1987) and the advocacy of a market approach for resolving that problem by Chubb and Moe (1990) had a marked impact on policy discourse. The 1990s saw the implementation of market-oriented reforms in at least sixteen of the fifty states. These began with Minnesota in the late 1980s (Mazzoni, 1988), but that state did not proceed to statewide implementation of open enrolment. This distinction fell to Massachusetts in 1993, and hence its inclusion in this study.

2.4.4 Summary

All three national cases derive from the same roots. However, each has been informed by broad traditions, depending on the cultural evolution of the communities within which they operate. A summary of the outcome is illustrated by *Figure 6*. In England, the residual influence of private secondary schools, supported by the association between the Anglican church and the state, led to the principle of selection. Selection informed the development of the public secondary sector from the outset. In Ireland, a long communal tradition of scholarship derived from Celtic civilisation and the church. It required both church and state to produce a nationally available secondary schooling system. They have combined to influence common accepted goals reflecting ‘economic, cultural, egalitarian, administrative and partnership concerns’ (Coolahan, 1995). Meanwhile, in the USA, ideals of democracy and freedom supported the early development of common access to schooling. This was provided for, and governed by, the local community and enforced where necessary by the Supreme Court. Overall, the concept of a meritocracy has informed the provision of public education (Spring, 1978). *Figure 6* illustrates the divergence of these three traditions from common roots, leading variously to selective elitism in England, ‘egalitarian’⁸ partnership in Ireland, and competitive meritocracy in the USA. All three traditions are subject to global and multilateral, influences. They are subject to bilateral influences on each other, though to varying degrees.

⁸ These ‘egalitarian’ claims are disputed by Lynch (1999) and are discussed in chapter 3.

Figure 6: Multilateral Influences between England, Ireland and the USA.



2.5 Political and Social Geography and Education

The provision and operation of public education are, as Sigler has said, a culturally embedded phenomenon (1997). However, cultures are evident at different scales, and public education is delivered within regulated space. It is necessary to consider the geographical or spatial dimension in this final section on 'informing issues'.

The geography of education is a relatively neglected area as evidenced in the literatures of both disciplines (Brock, 1985 and 1992). This is perhaps surprising, especially in geography, in view of the significance of Robson's study of 'City Structure' (1971). Robson selected 'attitudes to education' as an index of social processes operating within an urban environment. He then drew on the then near contemporary work in the sociology of education, including parental preferences for secondary schooling. Robson's work suggests that the location, the social and physical milieu, plays a part in the formation of attitudes to schooling. For instance, in his case-study of Sunderland, he compares parental attitudes to education across seven suburban areas of the city, finding considerable variation between localities. Robson finds the correlation between social class and IQ values to be of a high order, and goes on to remark that:

The same high positive association exists between parents' social class and the type of school (whether grammar, technical or secondary modern) which they choose for their children; the highly rated areas having consistently large proportions wanting their children to attend grammar schools (p.197).

Similar to comparative education, geography is a composite discipline informed by a range of contributing disciplines. The same range of factors as have been selected for

this thesis and, which are listed in chapter one, informs these same disciplines.

Robson wrote:

If attitudes towards education correlate with social class, it seems reasonable to assume, therefore, that this is not a result of a conscious acceptance or awareness of being in a particular social class, but rather because of certain forces and experiences to which people of a similar class each tend to be exposed (p. 199).

Among these forces will be the amalgam of factors operating in the local milieu in respect of schooling, and in respect of the issue in question here, parental choice of school.

As Bowe *et al.* (1992) observe, ‘attempts’ to break the link between locality and school via the market may actually fly in the face of parental choice’ (p. 36). While it is beyond the scope of this research to carry out a similar study here, it will be necessary to conduct local documentary research to gain some understanding of internal social geographies that will assist the interpretation of data generated by the empirical research.

Public education provision, including that of secondary schooling, operates within regulated space, *i.e.* it relates to political geographies at different scales, from local to national. In Ireland, for example, most public secondary provision operates within a unified national parameter, while some is subject to regional administration. In England, while local education authorities still have overall responsibility for public secondary schooling, their traditional control over a discrete territory, and school catchment areas within it, has been significantly diminished by market-related reforms. In Massachusetts, school districts may opt out of school choice reform that permits open enrolment across district boundaries. However, in all three countries, certain spatial regulations or practices do in fact constrain choice of secondary school.

These spatial regulations form part of the mediation of market-related policies in local political geographies. They are all matters for further investigation in the field, for it is at the local level that, due to such trends as devolution and deregulation, decisions are increasingly made; or, as Urry (1981) puts it, ‘important changes in contemporary capitalism are at present heightening the economic, social and political significance of each locality’ (p. 464). This does not mean that we can consider only the local dimension. The daily journeys to and from public sector schools are necessarily limited, and so there is a spatial distribution of schools within each geographical area – including the case locations in this study – coupled with a system of allocation in which choice may always have played a part. For example, in England and Wales, some ten years before the 1988 Reform, Dove and Flowerdew were able to illustrate this as follows:

<u>Allocation System</u>	<u>Proportion of LEAs (%)</u>
a) Catchment area (% involving some parental choice)	51 (19)
b) Feeder system (% involving some parental choice)	19 (11)
c) Parental choice area	27

From: Dove and Flowerdew (1978) and quoted in Kirby (1979)

As Kirby (1979) indicates, the feeder system is ‘susceptible to manipulation, with some secondary schools drawing on secondary schools of only one social group’ (p. 58). This is an example of spatial inequality associated with allocation to schooling (Coates, Johnson and Knox, 1971). The research will return in the final chapter to the

potential for even greater disparity in access to schooling within the market-oriented model; this model is based on the 1988 Education Reform Act. Further investigation of this issue by geographers is reviewed in chapter three below.

2.6 Summary

This chapter had two main objectives. The first was to present a brief synopsis of the historical roots and cultural traits of each of the public education systems in question the USA (Massachusetts), England and Ireland. The second was to outline the modern market discourse, its global dimensions, transatlantic variant and national identity, leading to the pieces of legislation that enacted some degree of market-related policy in these countries and triggered reforms. A third, lesser function of the chapter, was to further the discussion of the milieu or locale by considering it within the context of social geography. This does not mean that the geographical factor is the most important. Rather, because it is the most underdeveloped factor in the literature, it may be the factor to best portray the mediation of policy at the local level on account of its interdisciplinary and spatial nature.

It is hoped that by this stage the problems, focus, identity and context of this research are clear. The discussion will now turn to a review of selected literature relating to the issue of market-related reform.

CHAPTER 3: CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

This literature review provides an outline of the influence of neo-liberal ideology on educational policy. Of particular interest are the effects of these policies on second level schooling provision, especially market-related educational initiatives. Selection has been made of a cross section of research stemming from each country and as far as possible from each level of analysis. Witte, in his book *The Market Approach to Education* (2000) comments that:

In policy, politics and social science, there are two intellectual approaches to problems and debates. The first begins with an answer and then works back to evidence and the construction of a supportive logical argument. The second begins with a question and then searches for evidence and data to prove or disprove the proposition behind the question. Both approaches are legitimate (p. xiii).

The kind of research drawn upon varies as between the three countries. Macro-analyses tend to be more popular in the USA context, and certainly positivistic, quantitative research approaches still appear to be the norm. England, on the other hand, has built up a substantial body of research using qualitative paradigms. Ireland, though a significantly smaller country in scale, appears to lack a substantial body of either kind of research, but particularly lacks qualitative research. This has been a general criticism of the system in recent years, particularly with the lack of evidence-based research prior to the passing of the 1998 Education Act. This chapter aims to reflect, in as balanced a way as possible, the research from all three countries.

3.1 England

3.1.1 Markets in Education: Inequality and Disparity.

Ball, in his London (King's College) inaugural lecture, 'Education, inequality and school reform: values in crisis!' (1990b) assessed in a theoretical way the effects or potential effects of the quasi-market in education and on educational performance. In conclusion he asserted that if one introduces markets to education, one must be content with the idea of differentiation in education because disparity is implied within the concepts of excellence and competition.

One of the first major case studies monitoring the effects of market related policies, was conducted by Bowe, Ball and Gold (1992) in *Reforming Education and Changing schools: Case Studies in Policy Sociology*. Taking four secondary comprehensive schools and two LEAs, they examined the effects of the National Curriculum and Local Management of Schools (LMS) initiatives. The aim of their research was to 'analyse and evaluate the *policies* and impact of those policies' while looking particularly at the 'effects of policy rather than with policy "implementation"' (p.2, *original emphasis*). Their results show that many problems and conflicts occur from the contradictory and incoherent nature of the policies themselves rather than from those involved in the change process itself. This research was significant in highlighting the complexity of the nature of change which schools have to confront following such reforms. They suggest that trust, common-purpose, commitment and co-operation were jeopardised, and even lost, following implementation.

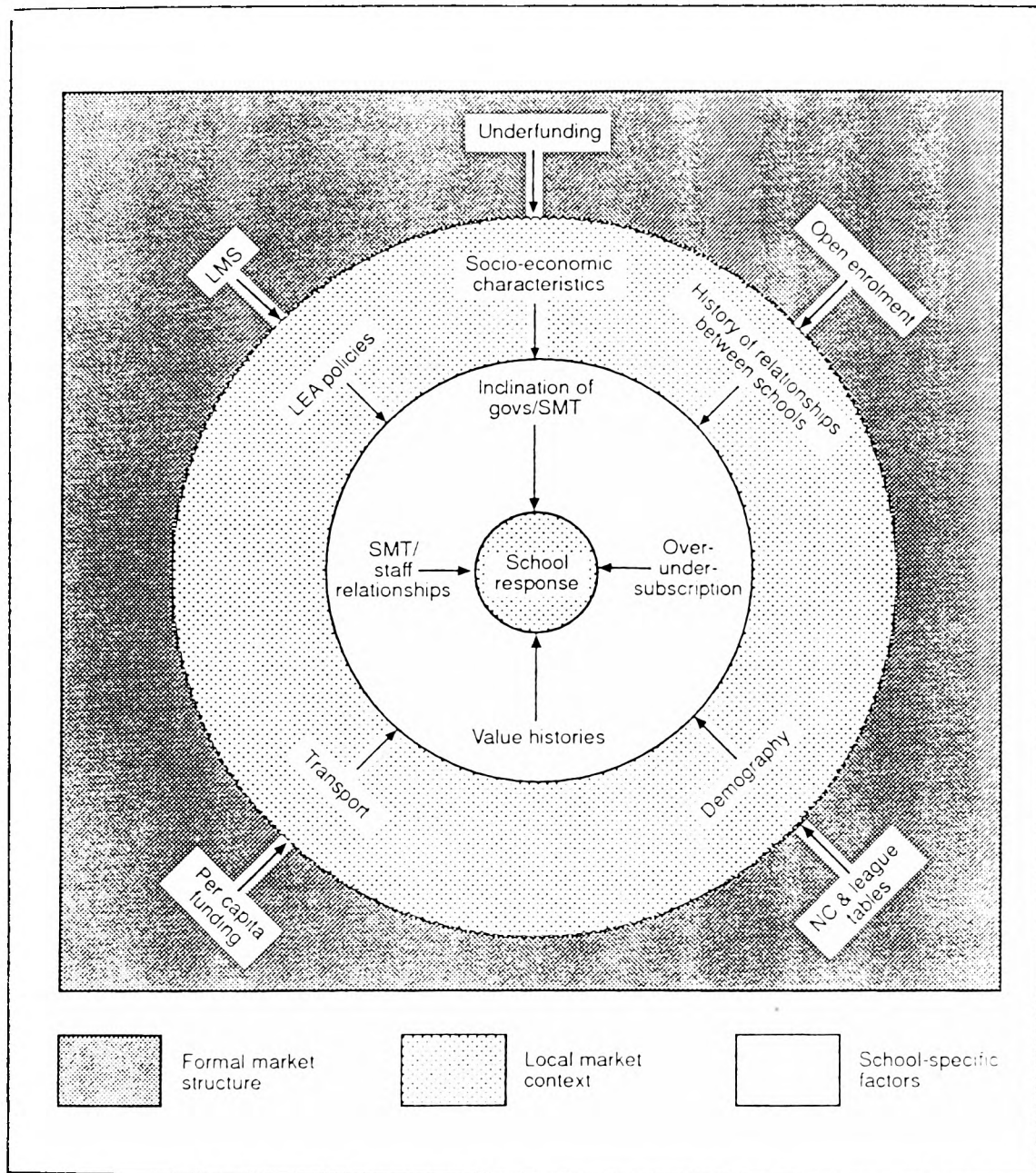
In 1995, Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe conducted a meta-analysis of market-related research under the title of *Markets, Choice and Equity in Education*. They found the

research to be predominately focused on issues such as parental choice, school responsiveness, and the distributional outcomes of choice and competition. In general the research tended to be, in their estimation, either too theoretical or abstract, and in respect of empirical research, too 'piecemeal' in character. In an attempt to address this problem, Gewirtz *et al.* linked three elements of the market, connecting choice, response and distributional outcomes together. In this way they felt it would be 'possible to understand, evaluate and theorise the education market as a social, economic and political phenomenon' particularly in local market settings (*Ibid.*, p.3). *Figure 7* illustrates their conceptual framework which has served to inform the researcher of her own strategy.

When Gewirtz *et al.* began to analyse the workings of schools' quasi-markets at the local level, their study focused on three clusters of schools in three 'competing' LEAs in the London area. Thus, they were able to study the interrelated nature of the market elements, normally the subject of separate research projects. Their research provides interesting information about the distributional effects of the market both on producers and clients alike. They concluded, similar to Ball's theoretical suggestions, that 'choice' is very much class based and has emerged as a new factor in both maintaining and in reinforcing social class divisions and inequalities.

The idea of 'choice', especially in a western context, has connotations of democracy, fairness, diversity and competition, and relates positively to the consumer mentality. However, this is ironical in that people can afford only what they can afford. (Despite the existence of BMWs or Mercedes Benz cars, not everyone can

Figure 7: Conceptual Framework of Gewirtz Ball and Bowe et al. (1995)



Source: Gerwitz, S., Ball, S.J. and Bowe, R. (1995) *Markets, Choice and Equity in Education*, Buckingham: Open University Press.

afford these.) The realisation that choice does not mean 'choice for all' leads on to another problem - the notion that education is popularly perceived as a 'public good'. Therefore, the expectation is that everyone is entitled to the schooling of their choice. However, similar to the analogy of the car, in a market-situation, this is not the case. People are entitled to some kind of education, but not necessarily the school of their choice, because, in effect, markets restrict choice according to means. So, while choice may exist, the means to gain access to that choice may not. This is one aspect of what Bourdieu meant when he wrote on 'cultural capital' (1997), or Putnam, when he wrote on 'social capital' (2000).

Another aspect of 'cultural capital' is parents' ability to acquire information so as to gain access to the best education they can find for their children. Educational opportunity depends very much on parents' geographic location, mobility, financial resources, and most importantly, knowledge and information as to how the education system works. In O'Sullivan's words (1996), 'it doesn't matter how many times you change the goal-posts, the middle-classes will always figure out the rules'. Therefore an inconsistency exists between the notions of choice, equality of opportunity and personal resources, both cultural and financial capital confer advantages in a market situation. So, as long as the notion of choice is commonly and uncritically perceived as being 'a good thing'; anything else is perceived as verging on monopoly or communistic. The problem of squaring choice with the ideology of the market will continue to exist due the practical difficulties of making choice a reality for all and not only for some.

Not only are markets having the effect of reinforcing class divisions, but also, arguably the quality of education is deteriorating for the student, and other 'consumers' such as parents or employers. For instance, in *Schooling, Welfare and*

Parental Responsibility (1996), Wyness argues that due to the educational reforms in the 1980s and 1990s, schools have become limited in their ability to play a welfare role in the life of the child. This in turn, undermines their ability to act as a 'social and moral guarantor' (p.143). Grace (1995) believes that:

Schooling is in danger of losing other commitments (where they existed) to community, collegiality, social justice and the public good. None of these considerations is thought to be measurably productive of success in the educational market as currently constituted (p.121).

For instance, several researchers have provided evidence that students with special educational needs or those parents with children who have learning difficulties are, in fact, disempowered by the market because schools are unresponsive to their needs (Evans and Vincent, 1997; Evans, 2000). This has partly to do with the market's insistence on 'performance indicators' and measurable results. Children with special educational needs, or learning difficulties will depress the average level of a school's academic performance. No recognition is given in the official league tables of the potential influence of this category of student. Only the 'raw' academic league results are listed in the national newspapers.

In any case, does the marketisation of education really allow schools to become more effective and efficient? Halpin, Power and Fitz (1997), for instance, looked at Grant Maintained Schools and the impact of self-governance. They found no evidence to suggest that autonomy at the institutional level is transforming the work of teachers in the classroom. If anything, it seems to reinforce more traditional notions of schooling. From the market perspective, the research of Hughes (1997) finds that teachers' own sense of professionalism, and the peripheral role of parents,

tended to prevent the kind of 'consumer/producer' interaction from taking place which would be more akin to an 'efficient' market situation.

Similar findings were found in the research report, *Success Against the Odds: Effective Schools in Disadvantaged Areas* (National Commission on Education, 1996). This commissioned report drew together eleven case studies across the United Kingdom. All the schools were located in disadvantaged areas. The Commission itself comprised educationists from a wide range of related sectors such as schools, teacher unions, parental associations, religious organisations, governing bodies, higher education, professional and business associations and local education authorities. The investigation reported that the cycle of disadvantage is further exacerbated by educational policy changes that favour market principles. The report suggested that the marketisation of schools tends to have a negative effect on individual schools through 'funding arrangements and forcing competition'. One weakness in the report is that it does not show how the cycle of disadvantage can be broken if the 'correct' school effectiveness factors were taken on board. These factors would include: school values and goals, whole school policies and practices, whole community involvement, inclusivity, leadership and management and improvement of the physical environment (Craft, 1996).

The report's findings correspond to what Deming (1994) suggested as the appropriate approach to management in education: that quality is something *built in* during the process of education, not something *inspected out of* education. That is to say, Deming pays attention to processes and not end-results, and he feels that carefully designed and implemented processes will ensure positive outcomes. As Holt (2000) observes: 'at the heart of Deming's theory is a theory about *variation*' (p.215). This runs counter to the neo-Taylorian model of management, which focuses on

command and control, a system which lends itself to hierarchical structures and accountability models, and is 'ideal' when implementing market-related principles in education. The fundamental point about the 'command and control' model is that if anything goes wrong it must be the fault of the workers, not management! It has certainly been the case for the past twenty years in the UK and USA that teachers have been 'under siege' and blamed for the so-called failure of education (*see* for example, Aronowitz and Giroux, 1985; Bash and Coulby, 1989; Berliner and Biddle, 1995). Holt (2000) suggested that improvement would come in education 'by examining all the relevant factors in context and recognising the effects of actions on all the elements associated with the organisation' (p. 215). This relates directly to the aim of this research which is to examine the *mediation* of open enrolment policies, in specific contexts.

3.1.2 Quasi-Markets in Education and Local Interaction

Woods, Bagley and Glatter (1998), in their book '*School Choice and Competition: Markets in the Public Interest?*' examined the character and effects of 'the interaction between parents and secondary schools as choice-making players in the local quasi-markets created by these reforms' (p.1). Quasi-markets are necessarily 'local and complex', hence the importance of investigating them 'locally' and 'in-depth' (p.6). They adopted a multiple case study approach which employed both qualitative and quantitative methods of investigation. Three contrasting locations were selected with reference to factors such as competitive opportunities amongst local schools and the socio-economic structure of each location. An analytical model of the public-market was used which could be applied where 'an educational system incorporates policies

such as parental choice, school autonomy and diversity of provision' (p.134). Woods *et al.* were influenced by other researchers such as Levacic (1995) who also stated that markets in education are socially conditioned and embedded: they do not operate in isolation but are highly regulated. Similarly Lauder *et al.* (1994) believe it is the interactive process of both social and political elements, *i.e.* human agency and organisational elements, that affect the kinds of outcomes that emerge from public sector markets. Woods *et al.* then analysed this public market within the context of a local competitive arena and the interactive relationships which occur therein.

Incorporating these research findings, Woods *et al.* devised a sociologically informed framework wherein the theorising of market related reforms could be located. As their conceptual framework is analytical in nature, they do not advocate or provide a rationale for market-related reforms. Rather, they use their framework to understand and account for the process by which these reforms evolve and are re-created over time through different modes of engagement. This also includes the examination of other directive influences. The framework which they derive comprises structural elements, domains and directive influences, and is clearly constructed from both market and public components:

- *Structural elements* consist of consumer choices, diversity of provision, competition between producers, demand-driven funding as determined by choice and competition and self-determination *i.e.* being responsible for their produce.

The decisions made about the above elements are, according to Riley (1994) inherently political. These structural elements are embedded in domains.

- *Domains* are locational categories consisting of: the producer domain (school governors and staff); the consumer domain, (pupils and parents); the micro-environmental domain, (local government, and other socio-economic, geographic, historical, cultural and demographic features of the local area) and finally, the macro-environment domain, (national government and other social, economic and international influences).

These domains are located in what Woods *et al.* refer to as directive influences.

- *Directive influences* are 'contextual factors' which represent a range of elements that condition actions. This involves interacting of the micro and macro elements mentioned above at different scales of operation; local, national and international.

Directive influences include the political and administrative frameworks that provide the parameters for diversity, competition and choice, as well as local features such as transport and access that aid or inhibit engagement with the public market.

Woods *et al.* found that although schools were overly concerned with academic issues, parents, on the other hand, were as much concerned with the personal and social wellbeing of their children as with academic performance. The researchers found three recurring themes emerging in their study: first, parents' real choice of school was often restricted; second, educational concerns were often secondary to that of the 'image' the school portrayed; third, that greater emphasis was placed on academic performance over wider educational aims. Having come to these conclusions, they then consider how educational policies might be changed to incorporate greater choice, diversity and competition. They also consider how schools

can become more inclusive as a public service so that educational opportunities would be available to all, and conclude by suggesting that a sociologically informed notion of the public market might be more appropriate in achieving an understanding of these processes. The modes of both Gewirtz *et al.* and Woods *et al.* have informed the researcher's conceptual framework (*Figure 2*).

In other relevant research, Hardman and Levacic (1997) claim that competition is increasing between schools as a result of parental choice. However, the relationship between recruitment and financial success is, they believe, dubious and difficult to determine. It appears from their study that the distinguishing factor which determines a school's popularity is, for the most part, examination results. This contrasts with the findings of Woods *et al.* that parents were as much concerned with social wellbeing.

Although Hardman and Levacic have not gone so far as to equate increased competition with school improvement, there is a notional correlation there. Other research in the US conducted by Hoxby (1996) demonstrates that choice has beneficial achievement effects. She compares regions with high population densities and multitudinous small school districts in which districts compete with each other, with districts that do not engage in the choice programme. However, Goldring (1997) suggests this may be due to greater selection from within the school and, by inference, exclusion of certain categories of students, for instance, those with learning difficulties, or special educational needs as indicated above. Alternatively, it could mean that schools are in fact performing better due to increased pressure, or due to a combination of added pressure with exclusion. Levacic and Hardman, in another study (1998) concur with Woods *et al.* (*Op. Cit.*) that further work remains to be done using 'qualitative evidence on how the links between market structural features, such

as school stakeholders' behaviour and school educational performance, *are mediated by a more complex range of factors* than those taken account of in quantitative data' (Woods, *et al.*, *Op. Cit.*, p.22, *italics* researcher's emphasis).

3.1.3 Quasi-Markets in Education, Sociological and Economic Concerns.

In relation to the economic dimensions of the marketisation of publicly funded schooling in England, Adnett and Davies (1999) claim that 'while economic arguments were important in motivating schooling reforms implemented by the previous British Government, they have been neglected in most of the subsequent research undertaken to assess the consequences of those reforms' (p.221). The researchers state that the USA's experience is different from that of the UK insofar as economists in the USA play a crucial role in policy design and evaluation, unlike in the UK where their role tends to end at the formulation phase. Consequently, they argue that by highlighting the significance of incentives and interdependencies between markets, an economic analysis would facilitate a 'broader investigation of schooling quasi-markets' (p.221).

Adnett and Davies (1999) present their analysis by suggesting that the main argument for using a market model for school reform was that national economic competitiveness was threatened by the perceived failures of schooling systems. These 'failures', it was claimed, arose because the state schooling system lacked business-like characteristics *i.e.* consumer choice, competitiveness, profit incentives and performance-related teacher pay. The solution was therefore to run schools like markets, and to have consumer choice determine their success or failure, or, to use

economic rhetoric, to let the 'invisible hand' of the market decide the schools' fate. Schools would then have to 'perform' in order to stay in the competition and to retain central funding which is predominately on a *per capita* basis. Adnett and Davies claim that when the 'efficient market model is extended, economic analysis can complement the prevailing sociological emphasis in assessments of the consequences of market-based reforms' (p.221). They recommend an economic assessment of quasi-markets in schools which entails three main principles:

- Consumers need to have a choice of schooling, and access to the appropriate information to assess alternative schooling, together with an ability to change schools should circumstances require.
- Consumer preferences are efficiently communicated to schools which are able and motivated to respond.
- Consumer preferences are themselves consistent with social welfare maximisation over time (p. 224-226).

They find that the sociological frameworks of Gewirtz *et al.* (1995) and Woods *et al.* (1998) discussed above are too narrow in their conception, and so they have added the economic domain. They believe that the limitations of these models is that they reach 'a typical conclusion' in their findings, which is that choice is directly related to social-class differences. Similarly, Tooley (1996b) and Seddon (1997) point out that while these simplistic caricatures of the market have proved popular with educationists, they are too simple.

Arnett and Davies (1999) highlight the fact that comparative data on these and related issues, concerned with the effect of increased competition on school behaviour, is not available. Nevertheless, they have provided a meta-analysis of national (UK) research on the effects of increased competition on school behaviour where it is available (p.229). These are their comments in relation to the works cited:

- Competition initially generated an emphasis upon promotional and image enhancing changes, rather than substantive changes in schools' teaching and curriculum (Woods *et al.* 1996; Gewirtz *et al.* 1995).
- Competition has engendered greater interest in neighbouring schools' activities, but less co-operation between schools, except in the case of feeder schools where communication ties have strengthened (Woods *et al.*, 1996; Power *et al.*, 1997).
- Schools are showing evidence of becoming more selective themselves and becoming more attentive to particular groups of parents, as opposed to becoming more responsive to parents overall (Hughes, 1997).
- In the UK context neither Grant Maintained Schools nor City Technology Colleges significantly challenged the traditional model of schooling, either in terms of curriculum content or diversity of schooling (Power, 1997; Edwards and Whitty, 1997).

Finally, Adnett and Davies claim that the financial incentive is not significant in raising levels of pupil attainment, and so the easiest method of gaining extra funding is to be selective at the point of entry to secondary school through a method where pupils are chosen on the basis of raw ability and are consequently cost effective. This tends to lead, as already mentioned, to selection by means of an examination, or other assessment of potential and to the exclusion of difficult, disruptive students, or special educational needs students.

So, in respect of the research conducted to date, it has shown in general that maintained schools have become more socially segregated and resources have been diverted from the socially disadvantaged schools which, in general, do not feature high up in the league tables. (Levacic and Hardman, 1998). Clearly, sociological and economic analyses can provide complementary critiques of educational reforms. Both frameworks attempt to explain why disparity has occurred or been increased as a result of such reforms. This adds to the 'productive policy' debate in which Adnett and Davies warn: 'neglecting the roles of signals, incentives and funding mechanisms severely and needlessly restricts the debate about future policy' (p.231). Combining both frameworks can result in the distinction being made between disparities which occur as a result of a specific schooling environment and those that are endemic to all market-based reforms.

3.1.4 Quasi-Markets in Education: Collaboration or Competition?

With respect to collaboration between schools and colleges in a competitive environment, Wallace (1998) refers to 'counter-policy' as being that which is 'located within a local perspective on national policy implementation' (p.195). This author

claims that the purpose of the reforms was to 'break the mould of the post-war consensus between the main political parties over state education' (p.195), which accords with the view of Ozga (1990) and involves shifting the balance of power between stakeholders in education. It was achieved through policy instruments, primarily legislation, as well as through financial incentives to comply with government regulations and the necessary professional development given to ensure that these were implemented. Whether the last-named element has been supplied may be questionable, though the establishment of the Professional Development Centre at the University of Nottingham is certainly a significant investment in specific human capital development. At the institutional level, as a result of such reforms, certain forms of collaboration developed 'where the schools and colleges belonging to these groups were close enough to compete for students' (see, for example, Bridges and Husbands, 1996).

3.1.5 Quasi-Markets in Education: A Question of Geography?

Despite the fact that the 'geography of education' is a field relatively neglected by geographers and educationists alike, there have been notable contributions to the issue in question at the beginning and end of the last decade. The spatial implications of the 1988 Education Act prompted publications from Bondi (1991), and also from Bradford (1990) and more recently, Gibson and Asthana (1998 and 2000) and more recently, Taylor (2001) have revisited the issue in a distinctive way. Bondi's contribution to the transatlantic comparison of market-related educational reform has been discussed above, but her earlier volume, edited with Matthews, *Education and Society: Studies in the Politics, Sociology and Geography of Education* (1988)

constitutes one of the first books to include the notion of the 'geography of education' in the title. One of the contributions, by Burdett (1988) has to do with 'Educational Policy Innovation: A Conceptual Approach' and refers to spatial implications of the 1988 Reform, as does his article in the journal *Geography* under the title: 'A Hard Act to Swallow? The Geography of Education After the Great Education Reform Bill'.

Bradford's earlier work had been mainly concerned with choice in relation to private education or the influence of social environment on state education, especially with reference to Manchester. His 1990 article, 'Education, Attainment and the Geography of Choice' brings these two interests together in a slightly uneasy combination whereby the first half deals with choice between private and state education on the national scale, while the second half focuses on the local scale and the influence of the immediate residential environment on attainment and school performance indicators. It is the second aspect - influence of the immediate residential environment on attainment and school performance indicators - that concerns us here.

Here, reference is made to earlier work by Moulden and Bradford (1984), which showed that 'where pupils live *within* a catchment area affects their attainment' (*italics* researcher's emphasis). The outcome reinforced the finding of Robson (1971) that there are significant influences of location on the micro scale. Bradford illustrates this by further explaining that 'two children with similar intellectual levels, parental social class and number of siblings would to some degree attain differentially according to the area in which they live'. So, one is not talking merely about 'middle-class' and 'working-class' area of towns and cities, but variations within each. Bradford continues to explain, with reference to aggregated performance indicators for schools and LEAs, that similar outcomes can result from different spatial distributions because 'it is not just the social composition of local areas that is

important, as in social class, it is the form and degree of interaction that influences outcomes'. The use of an aggregate catchment figure for social composition obscures the social geography of the catchment, which in itself has an important influence on attainment independent of the school.

Given that catchments as such were near abolished by the 1988 Education Act in order to increase both competition and choice, this did not, according to Bradford, weaken the effect of the local residential environment on attainment. In any case, as he points out with reference to Manchester prior to that legislation, nearly half the students in state schools went to schools other than their nearest school. On the basis of his Manchester research, Bradford concludes that:

Those schools with a greater proportion of pupils from outside the old catchment areas can expect to obtain higher attainments, for a given level of social background and prior attainment, than those with few pupils from outside their old catchment. Good marketing or an existing school reputation may then, in itself, by attracting large numbers of motivated pupils from outside its old catchment area, improve the attainment level of its pupils (p.15).

This would seem to be an incentive for ambitious schools to market in the hope of attracting academically able students from outside their traditional catchments or even LEAs.

Bradford finds that there is potential for increasing the degree of disparity between schools as a result of deregulation through open enrolment policies, and of what he describes as a 'cumulative causation process'. It is precisely the issue of increased disparity, or polarisation, as a result of the marketisation of public secondary education in England that is the concern of Gibson and Asthana (2000) in their second article on this issue 'Local Markets and the Polarisation of Public Sector Schools in England and Wales'. They conducted their research (following the change

of government in May 1997) having noted that ‘the DfEE remains unimpressed by the long standing arguments concerning the socially divisive consequences of market forces in education’.

Building on Bradford’s thesis, Gibson and Asthana argue that aggregate information on social stratification overlooks polarisation at the local level; they set out to illustrate this by concentration on an analysis that places schools in the context of the local ‘markets’ within which they actually operate. After a general review of the legacy of Thatcherite reform in public education and the limited amount of amelioration attempted by the Blair administration, the researchers concentrate on the issue of ‘polarisation, equity and the geography of social choice’ (p. 309). Pointing out, as Bradford had found in Manchester, that a significant number of parents in middle class areas had moved house in order to select the school of their choice - ‘selection by mortgage’, as they put it, Gibson and Asthana suggest a corresponding ‘intensification in the social topography’ of towns and cities in England is evident and that, consequently, market forces in education have been introduced to a situation already deeply stratified. Gibson and Asthana illustrate this by reference to the league tables of school performance as published between 1992 and 1998. These show that the gap between the ‘best’ and the ‘worst’ schools has ‘widened markedly’ over those six years (p.311).

In order to test their polarisation theory, they set up further research at the local level to examine ‘schools and their local markets; performance and social status in context’ (p.314). They used postcodes for pupils in eight hundred and three state schools in thirty-six LEAs and sought to establish, in respect of each school, a local market. Taking clusters of five schools where, for each individual school those with which it has the greatest ‘catchment’ overlap, were included in this. It is not

necessarily the case that geographically adjacent schools are included in the same cluster which is an interesting issue in itself. Having established their 'five school markets', it is possible to rank each school relative to the others, and over the same period of time (1992-98), they claim that increasing polarisation is evident. They state that:

From those statistics we conclude that, within local markets, high status schools are drawing to themselves the most socially advantaged pupils within their catchment area and that this will in due course, and perhaps already does mean that they are able to improve their GCSE results faster than their 'local' competitors (p.315).

Based on their finding of a marked increase in the uptake of free school meals in the lower achieving schools, they speculate that such schools appear to be in a 'spiral of decline'. They contend that school improvement, through the mechanism of parental choice, is not equally within the grasp of all schools.

Gibson and Asthana conclude that the marketisation of public secondary schools in England has already had consequences in terms of school mix and equitable provision, but that social polarisation results 'may only become apparent once we adopt the scale of local school markets' (p.317). They have clearly shown that the increasing divergence of experience on the part of schools reflects the influence of a 'multitude of locally significant factors' that a large-scale analysis such as theirs cannot hope to embrace. It is, of course, precisely on those factors (or at least a selection of them), and the focus on the 'locale', that this thesis is based.

Taylor (2001) examines educational markets as spatial phenomena. It is claimed that 'a geographical methodological framework can assist in the identification and appreciation of the processes of choice and competition and the varying constraints that underlie these processes' (p.198). Such constraints are in effect examples of some of the forms of mediation of interest to this particular researcher.

Taylor approaches the problem by 'conceptualising the actual spatial arena in which school are competing'. These arenas are identified from admissions data for six LEAs in urban, suburban and rural locations. From this information, it is possible to show the incidence of 'parallel' markets and their varying relationships with their locale.

The outcome of Taylor's research is that it is possible to identify hierarchies if markets have clear social class connections. It is advocated that 'further analysis of the market must consider both the emerging features of the market in general and the unique context to choice within each locale.

A significant conclusion is that because of the hierarchy of the market 'LEA-maintained schools will never be as popular as the more 'exclusive' state schools' (p. 212) such as voluntary-aided former grammar schools. It is noted that the market tends to replicate social class patterns but Taylor is not as clear as Gibson and Asthana in respect of increasing disparities.

In terms of existing, local scale, research on the influence of market-related policies on public secondary school provision, the English case has provided a number of formative influences on the conceptual framework developed by this researcher. The issue of multiple scales, which provides the main dimension of the framework, is at the heart of comparative analysis and especially the potential for further insights to be gained from international comparisons. The Irish case will now be considered.

3.2 Ireland

3.2.1 Introduction

Unlike the cases of England and the USA, and perhaps because of the long established existence of a market in secondary schooling, there has been less interest, until recently, in the development of thorough-going market approaches to schooling provision. As a result, there is little published research, and most is not on a local scale. Most of the research conducted appears to be theoretical, synoptic or merely commentaries on aspects of the Irish education system. National empirical studies tend to be quantitative in nature (Drudy and Lynch, 1990; Smyth, 1999). Qualitative research, on the whole, tends to be neglected. Instead, Irish researchers tend to look to their English counterparts for information in this regard. The researcher is seeking to extend this connection by applying her empirical methodology, developed from the English literature, to the Irish case locations, and this is reported in chapter 6. At this stage, however, the major publications relating to the issue of contemporary educational reform in Ireland will be reviewed.

Most Irish research comments on the *ad hoc* nature of educational arrangements where attempts are made to accommodate all the partners in relation to schooling. This is echoed in the Minister for Education and Science's opening remarks to the Education Act of 1998 where he states that 'consultation with the partners has been a very important part of this process', even though initially, with the Green Paper of 1992, the government favoured a more comprehensive market model similar to that of England or parts of the USA. This Green Paper was followed by the aforementioned National Convention which was called by the then Minister, Niamh Ní Bhreathnach. Hogan (1995) comments that the subsequent publication of the

Report on the National Convention by Coolahan, calls attention 'to the need for a further phase in the national debate on education, one which was specifically philosophical' (p.5). This was in direct response to a call for proper philosophical consideration of the major issues in education which would inform and affect future policy decisions.

Some of the challenges facing Irish education include consumerism, secularism, pluralism and alleged sectarianism (Cassidy, 1995). O'Reilly (1995) claims that Irish educational discourse was traditionally concerned with: epistemological issues in relation to curriculum; sociological issues - in respect of teacher-pupil relations; also with theological issues involving school control and ethos. He claims that, overall, philosophical discussions in Ireland have neglected economic and political issues. However, Dunne (1995) refutes claims that education must become respondent to the whims of the market economy, though he does concede that 'an instrumental role for education is essential, not accidental, in any modern society' (*cited in* Dunne, 1995, p.8). However, in his final analysis, Hogan believes that, while other western democracies are presently in the grip of market forces, that effect is 'less pronounced in the Republic of Ireland than elsewhere' (p.10).

3.2.2 Economics and Education

Such changing fortunes were sometimes initiated by outside organisations, such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Ireland joined the OECD in 1954. As Logan (2000) wrote:

The early 1950s saw the foundations of a national development strategy that brought unprecedented economic growth through the 1960s and 1970s...A landmark was reached in 1958 with the publication of 'Economic Development' which proposed an integrated programme of development, including investment proposals for industries with strong export potential such as agriculture and tourism...Of special significance was membership of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development which has as its goals the promotion of industry and trade and the economic development of its member countries (p.245).

The OECD writers were interested in the human capital theory in respect of international trade, particularly between the European Union member states, which Ireland also joined in 1973. Linking education to economic performance was taken for granted, and the OECD reports on Ireland's education system echoed a concern about the hiatus between education and economic activity.

Believing that education was central to that process [economic development] it established committees on education, labour and social affairs and a centre for educational research and innovation. One of its principle initiatives was to examine the educational growth problems of five less-developed European States' (Logan, 2000, p.246-247).

Ireland was one of the chosen countries when the Irish government responded positively to the invitation. It was felt that the project might 'provide a conceptual framework' which would link educational policies and institutions to changes in the economic and social structure and 'provide a range of policy options for education at all levels' (Logan, 2000, p.247). The OECD commissioned reports had particular implications for educational development in Ireland. A research team was set up to work on how education could interact with the economy - and to investigate the emerging field of the economics of education. It was decided that a non-meritocratic system of education would help expand access to education (as scholarships were then the only viable means of access to secondary schooling for bright but disadvantaged

children). It was noted that such extension of access to education had helped other western economies to improve. There was also the question of access to education as a civil and social right, but this was a secondary concern.

3.2.3 The Church and Competing Education Authorities

Another important player in the development of Irish education is the Catholic Church. Traditional socio-cultural legacies may be related to the fact that nearly sixty percent of secondary schools are academically-oriented and are run by religious groups. Of the remainder, approximately twenty-six percent are vocational and fourteen percent are community schools. It is within this context that parental choice has long since operated - in other words, a schooling market had existed in the Free State. That choice was expanded with the 1930 Vocational Education Act which was passed in response to the Commission on Technical and Apprenticeship's report in 1927. The outcome was the:

...promulgation of two Acts of the Oireachtas [Irish Parliament], the Vocational Education Act of 1930, which was to provide the framework for the subsequent successful developments in technical and technological education in Ireland, and the Apprenticeship Act, 1931 which, although it put apprenticeship on the statute books....was itself largely a failure. (Ryan, 2000, p.281).

There are one or two interesting points about the Vocational Act of 1930 that need to be mentioned. Firstly, responsibility for the promotion of vocational and technical education was given to thirty-eight statutory committees formed in local authority jurisdictions. These were accountable only to the Minister of Education and the

public. This posed a direct challenge to the Roman Catholic Church, who insisted that education should be its sole prerogative. Logan (2000) reports that:

When introducing the legislation for vocational education in 1930...the Roman Catholic Bishops, as holders of the most substantial interest in secondary education, asked to be reassured that the vocational school would not attempt to compete with the secondary school, the minister readily obliged (p. 244).

It was not until 1966 that these 'separate and distinct' curricular spheres between the vocational and technical sector, and the church-run academic sector were directly challenged. It was around this time that the Minister for Education, Patrick Hillary, stated unequivocally that it was the state's duty to 'provide for equality' which was equated with 'equal access and a central strategy for the achievement of that goal would be the full integration of the vocational school into a second-level system where a newly created comprehensive curriculum defined as a hybrid of the best elements from the traditional secondary and vocational school would be a central feature' (p.248). Hillary believed that the separation which existed, forcing students along one route or another was inherently unjust, and should have no place in an integrated second-level sector. The State's goal of a broader comprehensive curriculum was clearly articulated in the creation of comprehensive secondary schools between 1966 and 1973. However, though free secondary education came into being in 1967, secondary schools still retained their selective admissions policy. This had an indirect role in the composition, in terms of social profile, of the vocational school population. It was not until 1993 that the government banned selection at the point of entry, though many secondary schools had already abandoned it, due to increased demand for places, and also due to a broadening of the general curriculum.

The 'sea change' in Irish education noted by O'Sullivan (1999) is evident some forty years before the advent of overt market sentiments in the Irish 1992 Green Paper. During this time he claims that the decline of the theocratic paradigm has been ongoing: He believed that:

The current problems and concerns of the system can only be understood in relation to the nature of this cultural change, the social processes by which it has been achieved and the manner in which it has influenced other theories of what education is, what it is for and how its character is to be determined (p.20).

He illustrates this cultural change through the analysis of a succession of policy documents from the 1950s to the 1990s: from a dogmatic prescriptiveness to a populist, consumer-led approach. He compares the theocratic approach with the market approach by tabular juxtaposition, *citing* for example, the pedagogical relationship moving from paternalistic to contractual, the position of educators moving from situations of trust to those of accountability, and ownership from Christian to collective.

The implication for schools of this massive cultural shift are analysed in terms of the issues of equality, difference, virtue and control. They inform his conclusions on the future of society and schooling in Ireland:

The demise of the theocentric paradigm is destined to be confirmed in the educational planning of the future. Religion will remain a force in people's lives, and schools will continue to serve the wishes of those who desire to have their children educated within a specific religious ethos. But the collective cultural orientation on which Irish educational ideas will draw, be it in terms of the view of the human person, individual freedom, or personal virtue, will be derived less and less from a world view that places God and his intentions for the world and its people at its centre. The most serious contender to replace the theocentric paradigm in the recolonisation of the Irish conceptualisation of education is the market paradigm (pp.59-60).

Nonetheless, it would seem that progress along this road will proceed in a typically consensual political climate, as illustrated by the mediating effect of the national Convention of 1993 on the market related Green Paper of 1992 and the moderate tone of the Education (No. 2) Act of 1998.

3.2.4 Other Competing Partners in Education

O'Flaherty (1992), in his monograph on *Religious Control of Schooling in Ireland: Some Policy Issues in Review*, outlines five key factors which have facilitated unprecedented changes which led to the rise of market-related initiatives: i) the decline of religious vocations, ii) the emergence of teacher unions as a powerful interest group, iii) a huge increase in participation levels at all points in education, iv) the emergence of parental groups, and v) the growth of pluralism (p.64). Each of these elements will be dealt with separately.

i) The decline of religious vocations

With the decline in religious vocations, the churches' control over education began to diminish. This led religious orders to re-evaluate their future role in the provision of education. An OECD report on Irish Education, discussed by Walsh (1990b), pointed to the need for a local education authority to put 'some order on the rationalisation process'. Groeger (1991) argues that such attempts to introduce a structure 'were not successful' partly as a result of the falling number in [religious] vocations, but also because of demographic trends and the increasing demand for accountability, as well

as the need for rationalisation which made a re-think of educational provision ‘not only desirable but essential’ (p.8).

In response to these trends, the religious set up Boards of Management/Trustees to protect their interests. As religion has been integrated into the curriculum of both primary and post-primary levels since the 1970s, it has still continued to be influential, notably in the rise in participation rates which O’Flaherty believes is remarkable, especially at a time of decline in vocations to religious life (p.65). However, given the dominant role of the Catholic Church in the formation of schooling, and that Ireland is the only country in the English-speaking world which has a Catholic majority (O’Sullivan, 1996), the continued influence of the religious dimension is still significant.

ii) *The emergence of teacher unions as a powerful interest group*

From the 1960s, teacher unions became increasingly powerful and influential in policy formation and curricular intervention. They organised themselves to protect against the often conflicting interest of ‘religious’ managers and their state/government employers. In the Green Paper of 1992 and White Paper of 1995, their role as essential partners in education was recognised and was legislated for in 1998.

There are three main teacher unions in Ireland, the Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland (ASTI), the Teacher Union of Ireland (TUI) and the INTO – the Irish National Teachers’ Organisation. The majority of the ASTI and TUI members hail from the secondary sector. The majority of the ASTI members teach in the ‘private’ or religious schools, and the TUI members, in the vocational or community

schools, though neither are mutually exclusive. The INTO's members are predominantly primary school teachers. The INTO is particularly active researching educational issues, but mostly in relation to primary school issues. This study will focus on one group, the ASTI, and their activities. The researcher had an opportunity to attend a professional training day on being a teacher representative on the board of management of a secondary school which was of interest to this research.

iii) A huge increase in participation levels at all points in education

For its part, the Department of Education favoured larger school units which would have a wider range of options in terms of curriculum provision when faced with contraction. This in turn would attract 'more able students' who are 'essential to the survival of any school offering mainstream education' (Groeger, 1991, p.8). An ability to cope with the less able student is 'a double-edged weapon for a school desirous of a comprehensive intake in terms of ability and social mix' for as more students with problems go to such a school, 'parents, on seeing such children going to the school in larger numbers, may decide to send their children elsewhere...this dependency on public perceptions of the school has become increasingly important and has been described in terms of consumerism with the onus on schools to provide a parentally acceptable "product" ' (Groeger, p.8 *citing* Dennison, 1983). For reasons of provision, funding and composition of school comprehensive intakes, the Department of Education supported a rationalisation of the school system.

iv) The emergence of parental groups

The inalienable rights of parents, particularly in relation to education, are guaranteed by the Constitution of 1949. Article 42.1 states that parents have the right to: 'provide, according to their means, for the religious and moral, intellectual, physical and social education of their children' (Ireland, 1995, p.139). However, it was not until 1984 that the role of parents was officially acknowledged by the Minister for Education. Following this, parents formed the National Parents' Council which has two main branches: primary and post-primary. It was from this point that parental representation became widespread on School Boards of Management. The teacher unions, the far more powerful partner in education, generally favoured parental involvement in Education Boards, but both groups 'had to be content with a less than equal representation to religious nominees on Boards' (Groeger, 1991, p.66). However, following the 1992 Green Paper, parents were given greater status, as they were now perceived as 'consumers'. This put them on a par with Teacher Unions as stakeholders in the increasingly market-related secondary sector. The 1998 Education Act further strengthened this. Groeger (1991) also recognised the importance of parents in his case study school: 'parents wanted traditional values such as scholarship and discipline in the schools to which they would send their children' (p.142) and that there are 'other possible avenues open to schools but few are likely to meet with success unless the educational package is perceived by parents and employers to improve the quality of potential recruits'. (p.143).

v) *The growth of pluralism*

As Ireland is becoming increasingly secularised, attempts to accommodate this within the realm of education were evidenced in the National Convention. The National Convention followed the publication of the Green Paper. Consequently, a consensual approach was adopted towards the formation of educational policy in the subsequent White Paper and Education Act.

Other influences not mentioned by O'Flaherty are a result of a number of other factors: a) European social policy, which forced Ireland to liberalise both its laws and attitudes in respect of, for example, sexual issues (*i.e.* contraception, abortion, divorce, homosexuality), b) the ever increasing influence of the media, which act as a powerful mediator of, and contributor to, such public debates, and c) the declining influence of the church as a result of scandals. As a result, an erosion of traditional values became more evident in the face of pluralism.

The reform of post-primary public education in Ireland is the subject of a substantial doctoral thesis by A.J.C. Kelly (1996). Adopting mainly an empirical approach, he was researching in the context of demographic trends in the 1990s in Ireland, leading to the rationalisation of the second level sector, amalgamations and even closure. Kelly circulated the entire list of 792 post-primary schools, receiving 504 returns (64%). He found that more than 25% of Irish post-primary schools had fewer than 250 students, and therefore struggled to survive not only in respect of unit costs, but also owing to finding difficulties in covering the expanding and modernised curriculum which was mandatory. This was especially true with regard to the newer scientific and technological aspects; it led to acute management problems.

There was an increase in numbers staying on for post-leaving Certificate courses and vocational/technology programmes but, in 1996 at any rate, a lack of basic statistics about it. The Green Paper of 1992 referred to the need for 'devolved management', suggesting that Principals should act as 'Chief Executive Officers'. The introduction of such market-related discourse was not supported in the Report of the 1993 National Convention, published in 1994 .

Kelly traces the history of Irish post-secondary provision, beginning with the dissolution of the Board of Commissioners for Intermediate Education in 1923, and its replacement in 1924 by the Department of Education. He notes that the 1937 Constitution recognised the subsidiary role of the State, with schools retaining full autonomy in all matters of appointments and organisation, but does not say whether Vocational Schools established by the VECs from their inception in 1930 also enjoyed this degree of independence.

Massive expansion of enrolments in the 1960s prompted a Circular in 1966 in which: 'The Minister appealed to school authorities for greater cooperation, and expressed the belief that Comprehensive Schools would signpost the way to an integrated post-primary system' (p. 35). This foreshadowed the provision of 'Free Education' in 1967, prompting a 12% increase in post primary enrolment in one year. In fact in 1970, the concept of the 'Community School' was announced, and so there were then four types of post-primary school: Voluntary, Vocational, Comprehensive and Community. A common basic pay scale for teachers had emerged in 1968 from the Ryan Report.

The 1970 Vocational Education (Amendment) Act allowed the VECs to co-operate with other schools and in the same year the Department proposed that Community Schools be formed from the amalgamation of existing Vocational and

Secondary Schools, or from new foundations in the cities. Enrolment also increased from the raising of the minimum leaving age to 15 in 1972. During the 1970s many Vocational Schools changed their name to 'Community College', which is not the same as 'Community School'.

After some historical analysis, already alluded to in chapter two above, Kelly then goes on to outline the main reports and discussion documents with which he is concerned in his documentary research: the 1985 Green Paper; the 1990 IVEA Policy Document; the 1991 OECD Report; the 1991 CMRS Document and the 1992 Green Paper.

Key characteristics appear to be that: the 1985 Green Paper 'Partners in Education Serving Community Needs' suggested the division of the whole country into 13 Local Education Councils for post-primary education; the 1991 CMRS was looking to a 'genuine participative democracy' that would reduce the influence of vested interests; the 1990 IVEA policy document recommended the creation of an LEA for each County, dealing with both primary and post-primary provision; and the 1991 OECD Report criticised 'special interest groups that hampered reform and rationalisation (*e.g.* the Catholic Church, the VECs and the Teacher Unions). The OECD concluded that: 'The Department of Education was neither conditioned nor appropriately equipped to advise systematically on policy' (p.42).

As already noted, the Green Paper of 1992 was the most radical, and extremely critical of the standards of school management:

Whether a school has a board of management or not is a consequence of its historical lineage. All Comprehensive and Community Schools have them de jure, and by definition ... as a result of Ministerial directive, and Vocational Schools may have them by choice or by popular demand (p.44).

Among the stated aims of the Green Paper of 1992 were:

To make the best use of educational resources by radically devolving the administration, introducing the best management practice and strengthening policy making' and that 'only matters which cannot be administered effectively at the school level should be done elsewhere'

The hope was to allow the Department of Education to concentrate on policy rather than administration, by making the principals of schools into chief executives, with the support of powerful boards of management, and working to an 'annual school plan'. Kelly adopts the following spectrum of management styles for the principals: autocratic, delegatory, participative and collegial.

In a similar study, Groeger (1991) undertook a survey of principals and vice-principals examining the constraints faced by schools through a) lack of finance, b) increased numbers of teacher problems and, c) inadequate administrative assistance. He discusses the market-oriented activities within schools. These were more often a response to the demographic situation of contraction, than that of consumerist demand for places. He points out that:

A school which loses a number of students remains in the same building, with the same running costs and, therefore, ought to have special allowances made from the numeric loss. Unfortunately, this does not happen, and schools have become involved in a zero-sum game in which the winner takes all and the loser either closes or amalgamates (p.v - vi).

The case study school that he particularly focused on had clear aims which were well articulated and implemented by what Groeger refers to as 'a high level of organisation' as well as 'an efficient marketing strategy' which disseminated the

appropriate messages to the immediate community (p. vi). His study describes such strategies used by the school to enhance the school's enrolment, and ergo, finances.

As enrolment is a key managerial function within the second-level school, Groeger found that his case study school had well-developed programmes which effectively encouraged the majority of students in its catchment area to transfer from primary school to it. He claims that:

This strategy is but one of many which attempts to tie families and communities to the school. Links with local community groups, a Parents' Association, a Book Loan Scheme, effective use of class time, an efficient Public Relations Officer all contribute to the dissemination of a positive image of the school. Visitors to the school are greeted by an 'ambassadorial team' of students. A neat, orderly environment is constantly demanded of all within the school' (p.134).

Other strategies employed to counteract contraction were:

A greater dissemination of a positive school image through the use of Open Days, links with feeder schools and increased media coverage for the school. The idea that a school is a 'good school' because it is frequently mentioned in the media is fairly prevalent. Through judicious use of the media, school management can control to some extent the image of the school (p.135).

Although Groeger found that many schools have little interest in this aspect of management, the school recognised the importance of having an image. However, he stated that each school has an image; therefore schools must consider the desired nature of the image of the school and whether this image ought to be disseminated actively or passively. Groeger argues that 'many religious orders have found this approach traumatic as a fundamental conflict between the original aims of the order on the one hand, and the actual school ethos which has emerged over the years, on the other, has proved difficult to resolve' (p.135). He recommended formula funding as in

the UK, arguing that ‘a small school size factor allows an additional 8% to be included when calculating the formula for the school budget. If such a mechanism appears complex, it must be said that an amount of training is given to school Governors and Heads to enable them to carry out the calculations.

The widespread rejection of ‘competition’ in education is evidenced in the work of Emer Smyth *Do Schools Differ?* (1999), for example, surveyed over one hundred schools nationally, including a detailed case-study of six schools. In this work, she discusses the decision of the government *not* to publish ‘league tables’ as they would appear to be ‘redundant’ as a means of approaching school evaluation, claiming that ‘ranking schools in terms of their aggregate exam scores tells us little about the processes at work in a particular school or about how to enhance pupil outcomes within that context’ (p.226). This was the joint opinion of the ‘partners’ who came to consult at the National Convention on the possibility of a market approach to educational policy as suggested by the Green Paper of 1992. Smyth reflects on the fact that research from other countries (including Britain and the USA) was used to inform Irish policy formation. Hence, the Irish case provides an interesting juxtaposition to the other two countries in this study which applied market related reforms in education either through direct legislation or through directives to local authorities in respect of the vocational education sector. .

3.2.4 Economic Prosperity and Educational Change.

According to Walshe (1999) in his work on *A New Partnership in Education: From Consultation to Legislation in the Nineties*, ‘the final quarter of the twentieth century saw extraordinary changes in the Irish psyche and in Irish society’ (p.1). Walshe sets

out to trace the evolution of government policies, with particular reference to the 1990s, and to explain how they were influenced by personalities and politics as well as by a degree of consultation probably unique in developed countries. He examines such developments in a chronological and thematic manner. For example, there were successive agreements with the social partners in respect of preparing the ground of the economic success which came in the 1990s, much of which included investment in training and education. This included a substantial developmental programme in conjunction with the EU, which had a total expenditure of £1.5 billion between 1994 and 1999. Included in this package was the funding of many schemes enabling students to attend third level courses in Institutes of Technology, as well as partaking in training centres. Such funding also facilitated exchange programmes of staff and student between EU countries on programmes such as ‘Socrates’ and ‘Leonardo Da Vinci’, to enhance European integration.

3.2.5 Partnerships in Education in an Era of Change.

Such partnerships in education, and heavy investment in education are generally agreed to have paid off, for by the end of the 1990s 82-84% completed senior cycle programmes in second-level schooling. Proportionately, more young people went into further and higher education in Ireland than the UK although, as Walshe has pointed out, the proportion was still lower than in the USA (p.3)

Walshe argues that the Irish state’s strong interventionist role in education since the early 1960s in support of economic development finally began to pay dividends. Coolahan (1995) believes this is because ‘there has been little ideological conflict between the political parties regarding education’ and successive

governments continued to invest heavily in the system (p.453). This was partly to keep young people at school in times of recession (education's custodial function) and partly because of 'an innate belief that education would somehow contribute to economic growth' (Walshe, 1999, p.3). It appears to be the case that the highly skilled workforce available in Ireland as a result of such initiatives has been one of the attractions for foreign investors when planning to set up their industries in Ireland. This has since contributed to the 'Celtic Tiger' economy (O'Sullivan, 1999).

Breen, Hannan, Rottman and Whelan (1990) found that, in spite of the State being financially responsible for education, 'the capacity of the Irish State to carry through educational policy is restricted by the nature of the system' (p. 123). This is primarily as a result of the historical and cultural links that the Church has had with the education sector. Consequently, Breen *et al.* argue that it is precisely because of the state's *lack* of control over a system which the state funds, which gave rise to subsequent reforms in education, and not because of altruistic motives. Ironically, it was the OECD *Investment in Education* (1965) report, which led to 'a radical ideological departure in Irish educational thinking' in linking economic prosperity to educational achievements (Breen *et al.*, 1990, p.141). The uptake of the Free Education scheme was rapid. The state was prohibited from reorganising the structure and provision of education as such changes would 'clearly have diminished the control exercised by religious denominations over education: such proposals seemed to envisage the replacement of the largely denominational post-primary sector by a 'general system of state-schools which would be non-denominational' (Breen *et al.*, 1990, p.138). The state's attempts to do so failed miserably, as is evidenced in the fact that such state schools account for less than 5% of schools. And in fact, as was witnessed in this study, those that did become state schools (either vocational or

community) were denominational in character. Out of this, the partnership ideal arose. O'Sullivan argues that the decline of the religious in education was creating a lacuna to be filled by market-oriented values. However, O'Sullivan may be too pessimistic, as the Green Paper and subsequent National Convention demonstrated. O'Sullivan's lacuna appears to have been filled by a consensus among the education community of the undesirability of the market in education. Ironically, a market always existed in Ireland, with parental rights to choice enshrined in the constitution of 1949. However, the 1998 Education Act formally instituted the school board as the 'decision-makers' of education at the local level. Now, denominational schools had to set up Boards of Trustees who both protect denominational interests but also surrender power to other 'partners' in education, such as parents, teachers, their unions, and the business community, as well as to the state.

Kathleen Lynch, in her book *Equality in Education* (1999) argues about the inefficacy of such partnerships, especially for those disadvantaged by the system. She writes:

Without power-sharing between marginalised groups, policy-makers and professionals, colonisation of the marginalised is often the unforeseen by-product of policy action.....Their voices, if represented at all, are mediated by professionals and other service workers outside their control and mediated voices are not, by definition, organic voices. (p.306).

Lynch argues that the power-sharing ideal is being used to manipulate and silence oppressed minority groups into subservience. Lynch's fears may well be grounded, as can be seen by the writings of Harris. Harris (1989), a representative of the Department of Education, wrote an interesting chapter on 'The Policy-Making Role of the Department of Education'. In it, he writes that 'it is important that individuals or minority groups neither block change nor impose it by exerting pressure against a popular consensus' (p. 24). This appears to represent a utilitarian viewpoint, which, as

Lynch points out, endangers the views of minority groups by ostracising non-conformists. Although Coolahan and Hyland, in an open forum discussion at the annual *Educational Studies Association of Ireland* Conference (2000), defended the partnership ideal as ‘progressive’ and ‘forward-looking’, Lynch argued that in the current climate, it is expedient to do so. Her previous writing forwards her position:

To move beyond the liberal agenda, it is essential that the oppressed groups, which have been marginalised in educational decision-making, are brought into the policy-making process at all stages as equal partners with full and adequate rights of self-representation...partnership will only add to the oppression if those representing marginalised groups do not have the training, resources, time and skill to operate as equal partners in the negotiation or consultation process. (Lynch, 1999, p.306).

Liberal democracy does not imply the rule of the powerful or majority over minorities (Annan, 2001). Nevertheless, most Irish debates in education have revolved around the concept of inclusion and equality. Although such debates tend to occur at the national level, and local interests are represented through this partnership model, their efficacy is debatable. How policy is mediated in Ireland contrasts with that of England and also the USA, the latter of which this chapter will now examine.

3.3 USA

Following the macro-analysis of Chubb and Moe (1990) the issue of market related reform in respect of provision and operation of public schooling has been one of keen, even fierce debate as the question of standards in American schools remains high on the agenda. Chubb and Moe argue in *Politics, Markets and America's Schools* for the need for greater competition in education, to encourage greater school choice in education, and to provide guidelines for implementing such a system. This book was

published in response to the report *A Nation at Risk* (1983) which concluded that American society was being 'eroded' by the poor quality of education delivered which encouraged 'a rising tide of mediocrity', which was perceived as threatening to America's 'very future as a nation and a people'. As a result, a number of policies were implemented to counteract this perceived mediocrity.

Chubb and Moe (1997) criticised such initiatives on the basis that state control of the educational process was the main problem and any initiatives implemented by the state were thus destined to fail. They draw especially on the work of Coleman, Hoffer and Kilgore: *High School Achievement: Public, Catholic and Private Schools Compared* (1982), a huge quantitative study using an econometric modelling, which concluded that private schools achieved better results than public schools because on the whole these schools were better organised and run. Chubb and Moe conclude that effective schools are so because they are free from cumbersome external bureaucratic influence. Therefore, in their estimation, school autonomy is an essential element of school effectiveness. Finally, parents, or guardians, theoretically having the interest of the child at heart, are most likely to choose the best for their children.

3.3.1 Educational 'Failure' and Subsequent Reform.

Following *A Nation at Risk*, the subsequent debate on education, and the ensuing pressure to engage in reform, the Clinton administration expressed the sentiment that, although the Federal Government would like to influence educational policy and process, central direction was virtually impossible and that the power to do or to change things remained with the states themselves. Although this debate operates at

all levels, it is more widely publicised in national terms. This is also possibly as a result of cross-national comparisons of educational achievement which have raised considerable concern about public schooling in the USA (Postlethwaithe, 1999). One of the most vigorous defences of the record of public schooling in the USA can be found in Berliner and Biddle (1995) *The Manufactured Crisis*, the sub-title of which clearly illustrates their position 'Myths, Fraud and the Attack on America's Public schools'. Their research was conducted in order to examine what they suspected to be an organised campaign of misinformation about the performance of public schools. The strategy adopted by Berliner and Biddle was to identify what they regarded as key myths about the record of American schools and provide expert evidence from the documentary record to counter them. In explaining the reasons for, and timing of these myths, they echo the analysis of Aronowitz and Giroux (1986) in *Education Under Siege*, who say, in respect of the market approach:

Within this discourse there is no room for viewing schools as public places where students and others can learn and practice the skills for democratic participation necessary for a critical understanding of the wider political, social and cultural processes that structure American society (p. 212).

All in all, Berliner and Biddle believed that the claims made by *A Nation at Risk*, driven strongly by political agendas, are largely unsubstantiated, and that, on the contrary, American public education has, on the whole, improved. According to Holt (2000), in both the USA and the UK, 'politicians worked hard to establish the notion that education was in crisis; whether true or not, the result was a form of moral panic that allowed major political change to become a bipartisan reality' (p.213).

However, not all of the criticisms arrayed by Berliner and Biddle were directed at market related reforms. They also addressed the issue of vouchers and choice across

the spectrum of public, parochial and private schools. In addition to problems relating to the First Amendment to the Constitution of the USA - which supports the separation of church and state in public education - their main concern with such reforms is their potential for increasing already significant disparities. They claim that such reforms:

...will lead to greater inequalities in education and thus will thwart American's traditional commitment to 'common schools' and to equality of educational opportunity (p.179).

They do not, however, comment on the fact that a significant factor in the disparate patterns of schooling outcomes is the dependence on the locally generated tax income to support public schooling at the levels of the district and the state.

This issue of disparities, or 'savage inequalities', in relation to tax differentiation is highlighted by Kozol (1992). Schools in poorer districts have a more transient teacher work force, poor resources and school facilities. They suffer from truancy and high student dropout rates. For some Americans then, the notion of alternative modes of schooling looks attractive. However, very few examples exist of places where such alternatives modes of schooling actually work. The two main kinds of initiatives proposed are charter schools and vouchers. Charter schools:

...are established by educational entrepreneurs in consultation with local school districts, but are exempt from much of the regulatory burden imposed by the state on public schools (Brighthouse, 2000, p.21).

The benefits of the charter schools are that they are still publicly funded and therefore remain accountable to a public jurisdiction *i.e.* a state, a local municipality or a university which grants a charter to a community group to run a school. Such schools

must specify their curricula and they are accountable for their budgets. The schools themselves control their intake and usually, over-subscription is resolved by a lottery or another procedure agreeable to all concerned (Gardner, 2000)

There are other forms of choice mechanism within the public school system itself - these include Magnet schools which arose partly in response to integrationist court orders and inter-district transfer programmes which allow children to move from inner city areas to schools in the suburban area (Brighthouse, 2000). Brighthouse cites the example of East Harlem District No. 4 as a good example of how this programme operates; it involved 23 schools. These forms of choice are, according to Brighthouse, 'relatively uncontroversial' as they do not threaten traditional understandings of public schooling (p.21). What does tend to be controversial is the school voucher scheme.

School vouchers are described by Gardner (2000) as 'a means of distributing money so that individual families can select the school of their choice. Families receive a voucher from the state, municipal or a private fund which they can then use to "purchase" education for their children' (p. 45). The amount of the voucher is usually less than the district per capita amount. Sometimes, private schools require a 'top-up' fee in addition to the voucher. Mostly, vouchers are used in either independent or non-profit schools, and sometimes, denominational schools. Brighthouse describes three case studies where these programmes are in operation in both Cleveland and Milwaukee (see pp. 21-24). As indicated, there are various types of school choice and Brighthouse warns against using the terms 'school choice' interchangeably with 'educational vouchers'. The increase in school choice has been a result of a number of factors discussed below.

3.3.2 Change, Parental Involvement and Efficiency.

Goldring's (1997) comparative study between Israel and the USA indicates that market pressures have forced schools to become more effective and to increase parental involvement. Goldring states that, although schools enrol students from outside their catchment areas, there is evidence of selection at the point of entry. This is particularly related to social class. Thus, Goldring points out not only the dilemma of increasing choice and diversity but also the issue of diversity in terms of social class. The author argues that such market-related policies do not necessarily lead to better home-school liaison nor does it *necessarily* force parents to become more actively involved in their child's education.

As an example of arguments advocating market related school reform, that provided by Hill, Pierce and Gutterie (1997) in their book *Reinventing Public Education* will now be considered. Again, the subtitle is a clear indication of their position; 'How Contracting Can Transform America's Schools'. Their basic concern is with the effects of politically motivated and bureaucratically oriented trends in the provision and operation of American public schooling:

In our efforts to help public schools respond to the needs of an increasingly diverse population, we have made public education more rule-bound, rights-driven, and divided into specialities; we have removed decision-making from the school level and centralised it in District offices, courts and state Departments of Education (p.11).

In their discussion of options for reform, Hill *et al.* consider the following: contracting, vouchers, site-based management and charter schools. They favour the option of contracting where 'contract schools are market related public schools rather than schools that operate in a private market' (p.62). This ensures that decisions are

shared by the community, providers and consumers, and they claim that a system of contract schools would lead to a more equal allocation of resources than the present system, while still accommodating the need for diversity. Other authors who concur with this viewpoint include Chubb and Moe (1990); Rinehart and Lee (1991); Fliegel (1993); Armor and Peiser (1997).

3.3.3 Educational Reform, Political Agendas and Compliance

Tyack and Cuban (1995) argue in their book *Tinkering Toward Utopia* that educators often just pay lip-service to demands for reform to signify 'their alertness to the public will'; those that are openly resistant to reforms have been called 'laggards' (p.4). Tyack and Cuban argue that such educators' symbolic gesturing is merely a way of protecting their core practices and point out that 'change is not synonymous with progress': teachers 'tinker' with the system also to protect and preserve what is valuable about their core practices and to rework what is not (p.4). Tyack and Cuban pose a number of interesting research questions, including 'how have schools changed reforms, as opposed to reforms changing schools?'. This is clearly an issue of mediation, and of direct import to this research. Often reforms portray the past in a politicised, stylised way, 'as a golden age to be restored or a dismal legacy to be repudiated' (p.6). However, this is not a phenomenon unique to the USA. Hobson (1999) in his critique of *The National Wealth: Who Gets What in Britain* also reports on the so-called 'golden era' in education - one which he believes resides more in the minds and imaginations of people than in any reality that ever was. Tyack and Cuban

argue that such utopic visions of a golden era gone-by are a means of mediating a particular message in order to push a particular policy or viewpoint. They write:

...groups become mobilised to publicise problems, devise remedies and secure the adoption of policies by school boards and legislatures. Understanding actual implementation of reforms in schools, or lack of implementation, requires insight into the distinctive institutional character of schools (p.7).

This may be done either by welcoming or by deflecting reforms in many different ways. Tyack and Cuban (1995) believe that educational reforms are 'intrinsically political in origin', stemming from organised groups lobbying to have their values stamped on the school system. These groups shout louder than others, especially those who manage the economy and who have access to finance, the media and politicians. However, teachers and parents have a certain consensual model of what the 'real school' looks like; so, for instance, if children did not 'bring home their report cards, reform might be suspected' (p.9). By the same token, superintendents who want to maintain their positions 'needed to convince their school boards and policy *élites* that they were ready to adopt improvements' (p.10). According to Tyack and Cuban, two defining tenets of American education are firstly, that progress is the rule in American public education; and secondly, better schooling would guarantee a better society. Put together they mean that progress gives direction and coherence to reform. Tyack and Cuban are of the opinion that 'the ideologies of progress and regress in schooling are political constructs' (p.38). Furthermore, they argue that those who claim that education has been failing have not supported their claims with concrete evidence. What the authors do concede is that public education serves many purposes, only part of which has to do with academic competitiveness. In their words, 'good schools can play an important role in creating a just, prosperous and democratic society' (p.39).

3.3.4 The Business Community and Markets in Education

According to Tyack and Cuban (1995), the business community brought to education policies their 'technocratic solutions' (p.114). In their attempts to counter criticisms for failing education, politicians began to borrow from business discourse in order to give their work 'scientific legitimacy' as well as create 'managerial' positions, which fit the corporate mode. Politicians achieved this in a bid to please tax payers. The belief that schools could become consumer-driven and even profit-oriented (in relation to certain educational ventures such as the Edison project) prevailed. This viewpoint, originating in the 1960s and 1970s, argued that low achieving schools could be revolutionised through the adoption of the corporate model as this would at least assure accountability, transparency and efficiency in schools. Tyack and Cuban conclude that 'in a society prone to equating change with progress, it is not surprising that people who promise to reinvent schooling attract followers' (1995, p.132). They state that, 'discourse about public education schooling has become radically narrowed....it has largely neglected the type of choices most vital to civic welfare: collective choices about a common future, choices made through the democratic process about the values and knowledge that citizens want to pass on to the next generation' which, quoting Deborah Meier, 'is *essential* to healthy life in a democracy' (1995, p.132). Tyack and Cuban believe firmly that this must be channelled to maintain the 'trusteeship of the public good...all citizens must have a stake...and this is the main reason that Americans long ago created, and continually sought to reform public education' (p.142).

3.3.5 Further Research on Quasi-Markets in Education.

In a number of States in the USA, there is now a situation of extreme complexity created by the implementation of forms of school choice. In order to gain some kind of clear perspective on the situation, the Stuart Foundation contracted a research report, the final draft of which was made public in January, 1999. The title of the Report indicates the uncertainty about the outcomes of types of market related school reforms: *A Thousand Flowers Blossom in the Dark, The School Choice Movement and its Unknown Effects*. The first part of the draft report examines the context for school choice in the USA from both historical and contemporary perspectives. It criticises in turn the common school tradition, the progressive era associated with urbanisation and industrialisation and the school choice movement. The authors take five variants of school choice and proceed to review the evidence of each: magnet schools, open enrolment, charter schools, vouchers and tax-credits. Of particular interest to this researcher are the sections on open enrolment and charter schools in the state of Massachusetts, as well as Minnesota from which documentation has been obtained for comparative purposes. Minnesota was the first state in the USA to enact legislation permitting statewide open enrolment in 1988. By 1997, the number of states had risen to sixteen, since from the early 1990s different school options had become available, including Charter schools. The Stuart Foundation draft reported that 'by 1993, 14% of all Minnesota families were no longer attending their neighbourhood schools' (p.60). A number of mediating influences were noted, for example, the provision of transport for low-income students, regulations safeguarding a district's racial balance, and a rule that only state funds follow transferring students.

Of the five variants of school choice listed and discussed in the Stuart Foundation report, open enrolment is an umbrella term that may subsume the others, magnet schools have become part of the range of options available and tax-credits have not been developed to any significant degree. This leaves vouchers and charter schools as the two most influential innovations enhancing competition and choice in the public sector of schooling as discussed in chapter two.

Despite the proclamations of dissatisfaction with their local public schools, a Gallup poll in 1999 showed that 71% of Americans are satisfied with their local school (Rothstein, 2000). Ironically, these are the same people who are ‘unhappy’ with the American public school system (Kearns and Harvey, 2000). Nevertheless, dropout rates in some districts are as high as twenty-five percent, and employers report a lack of basic skills necessary for the workforce (Gardner, 2000).

The debate on failing schools initiated by the 1993 Report expressed concern for the rising tide of mediocrity in American education. The following decade, as aforementioned, gave considerable coverage to the topic and what could be done to improve it? Many solutions were offered, and diversity of schooling through open enrolment and choice appealed most to the American consumer. Again, the case study schools exemplified in Fuller’s *Inside Charter Schools* gives a more detailed analysis of the actual mechanics of founding charter schools.

By 1990, Armor and Peiser (1997) reported that nine states had enacted laws that effected greater choice within their education systems. The choice programme works as follows: assuming parents are the moral guardians of their children, the assumption is that they would want the best for their offspring. Therefore, parent would choose ‘good’ schools which they feel suit their child’s perceived needs. Once parents exercise choice, the schools have to engage in a market situation. As a

school's budget depends on its intake, as most funding is worked out through a formula in relation to enrolment numbers, being fully subscribed is an important criterion for surviving in the market-place. Hence, failing schools will be forced to close owing to falling rolls and not having the resources to continue and 'failing' teachers will be out of a job, as in the private sector. This 'natural selection' process will ensure that only good schools survive and 'bad' ones go bankrupt and close, akin to a failing business. The sentiments that drive this model of effectiveness are: 'the incentives and the dynamics of the market place must be brought to bear if we are to effect real change in our education system' and 'competition leads districts to reconsider the quality of their educational services and to make purposeful efforts to retain enrolments', the end result being that 'schools operating under the pressure of competition appear more apt to produce the kind of services that satisfy parents and children' (1997, p. x). Armor and Peiser, having conducted a survey in Massachusetts on the interdistrict choice programme, found that on the whole the programme was a success, and that it should continue subject to a number of recommendations to be considered. The recommendations advised the state to:

- conduct an 'awareness assessment' to assess interest in and awareness of the programme;
- consider funding transport to aid the movement of students, particularly disadvantaged students;
- advertise the seats available for inter-district transfers;
- instigate mandatory district participation in the choice programme;
- phase out reimbursements for tuition, and leave schools and districts to operate on market principles – with clear rewards for the winning districts.

Although the programme was used by less than 5% of the school-going cohort, nevertheless Armor and Peiser believe the choice programme was successful and should be supported further.

The case study schools exemplified in Fuller's (2000) *Inside Charter Schools* gives a detailed analysis of the actual mechanics of founding charter schools. Similarly, the more partisan research by Finn, Manno and Vanourek (1997) in *Charter Schools in Action: Renewing Public Education*, demonstrates that the Charter schools are also a success for those who attended them. Finn has been described as an 'unqualified enthusiast of the charter movement', and all his research shows that the charter schools offer students a better education where students are also, on the whole, happier. However, Finn *et al.* have also conceded that some schools have failed to perform, and subsequently, closed. Gardner (2000), in his critique of the 'Paroxysms of Choice' warns that American Charter schools are varied, and one must 'take account of the sources of dissatisfaction of particular citizens, the particular vision of the school, and the resources available' (p.46). In other words, Gardner is warning against a number of common phenomena in relation to the mediation and processes of change: the Hawthorne effect; the self-fulfilling prophecy; the novelty effect; and reflexivity.

Gardner is of the view that the USA's current educational plight 'cannot be attributed to the quality of schools or schoolteachers *per se* but rather to the lack of the appropriate kinds of social capital', and concludes that the American system is likely to go through 'paroxysms of excessive choice' before arriving at 'a saner system'. Ultimately, Gardner believes such school choices are good insofar as they remain on the fringes as choices and do not become the mainstream.

There is a call in the American system for more detailed research to be conducted into the success or otherwise of the effectiveness of the school choice movement programmes, and how these programmes are being mediated at the local level. Even Witte (1996), having conducted studies on the kinds of parents likely to exercise choice, cautions against claims being made about school choice effectiveness and confesses that 'little is known about the dynamics of educational choice systems' (p.174). Kane, (1996), in a critique of the research of both Witte (1996) and Hoxby (1996) research argues that while there are lessons to be learned from the successes of the school choice movement, worrying issues about the effects of those who are exercising choice are beginning to emerge. Nevertheless, Kane concedes that 'anyone willing to test the water' in terms of 'experimenting with various forms of choice' will inevitably help researchers to develop an evaluation of their success or otherwise.

Summary

To conclude this section, it appears from the literature review that in the English case, the 1988 Education Reform Act came almost as a surprise, and much of the literature since then has been looking at the effects of the reform. Broadly speaking, the literature has highlighted that school choice is being exercised especially since the publication of the performance league tables of schools. The literature has shown a greater polarisation on the basis of social class since the enactment of school choice. However, the Rotherham Judgement has also acted as a strong mediating factor in how this choice is actually exercised (see *Appendix A*). So, in fact, choice is limited. In Ireland, the vast majority of mediation of market-related policy in Ireland, occurred *before* its enactment, with the publication of the Green Paper. Because of the

dominant, *albeit* now declining, influence on education, the notion of partnership and consensus has been promoted in order to redistribute the balance of power. In terms of open enrolment, given that school choice has *de facto* always existed, the literature reveals that the school choice issue, conspicuous in its absence, is, if at all, a latent issue. The Irish literature also shows that such decisions are made at the school level, and that the autonomy of the school, in this regard, is accepted. The USA literature, similar to the English case although for different reasons, shows that school choice is a real issue. Most of the USA literature focuses around the debate on both charter schools and school vouchers. In the American case, where choice is exercised, it tends to give rise to polarisation of groups in terms of ethnicity, which is often related to social class. The strong mediators of school choice appear to be the community demand for open enrolment, in conjunction with the superintendent. It also appears that pressure from the Federal level has forced States to introduce legislation to increase school choice in an effort to raise education standards. Hard evidence that standards have been raised as a result of school choice is not yet available in any concrete form. Preliminary studies have shown that there are quite a few 'success stories' (Stanford, 1999; Fuller, 2000; Hoxby, 1996), which as Gardner (2000) warns, must be treated with caution. However, as for mediation, although the state level has implemented legislation, districts still retain their traditional power to opt out of the choice programme. The school district is obviously the focus of the study and a strong mediator of state policy.

CHAPTER 4: DESIGN, STRATEGY AND METHOD

With the purpose of the thesis established, a conceptual framework constructed, the historical and global context reviewed and the contemporary research literature critiqued, it is now time to turn to the primary research conducted in the field so as to be able to address the research questions.

4.1 Questions and Approaches

The methodology employed for the execution of this research is a threefold approach: documentary, empirical and comparative. The approach taken in this study is qualitative in nature. A comparative approach will be used in the analysis of the data gathered so as to enrich the outcome of the multiple case studies. This is hoped to maximise the potential for understanding the problem in question, *i.e.* the mediation of policy as outlined by the research questions. As the research questions are a key concern. They are repeated here:

- How do the **factors** identified affect the mediation of market-related policies for the provision of public secondary schooling at the local level, if at all?
- How do the key **stakeholders** identified affect the mediation of market-related policies for the provision of public secondary schooling at the local level, if at all?

- What **theoretical insights** on the mediation of market-related policies on the provision of public secondary schooling can be generated by a cross-national comparative analysis of multiple-case studies, if any?

It is important first to identify assumptions made within these questions, so as to highlight potential problems with the validity and reliability of the research (Wolcott, 1994). Identifying potential weaknesses goes some way to reducing any inherent bias that might otherwise threaten the credibility of the research.

4.1.1 Assumptions and Potential Weaknesses

The First Research Question

The main assumption made within the first research question is that there are certain factors involved in the mediation of policy for the provision of public secondary schooling in England, Ireland and the USA, such as religious, political, economic. A number of factors have been identified as a result of both the documentary analysis and the research literature review (*see* Chapters 2 and 3). The literature review demonstrated some factors contributing directly to the mediation of policy, and others indirectly. Although certain factors were included, others had to be eliminated (such as administrative, philosophical, legal, financial). Selecting factors was essential, and those omitted from the analysis were excluded partly because of the *well-nigh* impossibility of assessing the entire range of factors and their combinations and permutations in a comparative analysis. Factors were included because of their

frequency in the research literature, or their particular relevance to the location in question.

The identification of *key* factors was deemed to be important to the focus of this study. These were assessed, through the preliminary and pilot visits, by the strength of their contribution to the issue of mediation. The factors that remain in the conceptual framework were those deemed to be most pertinent in the mediation of open enrolment policy.

The Second Research Question

The main assumption underlying the second research question is: *that there are stakeholders in the mediation of enrolment policy at the local level*. It is assumed that the policies cannot be carried out without the influence of ‘actors’, whether passive or active. Hence, the term ‘mediation’ lies at the heart of this research. Which actors are instrumental in the mediation of policy? The response to this question leads to the next assumption - that there are *key* stakeholders.

The fact that people are identified as ‘key’ stakeholders assumes the exclusion or reduction of the influence of others. ‘Key’ stakeholders were identified from the literature review and the documentary research, which, together with the preliminary and pilot studies, assisted in the process of selection. From this, the researcher deduced who was involved. The reasons for the choice of respondents are further discussed below. Suffice it to say at this point that the selection of some respondents automatically precludes the inclusion of others. This means that the researcher did not get to interview *all* of those involved in the mediation of policy at the local level, but rather a selected cross-section. So, while the group is, in general, representative of the

locales in question, it is not entirely representative of *all* stakeholders involved in the mediation of policy, owing again to the scope and resources of the study. However, a representative cross-section was interviewed, and one which gives an insight into the operations of policy at the local level.

The Third Research Question

The third research question, by its existence, and through the execution of a comparative analysis, is in a sense a 'leading question', though it is asserted in the literature quoted that such an approach would be profitable in generating or enhancing theory. So, this is not so much a weakness as an informed speculation that must be tested.

4.1.2 Hypotheses

The researcher used hypotheses to guide the research. Although as is explained in the section on 'qualitative research', the nature of this approach does not necessarily require hypotheses, the researcher found that they are useful to give direction to the research enquiry. Verma and Beard (1981) define a hypothesis as 'a tentative proposition which is subject to verification through subsequent investigation. It may also be seen as a guide to the researcher in that it depicts and describes the method to be followed in studying the problem' (p.184). They add: 'in many cases the hypotheses are hunches that the researcher has about the existence of relationships between variables' (p.184). Therefore, hypotheses are used as aids or signposts towards guiding the analysis of data.

The researcher's hypotheses changed in their nature and form as the study progressed. Hypotheses were therefore not accepted or rejected, but rather developed and modified as the analysis continued. This process served to structure the research (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982). The hypotheses developed in this research were:

- That the **factors** identified affect the mediation of market-related policies for the provision of public secondary schooling at the local level, either positively or, negatively or neither way. (Each factor will be identified accordingly.)
- That the key **stakeholders** identified affect the mediation of market-related policies at the local level both positively and negatively or not at all. (Each key stakeholder will be identified accordingly.)
- That the adoption of a cross-national comparative multi-case study approach would yield additional insights into the mediation of market-related reforms in all three countries and locations selected.

A hypothesis is also generated within the comparative analysis in Chapter 8 as part of the sequence of Bereday's method, as described below and employed later.

Hypotheses act as a 'useful bridge between the research question and the design of the enquiry' (Robson, 1993, p.28). This is because within qualitative research, the hypothesis often comes *after* the data collection. In the interpretative approach taken here, the data collection and analysis are not rigidly separated. Similarly, initial theory formation takes place before, during and after the analysis of

the data, and it is constantly checked as the process continues, right to the end (p.19). This strategy is adopted here.

4.2 Qualitative Research

This research has its philosophical underpinnings in the qualitative research tradition. Qualitative research is a form of inquiry that explores phenomena in their natural settings. Often qualitative research uses multi-methods to gain a thorough understanding of context. This is a particular kind of enquiry that needs to be explained in detail before proceeding.

4.2.1 The Nature of Qualitative Research and its Philosophical Underpinnings

The division between the two research paradigms, qualitative and quantitative, has a long history and is well documented in the literature (Boulton and Hammersley, 1996; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). Qualitative research is often referred to as 'naturalistic research' which, as mentioned above, claims that human behaviour can best be understood by exploring it in its natural setting (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The latter paradigm, quantitative, often occurs in a more 'controlled' setting (such as psychological or scientific experiments) and is also referred to as the 'positivistic' paradigm (Hacking, 1990). This is one of the main distinguishing factors between qualitative and quantitative research and consequently, one of the main reasons why the research chose the qualitative approach. The reason for the division between the

two paradigms is because they are grounded in different epistemologies (Cassell and Symon, 1994). However, one may say that qualitative research emphasises inductive analysis, description and perception in the natural setting, and that it is mainly concerned with measurement and manipulation of variables as characterised by the experimental method of a quantitative paradigm (Creswell, 1994). The purpose of qualitative research, therefore, is to focus on understanding the people under study. This is an appropriate paradigm to use when understanding how actors at the local level mediate a policy. This involves direct contextualised interaction, rather than an experimental situation. Qualitative research has been defined in the literature as a means of examining people's 'words and actions in narrative or descriptive ways more closely representing the situation as experienced by the participants' which exactly fits the design of this research (Cassell and Symon, 1994, p.2). Before proceeding to the design and structure of the research, the philosophical epistemology, which forms the rationale for such an approach, will now be examined.

Philosophical Underpinning of the Research

The philosophical underpinnings of this research draw on the naturalistic paradigm, particularly Lincoln and Guba's notion of human behaviour (1985). The 'rival' philosophical approach, *i.e.* the positivistic paradigm, derived originally from the scientific method, is often referred to as the 'dominant' paradigm (Hacking, 1990). The dominant paradigm derives from a positivist movement which gained momentum in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, owing partly to the success of the natural sciences in testing phenomena through the use of the 'scientific method'. This approach utilises the *logico-deductive method* in order to comprehend phenomena

where the assumption behind such a paradigm is that 'there is an objective truth existing where the focus is on measuring relationships between variables systematically and statistically' (Cassell and Symon, 1994, p.2).

While the positivistic approach focuses primarily on prediction, control and explanation (Stromberg, 1986), the qualitative, or what is often referred to as the 'alternate' paradigm, focuses on understanding the meaning of events, actions and contextualised interactions between people within particular contexts (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). This is because the 'alternate' paradigm grew out of the *hermeneutic* tradition. This epistemology rejected the 'methodological monism' of positivism as the 'sole and supreme ideal for a rational understanding of reality' (Wright, 1993, p.11). Anti-positivists instead wanted a *Geisteswissenschaft* (moral science) based on understanding and *Einfühlung* (empathy) (Wright, 1993). As a result, qualitative techniques develop from phenomenological and interpretative frameworks where there is an acknowledgement that 'there is no clear-cut objectivity or reality' (Cassell and Symon, 1994, p.2). Consequently, the qualitative research approach takes 'an inductive form of inquiry' as its method (Anderson and Arsenault, 1998, p.119).

Although some, such as Lincoln and Guba (1985), argue that the use of both these qualitative and quantitative approaches is incommensurable on philosophical grounds others, such as Yin (1994) argue that there is 'strong and essential common ground between the two' (p.15). For example, the case study is a qualitative form of inquiry that relies on multiple sources of information, possibly including those of a quantitative nature (p.121).

4.3 Research Design

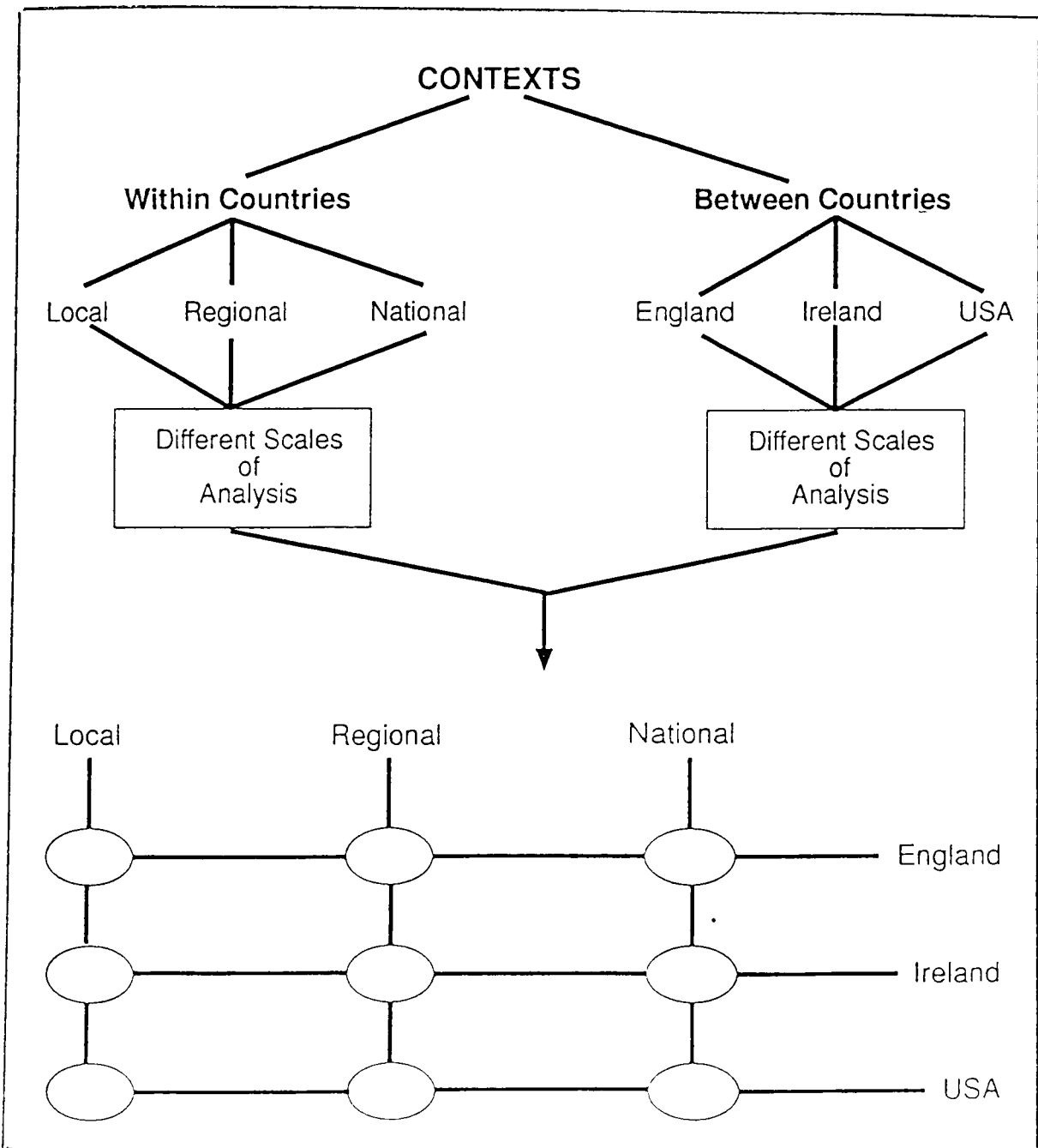
A research design is concerned with ‘turning research questions into projects’ (Robson, 1993, p.38). Yin (1994) defines a research design as ‘an action plan for getting from here to there, where “here” may be defined as the initial set of questions to be answered, and “there” is some set of conclusions (answers) to these questions’ (p. 19). As a prime intention of this empirical research is to understand the mediation of policy at the local level, the researcher decided to take a case study approach as context is a vital part of the case study design.

4.3.1 The Issue of Context

In this research, a multilevel analysis (Bray and Murray Thomas, 1995) is appropriate as it will accommodate the multiple contexts within the comparative framework that, in itself, has a number of dimensions and scales. *Figure 8* illustrates the contexts of the comparison.

The first part of the diagram illustrates that this research deals with two types of context – the context *within countries* and the context *between countries*. The research examines the within country context from the different scales of analysis, that is, locally, regionally and nationally. The between country context compares the contexts at these scales of analysis cross-nationally, and this also includes the international dimension.

Figure 8: Contexts for Comparison



Rosarii Griffin

The second part of this diagram shows how the different levels may be compared between countries. The points of intersection are the points of comparison. The main unit of analysis is therefore the intersection of all three scales at the local level: the focus of the study or the milieu.

This model allows for the issue in question to be compared at different levels within countries. It begins at formulation and legislation of policy on the provision of public secondary schooling, and proceeds until implementation of that policy at local level. The mediation of that policy is observed and analysed at different scales of reference. The model provides a pathway to the juxtaposition stage in Bereday's (1964) sequence of steps of comparative analysis and informs the construction of the conceptual framework (*Fig. 2*) for the multiple cross-national comparison of case studies.

4.3.2 The Case Study Approach

The case study is here defined as 'an in-depth multi-faceted investigation, using qualitative research methods of a single social phenomenon' where the case study is either the examination of 'a single instance of a phenomenon under investigation' or 'an instance of a broader phenomenon, as part of a larger set of parallel instances' (Feagin, Orum and Sjoberg, 1991, p.2). Or, as Stenhouse (1978a) puts it, 'the case study is an approach to understanding a situation in its totality' (p.24). The case study is an appropriate research tool for the purposes of this study. Feagin *et al.* (1991) outline several fundamental lessons that can be conveyed by the case study:

- ‘It [the case study] permits the grounding of observations and concepts about social action and social structures in natural settings studied at close hand’ *i.e. it allows the study of people in natural settings.*
- ‘It provides information from a number of sources and over a period of time, thus permitting a more holistic study of complex social networks and of complexes of social action and social meanings’ *i.e. it allows the holistic study of complex actions and their related meanings.*
- ‘It can furnish the dimensions of time and history to the study of social life, thereby enabling the investigator to examine continuity and change in lifeworld patterns’ *i.e. it allows a sense of time and history.*
- ‘It encourages and facilitates, in practice, theoretical innovation and generalisation’ *i.e. it allows for the generation of theory (p.6)*

(Phrases in *italics* are present author’s summaries).

All of the above facets of case-study research are in accord with the conceptual framework already described. Although a case study may employ both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection procedures, it is more common that qualitative methods are the main tool employed for the purpose of achieving greater ‘depth and detail’ (p.3). Again, this largely depends on the research questions, their assumptions, and the research method most appropriate to its construction.

The value of the case study approach in comparative education has long been advocated (Stenhouse, 1979). However, despite its special qualities, its potential has still not been maximised (Crossley and Vulliamy, 1984). This is true particularly when applied at the local level, as it is able to focus on 'the complexities of educational practices' which in turn can lead to 'important modifications to both educational policies and comparative theories of educational systems' (p.204).

4.3.3 Multiple Case Studies

The purpose of multiple case studies is similar to that of individual case studies: they seek to investigate a common phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. This kind of case study involves many more 'variables of interest' than data points, which means that the researcher must rely on multiple sources of evidence, and this information needs to converge at the point of interest, *i.e.* the research questions (Yin, 1994, p.11). This kind of research benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions (or hypotheses) to guide both the data collection and the data analysis. Multiple case studies therefore involve a detailed observation of the natural world.

According to Yin (1989), conducting multiple case studies is similar to conducting multiple experiments. The purpose in the case of this research project is to replicate a similar study in different locations so as to be able to provide enough evidence to arrive at an *analytical generalisation* at the end of the study, and possibly to contribute to theory. Naturally, the more cases under study, the better one can assess the *validity* and *reliability* and *replicability* of such 'theory' (these terms are

treated further on). The value of multiple case studies is that, by virtue of the number of in-depth analyses of locales, they help to explain in some detail the following:

- 'causal links in real life interventions that are too complex for the survey or experimental strategies.
- an intervention and the real life context in which it occurred.
- certain topics within an evaluative form, in a descriptive mode.
- situations in which intervention has no clear, single set of outcomes' (Yin, 1994, p.14).

Yin (1994) comments that the comparative case study is a distinctive form of multiple case study, one which performs all of the above functions, but within the context of a cross-national comparative approach. Miles and Huberman (1984), recommend using matrices to document the data and analyses of the multiple case study. Bereday (1964) also recommends the use of matrices. He suggests this should be applied to document points of interest.

4.3.4 Qualitative Survey

The tools for empirical research chosen include a survey: a qualitative semi-structured interview schedule. The semi-structured interview is ideal for exploring issues and for gaining an in-depth understanding of a situation. While Kvale (1996) believes the purpose of the interview is to 'understand the world from the subjects' point of view' (p.1). Browne and McIntyre (1993) believe it is to 'get at...professional knowledge and thought...knowledge which is not generally made explicit' (p.19). The overriding

purpose is to gain an in-depth understanding of the perceptions of those interviewed, who, in this study, are the main stakeholders involved in the mediation of market-related policies of secondary school provision. According to Browne and McIntyre, there is a strong correlation between what people think and do, where the former has a profound effect on the latter. Although this may seem a truism, Gage has shown that the 'allegation of obviousness may now be countered with the research result that people tend to regard even contradictory results as obvious' (Gage, 1993, p.237). Similarly, Cooper and McIntyre (1996) believe that such perspectives, which seem 'obvious in retrospect', have 'transformed the face of educational research' (p.3).

4.3.5 Documentary Research

The documentary component was necessarily employed first for a number of reasons:

- to explore key secondary sources that would contextualise the research
- to conduct a literature review of related research
- to gather data from primary sources at the local level.

Consequently, some of this dimension of the research informs the 'purpose and definition' part of this thesis, while other aspects inform the literature review.

Documentary research is, in both its primary and its secondary forms, an indirect mode of data collection, as the researcher is not involved in observing, interviewing or surveying. For the most part, it is an unobtrusive measure of data collection, which may be conducted in libraries, archives, offices, and suchlike institutions of public administration. Caution must be exercised in the analysis of such

documents depending on how their content has been derived and for what purpose (Barzun and Graff, 1977). As such, one is mindful of claims made by Carr (1999), who in a lecture argued that ‘educational research is always partisan’ containing ‘ideological commitments’ which is ‘explicit in educational theories’ and ‘implicit in their methodologies’. The researcher came across documentation ‘patroned’ by organisations with explicit ‘special interests’, such as the Pioneer Institute in Boston, USA (a right wing think-tank), the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) in London, England (a right-wing think-tank), and the ASTI in Ireland (a Teacher Union body). Such literature has already been referred to in chapter 3.

One of the key issues is in the selection and evaluation of the most appropriate and reliable sources of documentary evidence to inform the topic of interest (Robson, 1993). The process of selection is explained below. A list of the categories of documentation examined is provided in *Figure 9*. It is not exhaustive, but rather is a categorised list of educational documents consulted in relation to the mediation of market-oriented policies on secondary level schooling. The documentation collected may come from any of the four scales represented in the ‘conceptual framework’: international, national, regional and local.

4.4 Comparative Methodology

This is primarily a comparative study which allows ‘ethnocentric assumptions to be identified and challenged by the existence of alternative and equally deep-rooted practices’ (Broadfoot and Osborne, 1991, p.71). In other words, exposing them to comparative analysis will enhance the understanding of the mediation of market-related policies to secondary schooling in a particular milieu.

Figure 9: Main Sources for Documentary Research⁹

- ***International Level***

- Commission and survey reports by International Bodies such as the OECD 1994 Report
- Influential Philosophical Treatises
- International Journals

- ***National Level***

- Government Education Acts; Constitution and legislation covering education and related issues, and relevant preparatory documents such as White Papers
- National documents of interest – such as Departmental Reports or Circulars.
- National journals, periodicals and related magazines
- National newspaper articles
- Reports of other significant bodies (*e.g.* by key stakeholders such as church bodies or significant factor reports such as demographic or socio-economic reports of direct interest)

- ***Regional Level***

- Regional documents (similar to those described above in relation to Education Committees and Boards, major stakeholders and information on relevant ‘factors’)
- Regional policies of related interest groups (annual reports, interim reports, evaluation reports, *etc.*)
- Regional Boards’ annual inspection reports, *etc.*
- Regional books or publications of interest
- Regional newspaper articles

- ***Local Level***

- Internal school policy documents, regulations and reports
- Governing board Regulations and reports
- General school inspection reports
- Local political documentation, such as school districts in the USA
- Local key stakeholders annual reports, such as church documents on schools.
- Newspaper articles

⁹ See Appendices for documents relating to open enrolment policy in respect of all three countries.

4.4.1 The Value of a Comparative Approach

The main purpose of comparative education is, according to Bereday (1964), ‘to see schools of other countries not only as they appear in their own national context but in terms of other systems’, as well as to ‘appraise educational issues from a global rather than an ethnocentric perspective’ (p.6). O’Sullivan (1992) refers to this as taking a ‘cultural stranger’ approach by adopting an artificial sense of strangeness or positive alienation for the purpose of illuminating the ‘hidden ... features of daily life that otherwise remain part of the unexposed cultural fabric’ (p.445). This has the benefit of challenging our ‘relation of intimacy with modes of life and thought which remain opaque ... because they are too familiar’ (Bourdieu, 1988, p.xi).

Bereday, in recognising the eclectic nature of comparative education in terms of its reliance on other disciplines, particularly that of political geography, observes that ‘educational facts are deeply enmeshed in a matrix of other social circumstances’ (*cited in* Jones, 1971, p.85). Ultimately, he sees comparative education as having a ‘most challenging intellectual content of its own’, which prompted him to formulate a comprehensive comparative methodology to be used in cross-national situations. This model comprises four main stages of analysis: description, interpretation, juxtaposition and simultaneous comparison. Bereday’s approach has been selected for this study because its philosophical underpinnings are conducive to the researcher’s methodological and analytical frame of reference, which is inductive and, therefore, anti-positivistic. A more detailed discussion is provided in *Section 4.4.4.* below.

Given the identification in the conceptual framework of this study of eight main influencing factors on the local level mediation of international discourse and national or regional policy (cultural, historical, geographical, demographic, political,

religious, social and economic), one may build on the factor approach of Hans (1949) and Bereday (1964) in the light of Broadfoot's (1977) recognition that 'the comparative study of education is not a discipline, it is a context. It allows for the interaction of perspectives arising out of a number of social science disciplines' (p.xi).

The qualitative paradigm, adopted by the researcher, does not rely on explanation or predicted outcomes from the research. Instead, qualitative research takes an interpretative approach by focussing on the meaning of the data. This is in accord with Bereday's approach. Bereday, by taking a factor approach, illustrates through his comparative method, how this may be applied. The researcher has taken this 'factor' approach, and has expanded on its development for the purposes of gaining an in-depth analysis of the data collected. In all, Bereday's method seemed to be the most logical choice, both philosophically and empirically (see *Section 4.4.4*).

4.4.2 The Issue of Scale

The macro, normally national, level at which much comparative education is conducted often yields 'incomplete and unbalanced perspectives on educational studies', as it fails to consider 'salient differences among states' districts, schools, classrooms and individuals' (Bray and Murray Thomas, 1995, p.472). Katz (1987) has pointed towards the lack of research at the local level; and he demonstrates, through taking a case study example of Beverly, North Massachusetts, how aggregated statistics can misrepresent local phenomena. Similarly, in an OECD (1995) report on the implementation of market-related educational policies in sixteen countries, the results showed an 'unpredictability of outcomes' of similar policies implemented in

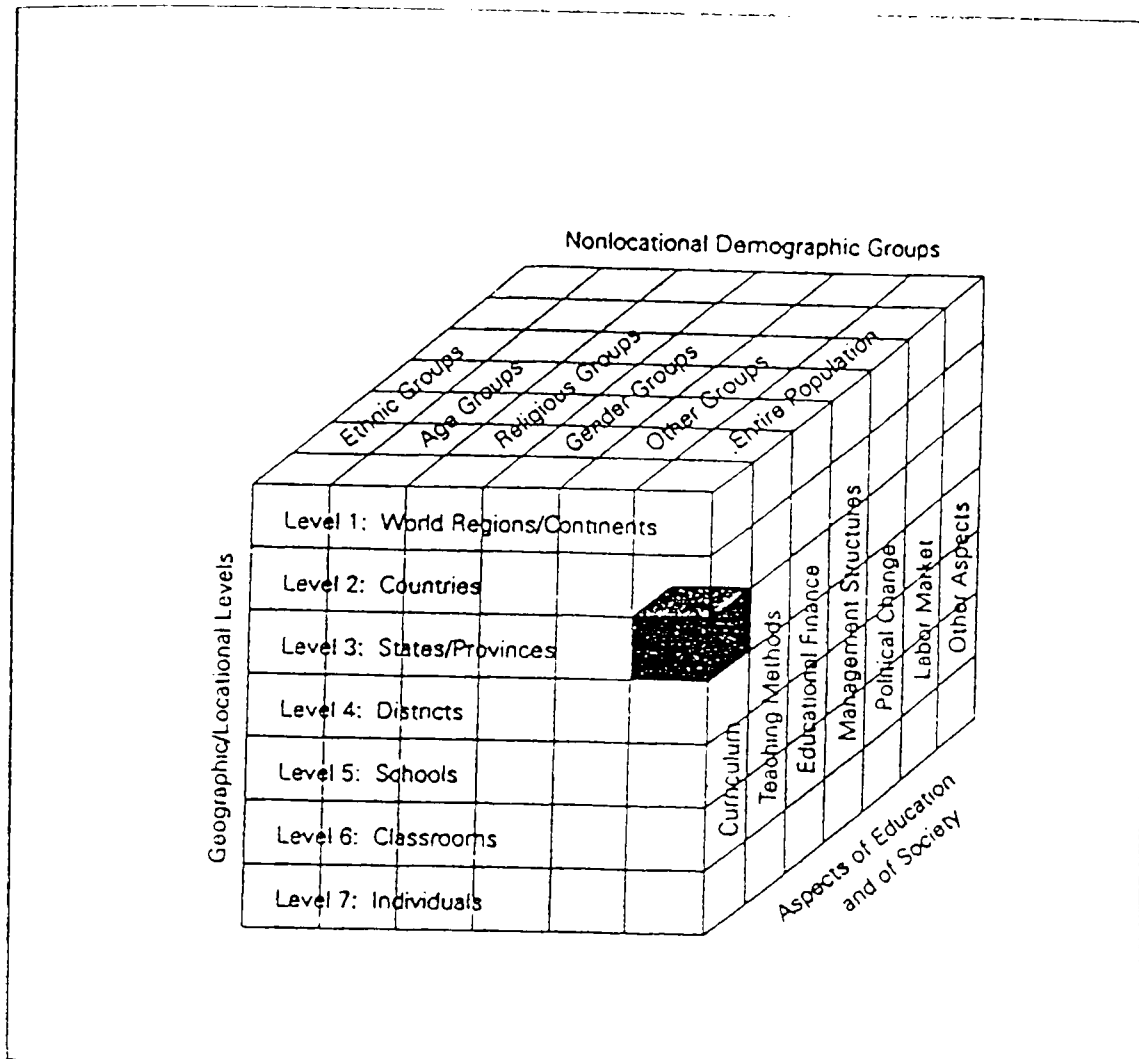
different contexts. This highlights that the particular context has important ramifications for the mediation of such policies.

How to compare the implementation of particular policies of different countries at different levels is a matter of scale. Bray and Murray Thomas (see *Fig. 1*) propose a multilevel analysis as a more comprehensive comparative model of research which can 'integrate insights gleaned from single-level approaches' (p.472). They offer a three-dimensional approach to classification of comparative data (see *Fig. 10*). The first dimension is geographical/locational including: world regions/continents, countries, states/provinces, districts, schools, classrooms and, finally, individuals. The second dimension represents non-locational demographic groupings including ethnicity, age, gender, religion, as well as an entire population. The third dimension embraces aspects of education and society such as finance, management structures, political change, teaching methods and labour markets. Although this model is comprehensive, it does neglect one important level of geographical scale of enquiry: the 'locality', the neglect of which is also highlighted by Bowe, Ball and Gold (1992, p.35).

Bowe *et al.* (1992) refer to three aspects in particular: the historical construction of locality and community which situates schools in relation to certain groups; the socially constructed limits of the 'market'; and the practical and physical constraints imposed by barriers to movement, *i.e.* local infrastructure. These three elements have helped to inform the conceptual framework in this research, by indicating the layers (national, regional, local); stakeholders (community, parents); and factors (socio-economic, religious) which need investigation (see *Fig.2*).

Figure 10: The Bray and Murray Framework for Comparative Education

Analysis



Source: Bray, M. and Murray, Thomas R. (1995) 'Levels of Comparison in Educational Studies: Different Insights from Different Literatures and the Value of a Multi-level Analysis, *Harvard Educational Review*, Vol. 65, No. 3, p. 474.

4.4.3 Comparative Multiple Case Study Approach

Building on the discussion of multiple case studies in section 4.3.3 above, this research takes a case study approach which, according to Stenhouse (1982), gives us a 'grounded representation of day-to-day educational reality, resting on the careful study of particular cases' (p.10). The case study has been defined as 'a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence' (Robson, 1993, p.146). The 'contemporary phenomenon' in this instance refers to the market-oriented policies, while 'the case' in question is the local context (Yin, 1994). The unit of analysis, therefore, is the local milieu or locale in which these policies are mediated, where the locale is defined as 'the setting' or 'the resource for social action' (Taylor *et al.*, 1997, p13). However, as this research is ultimately a comparative study, it undertakes a comparative multiple-case study approach.

The multiple case study is a distinctive form of case study as it involves looking at a similar phenomenon in different sites. The advantages of using a multiple case study design are that the outcomes are sometimes perceived to be more robust and the evidence more compelling than in a single case study design (Yin, 1994; Bassey, 1999). Multiple case studies follow a 'replication' logic which is analogous to that used in multiple experiments (Wolcott, 1990). Broadfoot and Osborne (1991) show that the adoption of a comparative multiple case study approach 'provides an ideal "laboratory" since it allows ethnocentric assumptions to be identified and challenged by the existence of alternative and equally deep-rooted practices' in different locations and contexts' (p.71). They believe that this approach 'can play a

vital role in comparative education in examining the hiatus...that may exist between the policies and practice of schooling' (p.74).

All four scales of observation from international to local are operated here within and between the case study localities. All four scales are useful in terms of their contribution to the understanding of the impact of market-related approaches at the 'grassroots'. Empirical methods are complimented by a documentary analysis of both policy documents and official records. The use of a variety of sources of data within a multiple case study approach not only enriches comparison but, according to Le Compte and Goetz (1982), also enhances reliability and internal validity.

As indicated above, the three case-studies have been carefully selected so as to provide comparable contexts. The three cities will be referred to by pseudonyms: *Engsite*, *Iresite* and *Usasite*. While they were comparable in terms of attributes such as population structure, size and provincial city functions, some issues which were not so comparable, such as ethnicity or religious orientation, could not be 'matched', since these patterns were distinctive to the locations in question. This may have a bearing on the operation and mediation of policy, and may also affect the degree of relative impact of each factor in each location.

4.4.4 Bereday's Comparative Methodology.

Bereday's approach provides a useful model for organising and structuring the data from the field. His method is valuable on a number of counts, not least because it is an intellectual exercise with very practical applications. For Bereday, the prime purpose of the comparative approach is to understand ourselves better in the light of the experience of others, and his method is illustrated graphically in *Figure 11*.

Comparative educational studies are often divided into two categories: *area studies* and *comparative studies*. Bereday makes the following distinction between the two. He argues the former to be merely descriptive (adjective-like) whereas the latter does something with the data (verb-like). The former, *area studies*, are necessary in order to have a more thorough understanding of the education systems and contexts under study. In order to achieve this, one needs to record one's impressions, both instinctive and visual, and collect sufficient amounts of data so as to have a 'rounded' picture of the context within which one is researching. As far as this research is concerned, *area studies* are represented partly through contemporary documentary study, as discussed in chapters 2 and 3, but also from the researcher's prior living and researching experience in all three countries under study¹⁰. Meanwhile, *comparative studies* imply juxtaposition of the data collected. The primary aim in conducting this juxtaposition is to see if comparisons are actually feasible.

The notion of *area studies*, or context studies, may be further divided into the categories of *description* and *interpretation*. The former involves an in-depth reading and understanding of the documentary evidence collected. Items such as the minutes of meetings; government reports; other official reports, for example, OfSTED Reports; newspaper articles, and other such auxiliary information. Gathering such data involves school visits, visits to local authorities, and time spent within the general environment, all of which should be organised and worked out in advance. Bereday recommends that such information be described in many different ways, both in narrative form and visually in the form of diagrams, graphs and models.

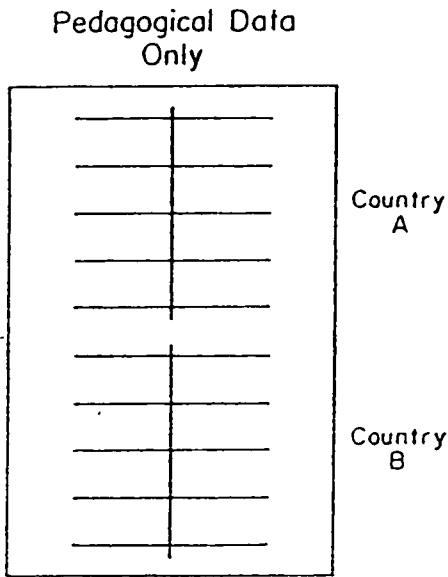
¹⁰ Including two separate Masters' studies in both Ireland and England, as well as similar level research in the USA when employed by the Department of Education, NUI, Cork.

Interpretation, by contrast, consists of ‘subjecting the pedagogical data to scrutiny in terms of other social sciences’ (p.19). In other words, one should view the data through the lens of other relevant disciplines. This is attempted here by isolating a number of factors by which to view the data collected, factors such as: social and economic; geographic and demographic; historical and cultural; religious and political (see chapter 1). This interdisciplinary approach, Bereday argues, broadens the scope of comparative education, and does not give the false impression that education somehow operates *in vacuo*. In other words, the data collected will be scrutinised, among other things, for their social relevance. This is important for interpreting the data, as well as for describing them. The conceptual framework in chapter 1 will be used to order the data in terms of the data’s historic, cultural, geographic and demographic relevance as well as from economic, political, religious and social perspectives. Overlap is inevitable, but it is clear that certain factors are more influential than others. This is the first indicator of how policy is mediated and which factors, or combination of factors, are more immediate in affecting the mediation of the policies under consideration in respect of the three countries and locations concerned.

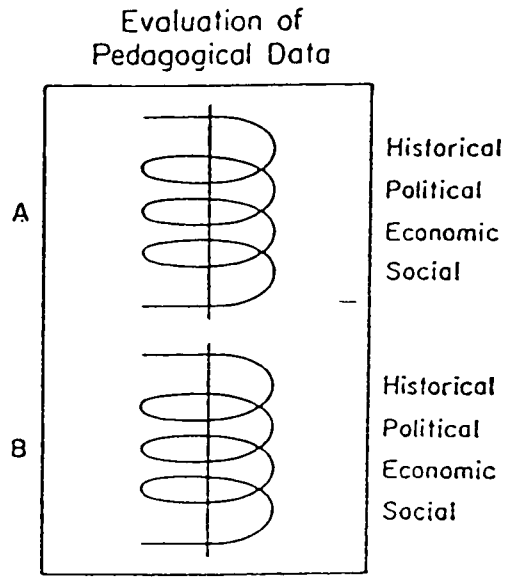
The *first stage of comparison* is therefore to match the data from different sources (cases, sites, locations, countries) to prepare for the process of comparing. However, this in itself is not a real comparative approach until one can determine a ‘unifying concept’. From this, one may, however, devise a working hypothesis or a ‘defining statement’ in relation to which the data will be compared.

Figure 11: Bereday's Comparative Methodology

I. DESCRIPTION

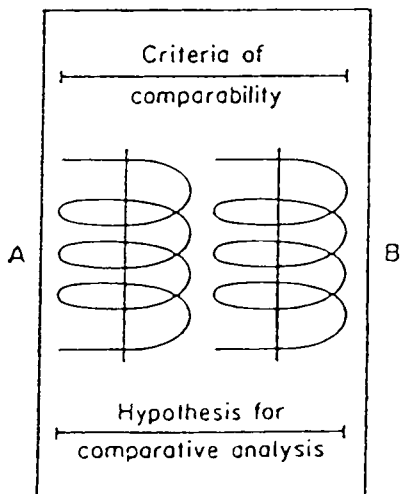


II. INTERPRETATION



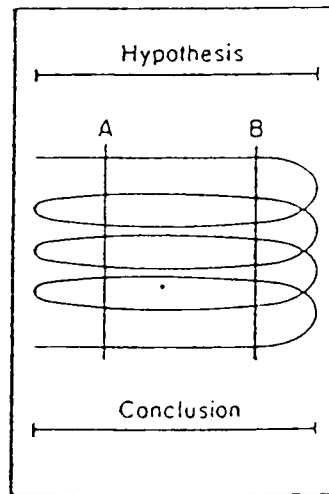
III. JUXTAPOSITION

Establishing Similarities
and Differences



IV. COMPARISON

Simultaneous
Comparison



Source: Bereday, G. (1964) *Comparative Method in Education* London: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc. (p. 28).

Following this stage, once the data has been grouped under suitable themes or categories, Bereday suggests compiling a matrix in which to view this information. The columns and rows therein are set up side by side so as to view the same data in relation to other locations. This is represented visually in *Figure 8* where a framework for the data is laid out both within countries, and then between countries, both at the different scales of analysis. Bereday favours the textual listing of material when comparing countries, thereby highlighting the ‘dynamic’ details of change and enabling reforms to be better identified. Once this is achieved, and the terms are firmly established, one may then proceed to the process of simultaneous comparison. The researcher has made use of the idea of matrices in chapters 8 and 9 below in respect of the comparative analysis and conclusions (*Figures 18 and 20*).

Simultaneous comparison is also divided into two hierarchical categories: *balanced* and *illustrative*. The first of these refers to comparing in relation to the different scales of analysis, *i.e.* the *same* or *equivalent* information displayed in terms of international, national, regional and local levels.

In practice the researcher followed an adaptation of Bereday’s model which extends in its execution over chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8 and is illustrated in *Figure 17* below. In detailed preparation for these analyses, the information gathered was summarised at each of the scales of analysis into synopsis-like statements, or paragraphs. This tends to be a time-consuming and difficult task, especially when aspects of one system do not correlate with an equivalency in another country. At this point, appendices may be attached to explain distinctions between or within the systems of education. Bereday warns against the danger of forcing equivalences when none exists. At this point, one must make the decision to move towards an illustrative comparison, which Bereday refers to as an ‘inferior’ model (p.65). The reason for this

is that illustrative models cannot arrive at generalisations. However, the illustrative model will be useful, as some aspects of the education system in the USA are not directly comparable with the systems of England or Ireland, and *vice versa*. Nonetheless, one is not attempting to generalise in this instance, but rather to illuminate, and hence the 'inferior' model proves useful at this stage.

Within the *balanced comparative method*, Bereday makes a further two-stage distinction. The first is called the *problem approach*, which leads on to the *total analysis* approach. The *problem approach* is intended for beginner researchers in comparative methodology. This involves the selection of a theme, and the examination of its recurrence and variance in different educational settings. Bereday uses the example of the relationship between church and state to illustrate one such issue which varies in different locations. He uses a bi-polar approach to illustrate this relationship at extreme points. Other cases are filled in along the spectrum of differentiation. This approach is one way of formulating a typology of educational reforms.

The second stage deals with the formulation of a typology which may become a particularly distinctive and original contribution of the research. This leads to an understanding of the 'complex interrelationship between school and society in an international perspective' (Alexiadou, 1994, p.10) The *total analysis* phase builds on the initial stage, the problem-approach. This is utilised in chapter 8 and 9 of this research.

Bereday's approach provides a complex and sophisticated model for this total analysis approach as described above, but can be summarised as:

- I. **Description**: including the systematic collection of data from each system under examination.
- II. **Interpretation**: the analysis of such data in terms of the social sciences.
- III. **Juxtaposition**: a simultaneous review of the information in order to determine the framework within which to compare them, and
- IV. **Comparison**: the selection of the problem, followed by the ‘total relevance’ of education in the different countries.

Although Bereday’s method is a good working model, it is the belief of this researcher that there is a gap between stages 3 and 4 of his comparative methodology. Certainly there is no clear direction as to, for example, how the data ought to be analysed, or how hypotheses ought to be formulated, which examines and cross examines one’s own subjective propositions. For this reason, and for the purpose of ensuring validity and reliability, the researcher has also employed the ‘Constant Comparative Approach’, which will aid the analysis from stage 3 to stage 4 of Bereday’s comparative methodology. (The constant comparative method is explained in detail in *Section 4.7* as part of the data analysis procedures.)

In the case of this research, the constant comparative approach will be loosely applied, as it is used in conjunction with Bereday’s method and not independently. So, while the constant comparative method will aid both the analysis of the responses from the stakeholders as well as the documentary evidence, Bereday’s method will aid in the presentation of the data. The conceptual framework will serve as a template for the ‘juxtaposition’ part of Bereday’s method in the final analysis. It is hoped that this combined approach will also aid the development of theory. *Figure 12* explains the analysis procedure diagrammatically.

4.5 Empirical Data Gathering and Analysis

The empirical strategy chosen is that of a 'survey', which here refers to a semi-structured interview and which falls under the category of qualitative research. The qualitative survey was used because of its capability to explore in detail and to gain an understanding of a situation and the context in which people operate (Creswell, 1994).

4.5.1 Interview Questionnaire Design

The stakeholder interview schedule *sequence* was given special attention. It began with straightforward factual questions, leading into more in-depth ones (Oppenheim, 1993). There were fifteen questions in total, divided into six sections: four dealing with each of the related factors and the remaining two sections dealing with factual or personal information with regard to the respondent. For example, the first two questions were introductory to put the respondent at ease. The last two questions were personal, allowing the respondents to elaborate on their own role in relation to enrolment. This also gave respondents the option to add their own comments. The researcher had by this time established sufficient trust with the respondents to help reduce 'systematic responsive bias' where respondents give the answer which they think the interviewer wishes to hear, thus gaining 'social approval' (Oppenheim, 1993; Rubin and Rubin, 1995; Creswell, 1994). Therefore, the ordering of questions and the general structure of the instrument were deemed important. Questions used were 'open-ended'. The chief advantage in using this type of question is 'the freedom it gives to the respondent...unencumbered by a prepared set of replies' (Oppenheim, 1993, p.112). Attempts were made to eliminate bias from the questions. This involved

the removal of such weaknesses as: implicit assumptions within the question, leading questions, and ambiguous terminology (Oppenheim, 1993). According to Boulton and Hammersley (1996), the mere fact that questions are asked at all is 'likely to have influenced the answers given' (p.283). Measures taken to control these influences are discussed in the 'validity' section below.

All of the open-ended questions pertained to the stakeholders' special interests and their perception of *other* stakeholders' interests in the mediation of policy. The factors identified in the conceptual framework were also included, and how these factors were perceived to influence the stakeholders' perception of policy mediation.

4.5.1 The Semi-Structured Interview Questions

The following were the questions asked in the interview. Each question relates to a factor in the conceptual framework. The questions were ordered as follows:

Q1: If I had a son or daughter, what procedures would I follow in order to enrol my child into your secondary school?

The first question related to the policy (enrolment) under investigation and how it is mediated at whatever level of administration the respondent represented, for example, a state politician represents the national level, but also the local level. These questions 'set the scene' in focusing on enrolment policy under the regulations of the 1993 Education Reform Act in Massachusetts, the 1988 Education Act in England and Ireland's 1998 Education (No. 2) Act.

Q2: What is prioritised in the enrolment procedure?

The second question related to the prioritisation of criteria in relation to enrolment. So, if open enrolment were operative, what restrictions, criteria or selection were implemented, if any, at the point of entry into a secondary school. If there were particular criteria, who decided what they would be, who mediated the power, and where did the power lie to decide what the policy should be?

Q3: Do you perceive that the population structure or ethnicity of this area has any bearing on the implementation and take-up of enrolment policy?

The third question related to 'population structure' including ethnicity, occupational structure and age structure, so as to gain a clear idea of what kind of milieu the school was located in. Answers to such a question gave an insight into the socio-economic background of the school's milieu.

Q4: In your opinion, to what extent does the location and distribution of schools affect the implementation and take-up of open enrolment policy?

The fourth question aimed at the geographic factor, to assess how it was influential in terms of how the enrolment policy was mediated. This question looked at the location of the school in question, and the distribution of schools in relation to this school, to influence the 'choice' factor, if any.

Q5: Do you see social class as affecting enrolment in schools in this area, and if so, how?

The fifth question relates specifically to social class. This question wishes to ascertain in more detail whether or not in the view of the respondent social class was an outstanding feature affecting the mediation of open enrolment policy.

Q6: Do you perceive the business classes to have any effect on enrolment in schools in this area, and if so, how?

The sixth question tries to isolate an aspect of the economic factor – in this instance, the influence of the business community on school policy. The extent to which local community businesses get involved in school affairs was of interest here.

Q7: At what political level do you think that the main influence is on enrolment policy? Is it at the national, regional or local level?

The eighth question aimed to establish the extent to which the political factor in mediation of policy was influential. The question aimed at estimating the perceived extent of its efficacy, power and influence on politicians. Question eight focused more closely on the local political level, which is the crux of the research topic. Again, the issue here was, to what extent were local politicians influential.

Q8: What do you perceive to be the role of local politics, if any, in how school policy is implemented in relation to enrolment?

Again, this question links directly to the role of local politicians as well as to the influence or otherwise of the political factor, as in question 8. The respondents were asked about their perceptions of its influence.

Q9: What is the relationship between funding and enrolment? How does it operate, and who controls the budget?

This question is linked to the 'economic factor' in the conceptual framework. To what extent does this factor affect the mediation of a policy, such as the enrolment policy? This is more related to financial gains and losses of the enrolment policy and how it affects the stakeholders' perceptions of how policy is mediated.

Q10: In your view, to what extent does competition for students between schools in this area affect enrolment?

The tenth question focused on 'competition'. To what extent has the competition element, engendered in the relevant education reform Act, affected the mediation of a school's enrolment policy? This again depends on the local milieu and relates directly to question four.

Q11: In your view, to what extent do religious bodies affect the implementation of enrolment policy, if at all?

This pertains directly to the influence of the religious groups in education, and also takes into account their perceived importance in the mediation of policy, particularly

at the 'grass-roots' level. This question deals with the 'religious' factor in the conceptual framework, and relates tangentially to the parochial system in the case of the USA.

Q.12: In your opinion, to what extent does local culture affect the mediation of policy, if at all?

This question touches on the 'local culture' and 'local milieu' which are unique to particular locations. This question asked the respondents for their perceptions of anything that is particular to that location. This allowed the respondents to comment explicitly on cultural or local peculiarities that may influence the implementation of enrolment policy.

Q13: In your view, are there historical, residual or local patterns that affect the implementation of enrolment policy, either positively or negatively?

This question links into the previous question, relating culture to history. This question hopes to identify and isolate particular patterns, for example, in respect of industry, commerce, urban growth and local attitudes. This question was particularly interested in attitudes towards education and in particular, the schools' enrolment policy. In this way, the researcher hopes to get the respondents' perceptions on the extent of the effect of historical and residual patterns in this particular area.

Q14. What is your role in the implementation of enrolment policy in this school/area?

This question usually leads to an explanation of the respondent's own role, and the 'interest' group he or she represented in the school or area, if any. This linked into one or other of the factors above – economic, for the business representative, religious, or political or educational. This also gave the respondents the opportunity to comment on their perceptions of their role in relation to the policy in question.

Q15: Is there anything more you would like to add to this interview?

At this point, the respondent was given a chance to reflect on the answers given, clarify other points they had made, or expand on points they had not thought through the first time. This also gave the respondent the opportunity to add new or other interesting or relevant material to the topic in question. The researcher had the same opportunity to revisit questions that needed further clarification or that raised other issues relevant to the topic at hand. In any case, this unstructured question at the end elicited relevant information. Although this was more difficult to categorise, it served to illuminate significant discussion and data.

4.5.2 Stakeholders (Respondents)

The 'stakeholders' primarily represented interest groups on the board of management of their school, including those from teacher/staff, religious groups, business people, political actors, principals (or vice-principals) and parents. Outside informants were also consulted, including: local regional and/or national politicians, district superintendents and officials from the respective state, regional or local education departments, for example, Chairs of Education Committees in LEAs.

Interview Process

The majority of interviews were conducted in the workplace of the respondent. The interviews took on average forty-five minutes, depending on the detail in the answers, and also on the researchers' probing. The researcher was conscious of the kinds of bias that could contaminate the data. A brief preamble preceded the interview to give the respondents the chance to ask questions as well as relax. Similarly, following the interview, the researcher allowed time for the respondent to bring up any issues or questions they wished to elaborate or comment on. The researcher, mindful of literature on the 'psychology' of interviewing (Robson, 1993), interpreted to an extent the comfort levels of the respondents, which seemed to correlate with their willingness to impart information. Approximately sixty interviews were conducted in all, twenty per country, and on average six to seven per school case-site.

Interviewees' Perceptions

It is important to note that the data derived from the semi-structured interviews were based on the respondents' perceptions. Perceptions are, by their very nature, subjective. Therefore, the aim here is to portray as accurately as possible the dominant perception amongst stakeholders as to the influence of various factors on their school's enrolment policy and practice. In the pre-pilot stage, over ten people were tested on the semi-structured interview. It was found that a number of questions yielded significantly different responses; therefore the wording had to be changed, sometimes simplified, or clarified. The research instrument was further refined during the pilot phase, where over twenty people were interviewed.

4.6 Data Analysis Procedures

4.6.1 The Dual Process of the Qualitative Design and Analysis in Action

The process of analysing qualitative data involves primarily 'examining people's words and actions' which, in essence, means that 'qualitative research findings are inductively derived from the data' (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p. 121). The data analysis is an ongoing research activity which allows the *research design* to emerge over time. For example, the research conducted in this study initially was going to take place in Vermont where such educational reforms were now enacted, but having consulted a leading visiting American academic who specialises in the area, the researcher was persuaded that Massachusetts would be a better state to examine, as it was more comparable in many respects, but especially in terms of its reform legislation. At the time, pre-pilot work had already been conducted in another US state. However, this proved useful in informing the researcher as to the background issues and concerns widespread in the USA at the time.

The concerns mentioned ranged from: whether home schooling is a better option; whether charter schools are taking from mainstream public schools; whether parental choice is only fuelling the 'white-flight' syndrome to middle class suburban districts; whether racial segregation will creep back in, and whether the existence of charter schools means public money will now be used to fund denominational schools; all of these issues emerged in the pre-pilot, pilot and main phases of the study.

At this stage, the researcher became aware of *epoche* where 'epoche' is a process that the researcher engages in to remove, or at least become aware of,

'prejudices, viewpoints, or assumptions regarding the phenomenon under investigation' (Katz, 1987, p.36 cited in Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p.123). The researcher dealt with this by recording all her assumptions prior to analysing the research.

Maykut and Morehouse (1994) citing Katz (1987) believe that the setting aside of one's assumptions is crucial in phenomenological research in order to be able to assess the data without prejudgement or imposing meaning too soon. The researcher has to be both an 'insider' (aware of one's thought processes), and an 'outsider', in order to attempt to judge the material as objectively as possible. Wax (1971) believes that it is only by achieving this that one can 'assume a mental position peripheral to both, a position from which they will be able to perceive and, hopefully, describe the relationships, systems, and patterns of which an inextricably involved insider is not likely to be consciously aware' (p. 3). Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to this dichotomy between the insider, outsider (or subjective/objective perspectives) as 'perspectival', and the road to greater objectivity can be shortened by subjecting qualitative research to rigorous and disciplined analysis.

The inductive approach adopted for this study means that the data collected relates to a focus of enquiry, and hypotheses are not developed *a priori*. Therefore, there are no predetermined categories for the data. These emerge from the data through the process of inductive analysis. Inductive reasoning is concerned with moving from the particular to the general. It is important to note that inductive logic is not so much concerned with valid inferences, but rather which inferences are probable given the evidence and the data on which those inferences are made. The constant comparative method will be used here to conduct an inductive analysis of qualitative data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Analysing data has been likened to walking through a maze; with many routes available depending on the approach one takes. However, analysing data is more comparable to ‘chaos theory’ in physics, which is actually a very highly organised and sophisticated way of understanding phenomena, and therefore the label ‘chaos theory’ as in physics, is a misnomer. This researcher would rather liken the analysis of data to that of ‘organising chaos’. Data analysis is said to consist of four main elements: interpretation; coding and organising; application of counteracting theories; and the testing of alternative explanations using a ‘knock out’ method (Anderson and Arsenault, 1998).

There are two main approaches to data analysis: *analytical* and *thematic*. The former takes the literature and theoretical background and uses them as an organisational framework, while the latter organises the data into descriptive themes. It is also possible to use both these approaches, by organising the analysis (Phase I) according to emergent themes (Phase II), and then extending the analysis to ‘examine the findings in consideration of existing literature and theory’ (Phase III) (Bereday, 1964, p.158). This is the approach that will be taken in this research. Bereday’s approach, as described above, will be used as the macro analytical tool with which to compare and analyse the data. The conceptual framework as illustrated in chapter 1 will be used to organise the data, while Glaser and Strauss’s (1967) ‘constant comparative method’ will be applied when analysing the data.

4.6.2 Preparation for Data Analysis

This section describes the general procedures undertaken prior to and during the analysis of data. The researcher went through three main phases when preparing for

the analysis of the interviews. The documentary evidence gathered was also subjected to a similar process of analysis and will be described later in this chapter. The preparation for the analysis of the interviews may be described as follows:

Listening to the taped interviews: initial familiarisation.

Initial familiarisation involved listening to the tapes and noting points of interest which occurred during the interview process. This process was repeated some time later, before transcribing, in order to hear the interview 'afresh'.

Transcribing the interviews: thorough familiarisation.

The transcribing of the interviews was a long and demanding process. The time varied depending on the quality of the taped interview; the speed at which the interviewee spoke; the background noise; the accent of the individual; the clarity of the interviewee's voice; and the volume at which it was recorded. However, this process allowed the researcher to become thoroughly acquainted with the data.

Highlighting points of interest: preliminary stage in the identification of themes.

Highlighting points of interest is theoretically the preliminary stage of analysing the interview transcripts. This process was achieved by firstly italicising words stressed by the interviewees themselves, and secondly, other points of interest noted by the researcher were highlighted in bold.

The preliminary focus was on the 'sub-sample' of the data, *i.e.* the data which looked most promising or the most convenient to categorise and which was relevant to the research focus (Boulton and Hammersley, 1996, p.290). They pointed out that 'with a small amount of data, it is often difficult to go beyond the description of a few key themes. A larger amount of data may allow greater development of understanding of the perspectives and behaviour of the people being studied, especially in terms of looking for relationships among categories' (p.290).

The data was then coded into categories which showed where the data had come from. So, for example, the second page of an interview with the Principal of an English school would be coded as {PP (Eng1) p.2}. This procedure was carried out for all respondents, schools and locations to aid the constant comparative method. Thus, when one collates the answers of different responses to the same question, one can readily identify where each response came from by referring to the above coding system. The second stage to analysing the data is to 'unitise the data'.

Once the data has been prepared, and the kinds of documentary evidence outlined above collected, then one may adopt Bereday's Comparative Methodology for the main analysis.

4.6.3 Unitising the Data.

At the beginning of every transcript, documentary evidence and field-notes were unitised. The phrase 'unitising the data' was first coined by Lincoln and Guba (1985). This step involves identifying chunks or 'units of meaning' in the data (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). This process is one of culling the data for meaning from the words and actions of the participants in the study. This is framed by the researcher's own

focus of enquiry and is achieved by 'first identifying the smaller units of meaning in the data, which will later serve as the basis for defining larger categories' (p.128). Each unit of meaning must be understandable, independent of explanations, and although smaller units of meaning are used initially to explain the main unit of meaning, the main unit must be able to stand alone (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

To arrive at 'units of meaning' the researcher must first read all the transcripts, documentation and field notes thoroughly. Each unit is labelled according to its origin, *i.e.* as in our example above, PP (En1) p.2. Cutting and pasting together the answers to questions achieved the unitising of the data. So, for example, three main folders were used. The first folder represented everyone's answer to a particular question from one particular school. The second folder consisted of every answer to that question from all three locations from that country, and finally, the third folder consisted of everyone's answer to that particular question from all three countries, and three locations therein. From this stage, boxes were drawn around the main unit of meaning in each response to that particular question.

The next stage is to isolate one word that conveys the essence of what was being said. These are then stored in a separate file with the appropriate references attached, so as to be easily referred to as necessary. This is done so that every piece of information is unitised. Units of meaning may vary from a word, to a sentence, to a paragraph, depending on both the informant and the point being made or expounded upon. Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend that alongside each unit of meaning a clear account of the respondent's background be noted, or in the case of documentary evidence, the source of the report and how it was commissioned, if at all, so as to assess the information in the most meaningful light. This would include auxiliary

information such as the gender of the respondent and any other personal details which may affect the nature of the response.

4.7 The Constant Comparative Method

The *constant comparative method* has four main stages of analysis: inductive category coding; refinement of categories; exploration of relationships and patterns across categories; integration of data and writing up the research (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994).

4.7.1 Inductive Category Coding

This involves drawing diagrams of the researcher's progress. This is what Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to as an 'audit trail' which traces the researcher's thought development throughout the entire research process. At this point, the researcher has a list of recurring themes or concepts already marked out which are useful to guide her in preliminary analysis of the data. Some ideas overlap, and these were combined. The first stage then is to select one theme or concept which recurs and this forms the first provisional category code. However, as these are derived from one's initial contact with the data, these must be provisional categories that may be changed or modified subject to further rigorous scrutiny.

In the second stage of this phase, the researcher reviews her unitised data files to see if there is any overlap between the categories of unitised meaning and the list of provisional categories as formulated above. Then, 'like are put with like', or the evidence for such categories is 'cut and pasted' under this category. For example,

'business involvement in school enrolment' may be one such category. In this lies both evidence from all three sources: documentary, field-notes, and the interview transcripts.

Often the provisional categories (from the researcher's initial impressions) may differ from those already formulated from the unitised meaning section. If so, then these categories are added, and the data scoured for further evidence that relates, either positively or negatively, to the category in question. This process is continued for all categories that have arisen in some form or other, until all the units of meaning are categorised and all the provisional categories are used or merged. Categories can be renamed, as provisional labels given may prove insufficiently comprehensive or specific as the case may be.

Another difficulty at this point may be the fact that data often falls under two categories. At this stage, it is advised to place them initially under both categories. Secondly, extraneous pieces of information may fit under certain categories, for example, unrecorded but noted pieces of conversation, or articles from a magazine that is not directly related. These may initially be added under categories for further consideration later. Finally, some pieces of data may fall outside any immediate category but appear nonetheless to be important. These are placed on 'temporary hold' under the category of 'miscellaneous'. Expanding the number of categories is necessary in order to reconstruct the data in a more meaningful way. At this point, the researcher accumulated numerous categories, and so moved on to the next stage: refinement of categories.

4.7.2 Refinement of Categories

This stage involves writing rules for inclusion which help to narrow the scope of inclusion of categories. Lincoln and Guba (1985) believe that this can be done by means of writing propositional statements. Propositional statements are statements of fact, grounded in the data from which they emerge (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984). This statement contains the essential meaning of the category. This is the first stage in understanding the phenomenon under research, and the first step towards one's outcomes (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). So, for example, while the category might be called 'Formulation of School Policy', the propositional statement might look like: 'schools formulate enrolment policy on the basis of their current situation' or 'schools modify enrolment policy to suit their changing needs'. The data that is placed under such propositional statements may be either positive or negative. So, some responses may not agree with the propositional statement, a respondent might have said 'the enrolment policy has been there since the foundation of the school, and it would be very difficult to change it'. However, Taylor and Bogdan (1984) recommend that such statements should be derived from propositional statements, which are in turn derived from a substantial accumulation of positive instances. Indeed, Maykut and Morehouse (1994) go some way in explaining this further:

A rule for inclusion is developed from a category when several data cards have been clustered under it based on the look/feel-alike criterion. The rule for inclusion is inductively derived from the properties or characteristics of the initial set of data cards clustered together under it. The rule for inclusion is stated as a proposition that summarises the meaning contained in the data cards. Data cards that on closer examination do not fit the resulting rule are categorised elsewhere. Remaining data are now included in or excluded from a category based on its rule for inclusion, not the look/feel-alike criterion elsewhere. Data cards are coded to their rule based categories. Data analysis continues until all cards have been categorised into a substantive category or the miscellaneous pile (p.142).

However, this researcher preferred to refine the above process further by placing all the positive responses first, followed by the negative responses, so as to get an overall balanced view of the category in hand. The next part of this process involves coding data cards to their categories. Coding data cards is a further refining of the categories formulated. This involves ear-marking the data to that particular category. This is done by means of coding each category (for example, business involvement in enrolment policy may be categorised as ‘the business community has minimal input into enrolment policy’). This category is labelled ‘Business’ and is coded as (B). This data piece on information is coded in all the documentary evidence and fieldwork as such. The transcripts were organised around this method, but by cutting and pasting and creating a separate file called ‘Business’ to cater for all related responses.

Once all the data has been categorised, the researcher then reviews it again for overlap or ambiguity. This requires a thorough re-examination of all the material and may entail a reorganisation and readjustment of the categories and their rules, perhaps in order to extend some categories or modify others. Finally, the miscellaneous pile is re-examined for the purpose of formulating either a new category which may encompass some of the issues, or else to distribute some of the miscellaneous pile into existing categories. This leads on to the next stage.

4.7.3 Explorations of Relationships and Patterns Across Categories.

This stage involves pulling the categories together which both accurately reflect the data gathered as well as synthesising it into a more comprehensively detailed analysis of the data. This begins with a thorough re-examination of the propositional statements which have emerged so far. The next step is to prioritise these propositions

according to importance in relation to the focus of inquiry. In essence, these propositions form the preliminary outcomes of the research. They have yet to be intertwined with other categories, formulating themes. Some may be sufficient to stand alone. This will be the case if it explains the phenomenon under investigation on its own without auxiliary information. Some salient propositions may need to be linked with others to become a core outcome of the research. Either way, both these types of data are referred to as *outcome propositions*.

At this point, one may need to take a break from the data in order to come back to it afresh. This is also a time recommended by the research methodology literature to bring one's preliminary work to a public forum to be critiqued, or at the very least, interested peers should be consulted for their observations, so that the very raising of questions can force the researcher to view things in a new light (Robson, 1993). The researcher did this by presenting her work to several international conferences, including: British Education Research Association (BERA), Sussex, UK in 1999; Comparative and International Education Society (CIES), New York, USA, 2000; and Education Studies Association of Ireland (ESAI), Maynooth, Co. Kildare, Ireland, 2000.

Concurrently, the researcher still continued to collect new data as indicated by the design of her research. However, there comes a saturation point (Strauss and Corbin, 1990), which Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to as the point of 'redundancy'. In any case, once all the links are made between categories and within categories and the final part of Phase II has been completed, the researcher must move on to the next phase. This phase is the fourth stage of Phase I, writing up the research and making the findings public.

4.7.4 The Integration of Data and Writing up the Research.

This is the stage that now links up with part 4 or Phase I of the research as described above - Bereday's *Comparison Stage*. This stage involves writing up the research which makes sense of the phenomenon under examination. This is the last phase of the analytic process. This also requires a rethinking of the data. This can often lead to new insights and a deeper understanding of the research inquiry. At this point, it is necessary to review a number of facets of the research which are vital for it to have credibility and integrity. The first issue is that of 'the trustworthiness of the research'. This is achieved in the manner and process by which the research was carried out. It is also achieved in one's own evaluation of the work of other researchers in the field. The question that may be asked is 'how can we trust the outcomes of this research?' In essence, this is an ethical question. The first issue here is that of transparency. The sources of research must be stated. Foundations who fund and support different kinds of research reports must have their interests stated from the outset and the researcher needs to note this. The researcher must be scrupulous about the categories formulated, and if she has any prejudices, preconceptions or assumptions about the research and its outcomes, these should be recorded from the outset, and then checked against the data, following analysis, for the possibility of subjectivity in either the analysis or interpretation of the information gathered.

This researcher wrote down her assumptions prior to her research. As indicated above, she also presented her work at conferences - one paper in each of the three countries of this study in order to be critiqued for the existence of bias; for ethnocentric assumptions to be challenged; for preconceptions to be challenged and interpretations to be critiqued independently. The feedback was most useful in

correcting false assumptions, or assumptions made that she was unaware of having. Critical questions were asked which forced the researcher to review her study in a new light. The researcher also gave her work to peers in the field to critique which always exposes one's own ideas as to certain aspects of the research, and also serves to pinpoint ill-founded subjective opinions or bias. In other words, the research was rigorously checked for bias. The researcher acknowledges that it is virtually impossible to remove sources of subjectivity, as one needs to arrive at some conclusion based on the evidence. Nevertheless, every attempt was made to be critical and 'objective' at all times. Objectivity is a concept which must be placed in inverted commas as from the philosophical ontological argument, while total objectivity almost certainly cannot be attained, it is vital that researchers rigorously attempt to minimise the possibility of subjectivity (Pring, Walford and Wilson, 1997/98).

4.8 Pilot Studies

4.8.1 Introduction

Originally, the pilot phase of this research was to employ a 'theory-testing' survey, which intended to analyse the parental role in exercising the choice policy in the enrolment procedure. 'Theory-testing' here refers to an 'explanatory' account which tests a hypothesis (Yin, 1994 *cited in* Bassey, 1999). However, the purpose of this research was *not* to see if parents were exercising *parental choice*, as that is not the issue here. The issue here is by *whom* and *how* the policy was being mediated. In this case, the choice policy in terms of enrolment was chosen. However, the issue under

examination is *mediation*, and where the power lies, that is to say, with whom, and what factors, if any, are affecting the mediation of policy.

A vital component in a cross-national study such as this, which involves multiple case studies within and between locations, is visiting the locations selected. It was decided that before pilot studies were conducted, preliminary visits needed to be made to prepare the ground for those studies. Then the pilot visits were undertaken, the data generated analysed and, on the basis of the outcomes, certain lessons were learned that in turn informed the main field studies.

4.8.2 Preliminary Visits

The preliminary visits were undertaken immediately following the completion of the research proposal, the initial literature review and, the identification of likely factors and stakeholders, and design of empirical research tools. The objectives of these preliminary visits were:

- to check the overall acceptability of each case-study location;
- to identify gatekeepers and gain permission and access;
- to identify the nature and availability of primary documentary sources;
- to introduce and discuss the key empirical research tools, and
- to make arrangements for the pilot visits.

ENGsite

The English case location was visited in December 1998. Accounts of a significant amount of take-up of parental choice opportunity were confirmed in the core (urban) LEA, and between that authority and the surrounding (suburban/rural) LEA. The human ecology of the area was noted in terms of its overall scale, occupational and social structure, educational history and political geography. Visits were made to the headquarters of the two LEAs, meeting a leading education officer in one and a leading elected council member in the other. From these discussions perspectives were gained on the workings of these LEAs, relationships between them, and their respective relationships with their schools. Initial understanding was gained of the significance of two changes of local authority boundaries since the introduction of non-selective secondary schooling in the late 1960s. These are illustrated in *Figure 12* below. Likewise, the significance of the introduction of a junior high school sector in the mid 1970s in the area of the urban authority, and its abolition in the early 1990s was noted.

Three schools were visited, all non-selective comprehensive schools, one in the suburban LEA and two in the urban LEA. The choice was such that the bulk of the population of the conurbation is located in the urban LEA. Here too, the only Roman Catholic high school in either of the two authorities is located. The preliminary visit to this school confirmed the significance of the religious factor, and so it was clear that the school had to be in the main study and therefore not in the pilot. The other urban authority school visited was found to be on the point of possible closure and re-opening with a new name and staff. Although of interest in itself, this was considered to be too extreme a case for the pilot and an alternative was selected. There was no

problem with the selection of the suburban high school for the pilot, there being four such schools receiving intake from the neighbouring authority through parental choice.

Initial versions of the empirical tools were discussed with two of the Principals, and preliminary interviews conducted with the representatives of the LEAs. Minor amendments were made as a result, and arrangements made to revisit for the pilot in the Spring of 1999. It was clear from this first of the preliminary visits that the issue selected for the research was of intense interest and that the range of factors already identified was influential in the mediation of open enrolment policy in this area. Likewise, the research identified a range of stakeholders, most of whom were on governing bodies of schools. This enabled the researcher to move towards the refinement of a conceptual framework as already illustrated in Figure 2 which could then be reconsidered in the light of the preliminary visits to Ireland and the USA.

IREsite

The researcher is of Irish nationality, and is *au fait* with the structure and provision of the Irish educational system, for the following reasons: the researcher went through the Irish educational system as a student; qualified as a teacher-practitioner here, completed a Master's thesis (by research), in an Irish University, which examined pedagogical and assessment issues at the secondary level in a case location in Ireland (*see* Griffin, 1997); and the researcher is in constant contact with Irish educationists/colleagues - practitioners, researchers and academics - involved in Irish second level education. In spite of this, the researcher carried out a preliminary visit to

her home country to establish the best location to base her case studies, and to allocate site areas where the researcher would not be known by the school staff.

In terms of the literature search, the researcher chose to contact former colleagues to discuss the topic of research, and to seek advice on the current situation in relation to the mediation of policy in Ireland. It was decided to avoid the capital city because already much research has already been carried out there, but also because capital cities are very idiosyncratic and not necessarily representative of provincial cities.

USAsite

The preliminary visit to the USA was delayed by the need to select from within the range of states in the federation that had accommodated open enrolment in their public sectors. This required more preliminary secondary documentary reading than in the other two cases. The researcher also consulted with American colleagues; and for different reasons Connecticut, Vermont, Massachusetts, Minnesota, California, Arizona and North Carolina were all considered as potential research locations. An opportunity for financial support to visit the last named was taken up – in March 1999.

In North Carolina, visits were made to the Education Department of the state in Raleigh, to a public high and a primary school, to a charter school and a home schooling project. Special attention was given to the wording of interview questions, so as to avoid cultural misinterpretations of terms. The interview schedule was then pre-piloted with the principals concerned in this preliminary visit. The parental

questionnaire was also delivered at the public high school for the same purpose. Utility of the survey was also monitored in terms of the context of the research topic. Valuable contextual information was gathered in respect of the USA system of education. For example, the charter school movement in North Carolina was seen to be the key response to the demand for choice, as opposed to an open enrolment policy. However, as North Carolina did not appear to offer an urban location sufficiently comparable to those selected in England and Ireland, it was decided not to locate the final USA case location there. The only possibility would have been in Charlotte, which as the main city, though not the capital, was not comparable. On return, and on seeking advice from the aforementioned Stanford Professor visiting at Oxford, as well as a review of evidence gathered from all contending states, it was decided to opt for Massachusetts on account of its statewide open enrolment legislation. Although the open enrolment component of the 1993 legislation was optional for each school district, the occurrence of a suitable urban complex away from the primate city was noted which had been identified through documentary study and indigenous advice.

Overall, the preliminary visits were positive in outcome in that they led to the confirmation of location, a readjustment of the research tools and to the gathering of useful contextual documentation, all of which has been taken into account in the final analysis below.

4.8.3 Pilot Studies

It was decided to proceed with the pilot studies immediately after completion of the preliminary visits, since there was a minimum of adjustment to be made, and support

was readily available. Both the English and Irish pilots were carried out in April 1999, and the USA pilot in the following month.

ENGsite

The main focus of the pilot visit was on the two high schools selected, one from each authority. In each case three component tasks were carried out: the identification of institutional level primary documentation; a semi-structured interview and open discussion with the Principal; the delivery of a parental questionnaire to a limited number of parents of students in their first year.

The suburban high school is located on the very fringe of the conurbation, drawing its intake from a large number of feeder schools including some in genuinely rural locations. Directly to the east, another LEA had similar high schools. Consequently there is only a modest cross-border migration of enrolments. There are few spare places, since the rural feeders have no feasible alternative, and the suburban area, which this high school serves, is the most affluent in the conurbation. Not surprisingly, the academic performance indicators from this school are positive.

The interview, and other discussions with the principal, provided valuable insights into how the current system operates in response to national legislation which arose from the 1988 Education Reform Act and other related Acts. In particular the following issues were explored: new pressures and responsibilities devolving to the principal and the senior management team – itself a feature and a title symptomatic of the business-style orientation of the reforms; the composition, role and operation of the school board; the history of LEA reform in the area, including boundary changes, and relationships with the new (post 1996) authorities in this area. The outcomes of

these discussions and the interviews, contribute to the overall analysis in chapter 5 below and the parental questionnaire is considered at the end of this chapter. Further minor adjustments were made to the interview questions.

The second high school in this pilot is located in the urban LEA close to the border on the western side, an area losing students to the suburban authority at the age of entry to secondary school. Here again, the focus was on the responsibilities of the principal and senior staff in the context of competition for students; reactions of the school to this situation in respect of marketisation, including the generation of indigenous documentation; the role and operations of the management board; and relationships with the new (post 1996) LEA. The immediate locational context of this school was of particular interest because of proximity to the other LEA, but as well as to a nearby single-sex boys' high school which was a high status grammar school in its pre 1970s selective past, but was now in difficulty *inter alia* because of reported adolescent male underachievement. Some consideration was given to including this school in the study in view of the predominance of single-sex schools in the Irish case. This was rejected on the grounds that each national case study within itself should be as representative as possible of the local educational milieu.

Again, the outcomes of this pilot case study contribute to the overall analysis of the English case in chapter 5, and the issue of the parental questionnaire is dealt with at the end of this chapter. The English pilot study, together with the preliminary visit, placed the researcher in a sound position from which to embark on the main study after final selection of the two high schools in addition to the singular Catholic case. In particular, she was well prepared for the examination of the management boards in the main study, as well as in respect of the changing relationships between

schools and LEAs, and in the information acquired from local, especially primary, documentary sources.

IREsite

The Irish case location was examined in April 1999. Visits were made to two schools: a vocational school and an all-girls secondary school, run by the voluntary sector. The latter was a religious-owned school and although it had a lay principal, still the trustees' interests were represented on the management board. Again, interviews were conducted with both principals, and the context of how the school enrolment policy operates was discussed. Although the returns of parental questionnaires on the issue of school choice from one school were high, the religious-owned school was quite low. Hence, no reliable information could be gained from such an instrument as it inevitably would favour one particular neighbourhood over another.

At this point, documentary research was also gathered, and a number of educationists and politicians were interviewed. Because there was a distinct difference between the structure and operation of the voluntary school as opposed to the vocational educational school, established by the 1930 Education Act, it was decided to include such a school in the main study, along with two voluntary secondary schools. The selection of schools accurately reflects the ratio of these two types of secondary school nationwide, that is to say, two-thirds of the secondary-age population choose to attend religious schools, while one third choose vocational or comprehensive schools.

One of the schools was located in a working class area, while the other was located in a lower middle class area. The contrast in environments was thought to

influence in some way the mediation of school enrolment policy, and thus became an important factor for inclusion into the main study. Again, documentation was collected from local sources, including the local university library.

The discussions with the principals proved to be invaluable. The first principal identified factors affecting, in his opinion, the mediation of school policy in Ireland. Similarly, the second principal was well versed in his role, having been in his particular school for more than ten years, and his experiential information proved very insightful. Both principals were very informative and provided a number of interesting observations on the Irish educational system.

These principals operated in schools which were very community-oriented, and they each prioritised the needs of the students in their particular context. Both principals were strongly driven by the received Christian ethos. Both principals indicated at an early stage that the role of politics and politicians was negligible, as was the role of the business community except where this was involved by invitation. The role of the church was interesting, with the principal of the vocational school having disputed with the local bishop over enrolment policy, while the principal of the religious school, though mindful of the trustees' influence, operated according to the perceived needs of the students rather than being influenced by any religious or church ideals. Social and economic factors were reckoned to be influential, as were local geographic and demographic patterns.

Because the *modus operandi* of the Irish school sector seemed to operate according to the dictate of different factors, it proved - even at the pilot stage - an interesting contrast with the other two cases. So, while school choice was an important issue in Ireland, school choice for parents being *de jure* an enshrined constitutional right, it appeared that *de facto*, the mediation of enrolment policy was

adjusted at the local level to suit the schools' individual needs. This served to indicate to the researcher that the focus of the study was appropriate.

USAsite

Unlike in the case of the English and Irish pilot studies; the location selected was not the same as for the preliminary visit. There was therefore the additional important task of assessing the overall contextual suitability of the Massachusetts location.

Relevant information was gathered by electronic interaction with the school district selected. Visits were then made to the offices of the school district, where interviews with two senior administrators and the research officer enabled an understanding of the local educational context to be gained. A significant amount of local primary documentation was gathered, and negotiations were conducted to visit three schools; a public high school; a charter school and a private high school. The parental advice centre is a feature of the local system. An interview was also conducted at the centre, in which it became evident that a fairly strict zoning system applied at primary and junior high school levels, as directed by the centre; but despite this strict zoning system, there was genuine open enrolment at high school level.

A significant difference was evident in the USA as compared with the English and Irish cases insofar as there were no management boards as such at institutional level in the public school sector, though they did exist in the publicly-funded charter school and the private school. In the public system, the management board for the district itself is in effect a macro school board. Important relationships exist between the office of the superintendent and that of the mayor, leaving the principals of schools somewhat exposed in relation to both. The on-site management teams present

in the public high schools did attempt to bring in a range of stakeholder interests, but they had no power or significant status.

The attention of the researcher was drawn during this pilot visit to the existence of the Regional Education and Business Alliance (REBA) which, although acted independently from the school district, was clearly a vigorous and influential body. Relevant aspects of its operations have been taken into account in the overall analysis below. An informal interview was also conducted with a local politician from a different school district, and with a Superintendent from a third district. These were undertaken in order to understand the realities of operating numerous small school districts in close proximity, as well as to visit the prime location being considered for the USA main study.

It was necessary to visit the Department of Education of the state of Massachusetts, located in Malden, near Boston. Here, interviews and other discussions were held with a number of administrators involved in the delivery of open enrolment policy from the 1993 Reform Act, as well as in related curricular and assessment reforms, which have been touched upon in the contextual discussion above. A considerable amount of primary documentation was gathered. On the basis of this visit, minor adjustments were made to the semi-structured interview schedule.

The Parental Questionnaire

A parental questionnaire on the issue of school choice was included in the preliminary visit to the USA and in the public visits in England and Ireland. This was thought at the time to be appropriate since parents were in effect the customers in the market context. However, it became clear in delivering and analysing the survey that it would

take the focus away from the issue of mediation of policy towards a study of parental choice. Because parents are represented in the governance of schools in England and Ireland and through the parental advice centre and site-based management in the USA context, it was decided it would be sufficient to gather data from these sources and so the parental questionnaire at the pilot stage was discontinued. If the survey had been continued, it would have given undue weight to parents as stakeholders in judging the mediation of policy. Some useful information was gathered from the pilot parental surveys and has been included in the overall analysis. The parental choice issue has already been dealt with in considerable detail in the literature (Adler, M and Raab, 1988; Adler, Petch and Tweedie, 1989; Boulton and Coldron, 1989; Boyson, 1975; Coldron and Boulton, 1991; Echols, McPherson and Willms, 1990; Gewirtz, Miller and Walford, 1991; Hunter, 1991; Johnson, 1990; Petch, 1986; Power, Halpin and Fitz, 1993; Walford, 1994).

Finally, considering the philosophical underpinnings and balance of the qualitative approach, it was decided not to include the *addenda* of a quantitative element. Although in theory a quantitative paradigm might be valuable in its own right, and could add significantly to a qualitative study, in this instance it became clear that it would not so do. So, the researcher believed it best to focus on the main issue as directed by the research questions, and rely on the extensive 'parental choice' literature already published for additional information.

4.9 Limitations in the Methodology

The following discussion outlines the perceived limitations of the research. Strategies used to reduce these limitations will also be discussed.

4.9.1 Validity

Validity refers to the extent to which conclusions effectively represent ‘empirical reality’ and whether the constructs devised by the researcher adequately represent the categories of human experience under examination (Pelto and Pelto, 1978; LeCompte and Goetz, 1982). The two most important questions asked in relation to validity in terms of this research are:

- ‘Is the researcher actually measuring/observing what she thinks she is measuring/observing?’

(This question addresses the issue of *internal validity* (Campbell and Stanley, 1963; Cook and Campbell, 1979), and

- ‘To what extent are the abstract constructs and postulates generated and refined by the researcher applicable to other groups?’

This question addresses the issue of *external validity* (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982, p.43).

Although internal and external validity are interrelated issues, they are quite often separated in order to clarify the procedures involved; this is a convention used to simplify the issues (Cook and Campbell, 1967; Campbell and Stanley, 1963 and LeCompte and Goetz, 1982). Although Wolcott (1994) cites many different types and forms of validity testing for qualitative data, the convention of using internal and external validity will be applied here.

In terms of *internal validity*, the answers which emerged from the questions put to the respondents in the main study, were given without hesitation. This was due to the fact that the questions were pre-piloted and piloted. This process itself entailed 'testing' the research instrument on at least twenty different people from all three countries. Therefore, terms which were uncommon in the culture or had slightly different connotations were changed so as to be applicable in all three countries where they were used - hence the explanation/definition of terms section at the beginning of this thesis. The researcher cannot guarantee that the questions were absolutely clear to all respondents, but non-verbal language suggested that the questions were clear. This meant that, unlike in the pre-pilot and pilot phase, the researcher was not asked to repeat questions, did not get the 'eyebrows-up' indication (*i.e.* what exactly do you mean?); clarification was not sought, (apart from some nervous respondents, in which case, their quizzing appeared to be more a reflection of their own lack of confidence, rather than due to the nature of the questions themselves); and on the whole, respondents appeared comfortable answering the questions put to them.

Wolcott (1994) gives advice on strengthening the validity of the research, and his suggestions are as follows:

- 'Talk little, listen a lot (including asking for explanations when necessary - even if it makes you 'look a bit dense', p. 348)
- Record accurately (*i.e.* mechanically record the information but also note impressions/descriptions, p. 349).
- Begin writing early (*i.e.* even before the event, and immediately afterwards, creating a fuller picture of gaps to be filled and assumptions being made, p. 349).

- Let readers ‘see’ it for themselves (*i.e.* include primary data in final analysis, by means of direct quotation, *etc.*, p. 349).
- Report fully (*i.e.* even obtuse phrases that may yet be open to interpretation, p.349).
- Be candid (*i.e.* write with honesty, and be ‘straightforward’, p.352).
- Seek feedback (*i.e.* share your work with others, p. 353)
- Try to achieve balance (*i.e.* re-read and check if it is fair and inclusive, p. 354)
- Write accurately’ (*i.e.* use simple technical accuracy, p. 354-5).

Other advice suggested to researchers is that they should let teachers review transcripts and data collected from them. The researcher did not follow this advice on this occasion due to temporal and spatial constraints. Instead, the data were opened to scrutiny from colleagues, fellow doctoral students and other academics, all of whom highlighted the weaknesses of the researcher’s interpretation and written word.

External validity pertains to generalisations which do not necessarily apply to the research undertaken here, as it is not the main aim of this study to generalise. As will be discussed later, aspects of local dynamics and interactions may be generalisable in terms of elements of the *modus operandi* of decision-making procedures, or influencing interests on the mediation of enrolment policy (or other school policies). This can only be established insofar as the experiences recorded here may be valid for others operating in similar situations or contexts. This form of validity is better known as *ecological validity*. Ecological validity will only exist as long as the researcher records the events, experiences and perceptions of the respondents with honesty and accuracy.

4.9.2 Generalisability

A frequent criticism of qualitative research, and especially the case-study methodology is that it is incapable of providing a generalising conclusion (Yin, 1994). Giddens (1995), for example, considered the case study ‘microscopic’. However, Yin (1994) argues that the number of cases used does not transform a multiple case study into a macroscopic study; rather, the aim of the study ‘should establish the parameters, and then should be applied to all research’ (Taylor *et al.*, 1997, p.2). The aim of qualitative research to seek an in-depth understanding of the issues – must be borne in mind. Indeed, the issue of generalisability in relation to the aims and purposes of qualitative research has long been widely debated and most qualitative researchers agree that the purpose of qualitative research is *not* to generalise (see LeCompte and Goetz, 1982; Becker, 1970; Hammersley, 1987; Schofield, 1993), although some argue this may be achieved (Yin 1994). Yin believes that the generalisations based on ecological aspects of case studies can enhance theory building, but that generalisations in themselves cannot be made about populations. It is beyond the remit of this thesis to engage in the debate in detail, suffice it to state that this research is not aiming to generalise but rather to understand the process of mediation in specific contexts for the purposes of generating theory to be further tried and tested, qualitatively or otherwise. Though the findings presented here may be applicable to other similar situations and contexts, the researcher is not making any claims to generalise the findings at this stage. Subsequent research would be a prerequisite before such claims could be justified.

4.9.3 Reliability

Reliability is achieved by the resolution of both internal and external design problems thus drawing external and internal reliability together. *External reliability* is concerned with the same result occurring elsewhere in similar circumstances. *Internal reliability* is concerned with the degree to which other researchers would come up with the same data using the same instrument or constructs. According to De Vaus (1996), 'replication of results has been one of the key safeguards against falsification. Replication requires that another researcher can collect comparable data in the same way and thus check the veracity and reliability of any set of results. This is an important safeguard' (p. 340). However, he does go on to say that 'true replication is less achievable in survey research. This is because social surveys rely on samples in a particular place and time, and, to the extent that the time and place of two surveys (and thus the sample) are different, then any variation between results can be defended in terms of sample differences. This makes true replication extremely difficult' (1996, p.340-341). Such deliberate misrepresentation of data, suggested by De Vaus as being possible, is unethical. He believes such misrepresentation is accounted for by inappropriate methodology or by not analysing the data according to the approach undertaken. On both counts, the researcher has explained in detail both the rationale for the methodology and the form the analysis took. Similarly, this researcher has taken De Vaus's other suggestion that the research data are available for scrutiny to other interested researchers. This, he believes, is the 'closest approximation to replication' (p.341).

Therefore, while reliability is primarily concerned with replicability of findings, validity, as mentioned above, is more concerned with the accuracy of the

findings (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982, p.32). A multiple case study design must have a replication rather than a sampling logic. This is achieved through replicating the pattern-matching, which serves to strengthen the results and thus increase confidence in the robustness of the theory (Robson, 1993). Nor can one have reliability without internal validity. While reliability cannot be verified *per se*, the researcher both pre-piloted and piloted the research instrument such that it is focused solidly on the research questions at hand. It was noted when confusion arose over the point of the question; words and terms appeared to be culturally specific; when the setting was inappropriate; and when a different setting for the interview was sought (and insisted upon) where outside noise could not distract. Attention was also paid to ensure the respondent had enough time to answer all the questions adequately: interviews were never put back-to-back for that reason. Of course, the researcher could not guarantee that information was not passed around. However, by scheduling the interviews carefully, as well as asking respondents *not* to speak to others still waiting to be interviewed, the researcher went as far as she could to gather discrete responses. Aside from that, the researcher could not enforce an ‘assurance of silence’ within the realm of politeness.

4.9.4 Ethics

Ethical issues have been considered at every step of the research process to ensure that the research is conducted appropriately. The issue of ethics is a prime consideration during the entire research process. The researcher was guided particularly by the ‘Ethical Principles for Conducting Research with Human Participants (British Psychological Society)’ (see Robson, 1993). Sieber’s (1992)

book, *Planning Ethically Responsible Research: A Guide for Students and Internal Review Boards* lists six main concerns for researchers. The 'six norms of scientific research' by Sieber are listed below (1993, pp.18-19) and the researcher's responses are in brackets:

1. *Valid research design*: this takes into account theory, methods and prior findings, all of which must be appropriate to the topic. (This has been outlined in detail in this methodology chapter and in chapter 1.)
2. *Competence of the researcher*: the investigator must be capable of carrying out the procedures validly (the researcher has engaged in both personal and commissioned research to the satisfaction of the appropriate review boards).
3. *Identification of the consequences*: this involves ensuring confidentiality, maximising benefit, minimising risk and respecting privacy (see below).
4. *Selection of subjects*: the subjects must be appropriate to the purposes of the study, representative of the population that is to benefit from the research, and appropriate in number. (The researcher chose governors from each school, and the governors were chosen on the basis of the interests they represented (e.g. business), and their availability. Naturally, 'availability' posed the problem of the 'self selective nature' of respondents. However, because there were usually a maximum of two people on each board representing a business interest, then it made sense to interview the person who could make her or himself available, rather than try to persuade the person who could not. Also, only one of the two had to be

interviewed. On the whole, the respondent numbers were balanced between all three locations and between all three schools.)

5. *Voluntary informed consent*: i.e. freely given agreement to participate in the interview. This requires clear communication between the respondents and the interviewer. (The respondents knew what was expected of them beforehand, as the interview process was explained to them by the researcher.)

6. *Compensation for injury*: the researcher is responsible for what happens to subjects. (This situation can be avoided, as explained below, by ensuring pseudonyms are used and the identity of respondents is concealed. No information which would be indicative of the place or person is given. To the best of the researcher's ability, confidentiality was maintained at all times. Even curious friends of the researcher who proof-read the thesis were not informed of the locations.

Ethical issues ranged from the identification of people and places to what they actually said. In this thesis, the identities of informants were obscured through the use of pseudonyms. Pseudonyms served a dual purpose: they maintain confidentiality by protecting the respondents' identities and pseudonyms also allowed them to speak more freely. All respondents were treated equally. For instance, the precise nature of the interviews was withheld so that every respondent was given a chance to answer without undue preparation, which may 'contaminate' the data. Data may be contaminated when others unduly influence the respondent's opinions. In research terms, this is perceived as 'contaminating' their own spontaneous viewpoints and

reactions. So, while deception was avoided, an open approach was adopted by giving reasons why the nature of the topic could not be divulged in advance. Secrecy about the real issues in the interview schedule also have the effect of not allowing respondents to develop positions deemed 'suitable' or 'socially acceptable', creating a situation of 'systematic responsive bias'.

The interviewees seemed comfortable with the interviewer's preamble as it did not affect their work directly. The choice of questions asked was not personal, asking only for general biographical details. The remaining questions were based on the research topic and again were not controversial, as they were not seen to affect the school or stakeholders in any adverse way. Permission was sought before taping the interviews. The interviewees were again assured about confidentiality. Pseudonyms protected both the sites and the respondents from being identified, and in this respect the researcher observed Dingwall's (1980) sentiment when he wrote 'ethical fieldwork turns on the moral sense and integrity of the researcher negotiating the social contract which leads his subjects to expose their lives' (p.885). This issue is one of trust between both parties (Gill and Johnson, 1997, p.126).

Overall, the researcher feels that confidence was built up between both herself and the respondents during the course of the fieldwork. She reassured the respondents that the data would be handled carefully and sensitively. At the same, the researcher also feels it is important to be 'intellectually honest' to the findings of the research (and thus retaining validity and integrity within the research).

Scott (1997, *see* chapter 12, p.162) listed seven simple do's and do not's which are a useful source of reference when interviewing. The researcher made use of such 'tips'. These are given in the interests of maintaining ethical considerations while conducting professional research. They are summarised here:

- Allow respondents to say what they feel.
- Do not misrepresent individual contributions in the final analysis.
- Be responsible with the data, as insensitive handling may harm them.
- Open your data and findings to the public, who may have an interest or need in them.
- Maintain anonymity of schools and areas. Their interests need to be protected.
- External funding bodies have an expectation of the highest standards. Deliver well.
- Ethical considerations should always be to the fore, especially in truth-telling.

For all the same reasons and examples given above, the researcher is satisfied that she has met the ethical requirements of the type of research undertaken.

It is now appropriate to move on to the analysis of the outcomes of the research undertaken. This research is in accordance to the methodology described above. As indicated, the sequence of analytical chapters falls within the framework of Bereday's methodology and begins with serial consideration of each national case and the location selected within it.

4.10 Adaptation of Bereday's Methodology

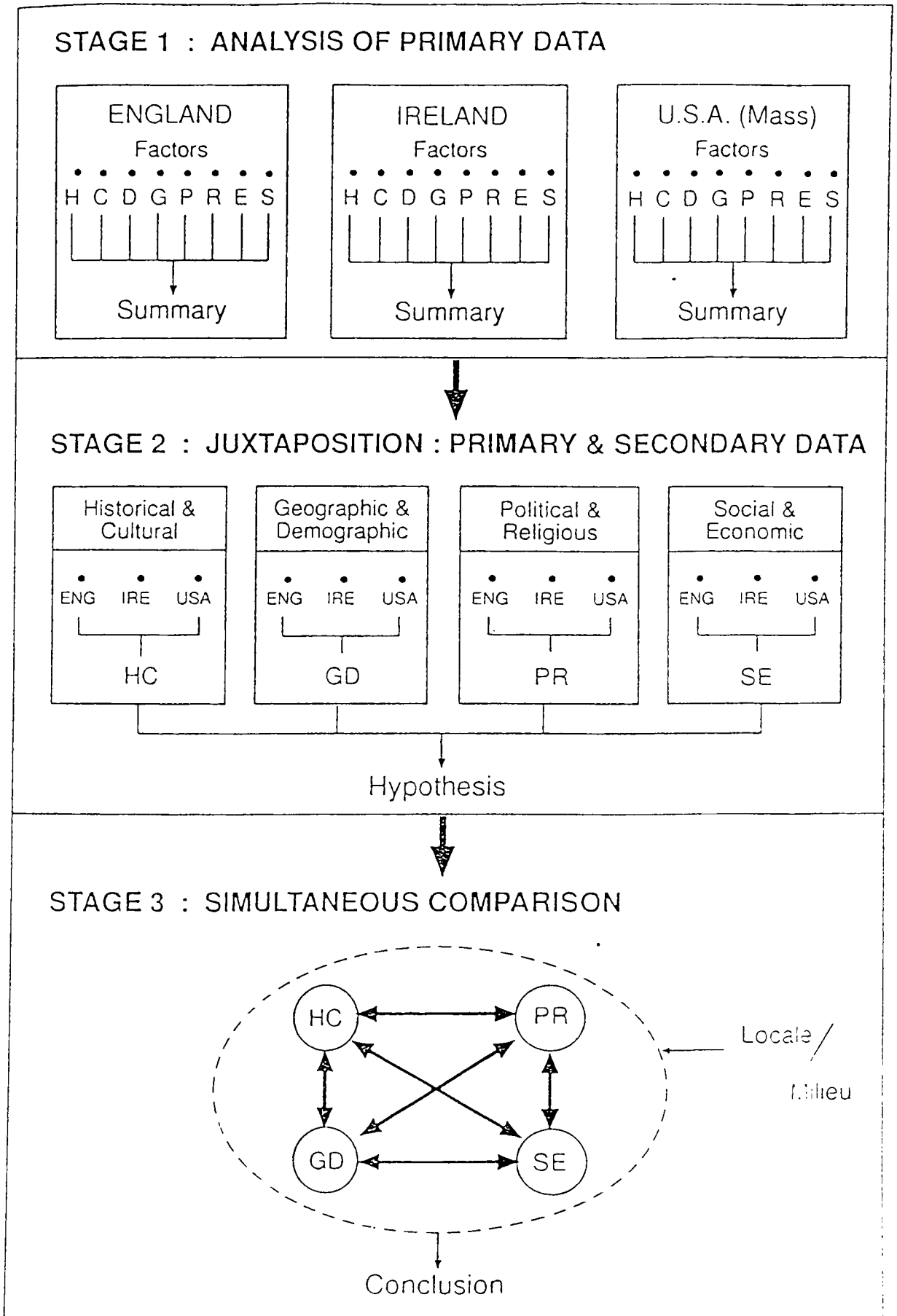
The application of the various components of strategy and method described in this chapter takes the form of an adaptation of Bereday's methodology as illustrated in *Figure 12*. This informs the second half of this thesis comprising chapters 5 through 9.

As can be seen, Stage 1, the analysis of primary data, comprises unitary chapters on England, Ireland and the USA respectively. This covers both stages 1 and 2 of Bereday's methodology: description and interpretation.

Chapter 8 contains stages 2 and 3 of this researcher's method, being 3 and 4 of Bereday's method. The incorporation of the outcome of the application of the constant comparative method informs these sections, and especially the categories formed in Chapter 8 (see matrices, *Figures 18 and 20*).

Chapter 9 takes the outcomes of the simultaneous comparisons a stage further by focussing down on the six key themes informing the mediation of the policy in question that arise from the six permutations shown in *Figure 12* and are evident differentially across all three countries and case locations.

Figure 12: Applications of Bereday's Methodology



CHAPTER 5 UNITARY ANALYSIS: ENGLAND

5.1 Introduction and Setting

In each of the next three chapters a parallel structure will be adopted: first, an introduction to the setting of the case-location, then an account of the outcomes of empirical research and finally a discussion of selected documentary evidence mostly derived from, or relating to, the location.

As indicated above, the English location is a substantial provincial city - a regional centre of a predominantly rural hinterland. It has a distinctive industrial history based on the processing of primary resources imported by sea. This included the fishing industry, which virtually ceased to function in the mid-1970s. Other traditional imports support primary resource processing and manufacturing such as timber and pharmaceutical products. More modern imports like oil and natural gas support petrochemical and microelectronic secondary industrial development. There is now a range of manufacturing and service industries clustered in the location, although the unemployment figures have been above the national average since the mid-1970s.

The pattern of urban structure is fairly typical of British cities, with an industrial east and north and a more residential west. That pattern is sharpened by predominantly westward land transport connections and by a river running north-south which divides the city with a few bridging points. Together with the disparate employment structure, this has led to highly localised patterns of urban social

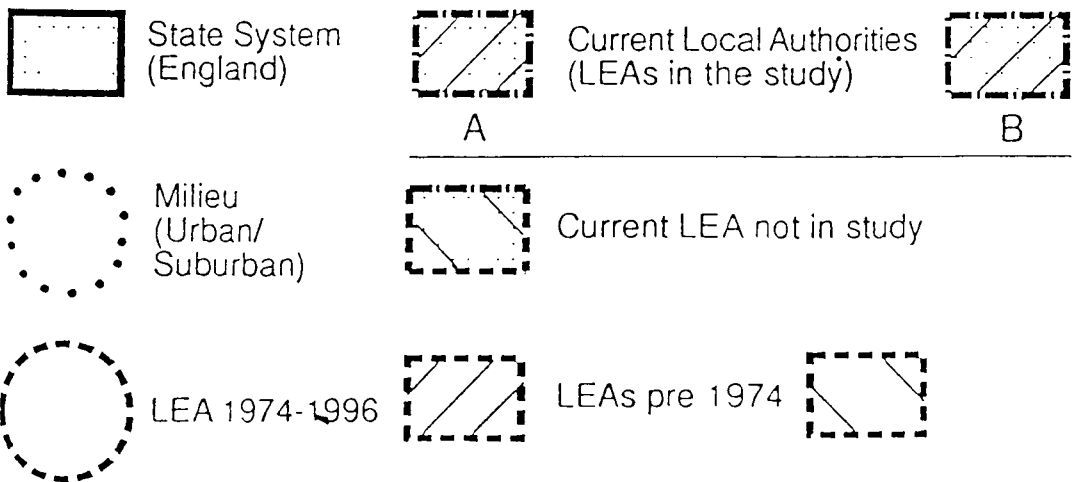
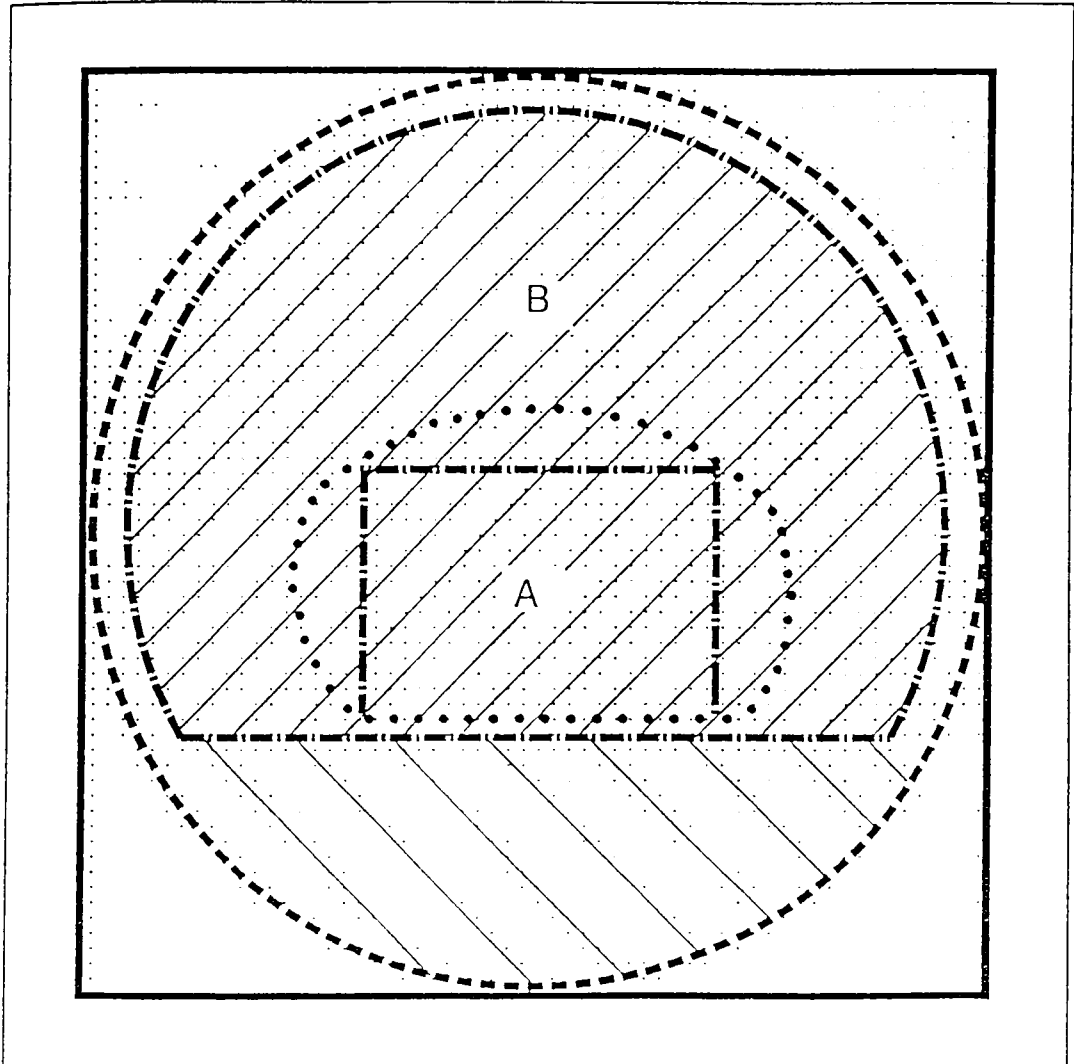
segregation, though without racial overtones since there are no ethnic minorities associated with primary and secondary occupations (Peach, 1975). Such minorities as do exist are of a professional background, associated with the universities and the hospitals.

Figure 12, which refers particularly to education, illustrates the political and administrative structures of this area. That this is more complicated than the Irish and USA cases is a insignificant factor. One can see from the diagram that the locale itself is currently divided between two administrative areas. It has also experienced a number of reforms since the 1970s, each of which has caused a reorganisation of the structure and delivery of educational services. Prior to 1974 the locale in question was wholly within the same county but for purposes of public education provision (LEAs) it was divided into two. From 1974 to 1996, that county was amalgamated with part of a neighbouring county to the south with the whole new area becoming one new LEA. In 1996 a further local government reform split that county/LEA into five new areas, two of which (A and B) are the LEAs sharing the locale with which this study is concerned.

5.2 Empirical Outcomes

This leads directly to consideration of paired factors as evidenced through the delivery of the research instrument described in detail in chapter 4. In other words, this comprises analysis of the perceptions of the range of stakeholders interviewed in term of the factors that informed the survey.

Figure 13: ENGsite.



Rosarii Griffin

5.2.1 Stakeholders' Perceptions

Historical and Cultural Background

The area within which the locale is situated forms one part of a major predominantly rural county, but with the majority of the population residing in a large city. The county is regarded both from outside and inside as being somewhat separatist. Such a view informs the empirical evidence. Respondents generally described the local community, and the community of the city, as an insular one. Most of them stated that the majority of families had been in the area for generations. There is a tradition of generations of successive families attending the same school. In the words of one governor:

We are the nearest school, so that's the school you go to, and the thought of going anywhere else or having the choice to go anywhere else does not even enter some parents' minds. We are just like part of the environment.

Another parent governor, although in the area for eleven years, found that the whole area was 'very parochial' and tended, on the whole, to be a 'very close community'. Despite that, there was a significant uptake from outside the traditional catchments, even though most interviewees from the governing bodies claimed that their schools were there to serve the local community.

Such communities generally seemed to accept their local school as part of their locality and local culture. Only if locals began to refuse to come to their local school would there be a problem, but in all three schools this was not an issue. A

teacher governor summed up this general sentiment by saying, 'I think really most of the parents just want to send their pupils to the nearest school'.

In view of the responses as to how 'culture' was perceived by some respondents as a factor, it was defined in the English case in terms of the tradition that a school had built up over the years. However, the traditional patterns of schooling were perceived to be breaking down somewhat because of the effect of market-related policies. According to one chair of governors, this occurred because 'people are beginning to look at what the school has to offer and whether or not children would be best served by going to that particular school'. Informants were of the view that the publishing of performance league tables has made parents more conscious of their choice of school, especially as the indices for several of the high schools in LEA A are among the lowest in the county.

At the high school level respondents perceived a deeply rooted lack of interest in education. This is perhaps, paradoxically in the past when there was full employment (following the age of compulsory schooling fifteen), it was irrelevant and in the subsequent decades of high unemployment, it also appears to be pointless.

Geographic and Demographic Factors

The location of schools was found to be a major factor especially in relation to demographic shifts. The shifts left some schools grossly oversubscribed and others competing for a dwindling number of students. Such apparently market situations had, it appeared, little to do with parental choice operating on educational criteria. Indeed, according to some respondents, parents in the east of the city tended to feel 'trapped' into going to their local schools. As indicated above, the city in question is divided by a river into East and West, and according to an LEA Adviser, 'People will not cross

the river, so if you live in the East...you go to school in the East, if you live in the West, you go to school in the West.' On the other hand, according to two parent governors, this *de facto* segregation is beginning to break down in the light of performance league tables being made public.

The basic geographical fact remains that there are four suburban high schools in Local Authority B, just across the border from Local Authority A. By contrast, just across the eastern border, there is only one such school and this is oversubscribed from within its own authority. This does not mean that choice and cross-catchment flow do not occur within the eastern half of the city, but they are virtually confined within that half. One high school in particular – a former grammar school, but since the 1970s a comprehensive – remains very popular. This is even to the extent of influencing house prices within the traditional catchment area. According to one principal, this drew some owner-occupier support away from his school.

All the respondents felt that demographics, as well as geography, played a significant role in school enrolment. In some areas - notably the west - the number of feeder schools had trebled as a result of deregulation, and with that has come some degree of 'choice'. As a result, schools located in the suburbs have benefited from the increased mobility of the traditionally static city population. Even within these suburban areas, some students choose to go to another school in the locality, as opposed to their nearest 'local' school.

Most of the interview responses included some examples of people moving from one area into another, indicating the popularity of one local authority over another. Suburban schools give the impression of being less densely populated, and one school in particular 'does give an atmosphere of coming into an open space' which in turn, 'affects people's perception of a place, rather than [us] being located in

the middle of a town, so we would not be able to have this vast space, where we border onto the lawns and the golf course’.

To give some idea of the scale of movement in respect of individual schools, one respondent in this area commented that:

When I first came, the school was in decline in terms of the number of children. In its peak it was 1,600 children in the school, so in the late '70s and in the early '80s it was going down, and then by '90 we were down to 1,000.

He put this down to a change in demographic trends. This affected his locality and school in the following way:

It wasn't a great move away from the school by local people, so it was the fact that the population was falling, but it made a great difference to the school, in terms of how we organised it and what we offered.

Further indications of the scale of movement, some of it leading to massive increases in rolls in recent time is given in the section on documentary evidence below.

Political and Religious Dimensions

Before considering the perceptions of stakeholders in respect of these factors, a brief description of the case-schools and their locations will be given.

Of the two pilot schools, one school is a purpose-built comprehensive school for the 11-18 age range; it therefore included a sixth form. It is in the most affluent suburban and ex-urban zone. The other pilot school is also a purpose built comprehensive school but serving the 11-16 age range and close to the border with

the other LEA. It is also in close proximity to a single-sex boys' school and a sixth form college.

The first main case-study school is primarily a 'working-class school' with a highly vocational, technical and practical element to the curriculum. This school, an 11-16 comprehensive was a low-achieving school according to the national performance league tables. However, the school governors were happy with the school's overall performance and the principal's leadership, believing that the school serves the community well. The community too appeared happy with the school, and the school tended to be oversubscribed.

The second case study school, the Catholic school, is located in a mid-suburban zone of the city. This school is also oversubscribed. Because it is a voluntary-aided school, it can select its intake. The intake is entirely from Catholic families with preference to those living in its nominal catchment area. This is a 'middle-class' area, located near the city's university.

The third main case-study school is also a mixed school located in an affluent middle class area. It was originally set up as a secondary modern and then became a comprehensive school. This school has a significant number of students coming from the adjacent city LEA, and has a sixth form. As far as this case-location is concerned, the religious factor is primarily political in that it pertains only to the administration and delivery of schooling, and not to any wider cultural and historical factors, except insofar as the Catholic high school is the only one in either LEA. This suggests that the Catholic community is in a distinct minority. Originally, there was a boys' single sex school run by the religious, and the same for the girls. However, in the 1980s the two schools merged. Catholic parents were anxious to enrol their children into the merged school. In the words of a parent governor at this school, parents perceive it to

have 'very strong discipline'. Currently, there are no religious staff, only lay-teachers. However, this does not affect the perception of the school as a religious school. According to the principal, such connections were 'very good for us, and we want to maintain that as well'. Indeed, he went further to emphasise the 'mission' of the school on behalf of the Catholic community. The ethos still reflects the denominational interest of the school as evidenced by regular lunchtime 'Holy Mass' and frequent visits by the parish priests. It is clear that the religious element did in fact influence parental choice, indirectly influencing *other* schools' intake.

The main concern expressed by those on the management boards was local perceptions of the schools and the politics of keeping these positive. In the words of one Chair of Governors, the 'perception of the school is something the school would positively promote. It is [about] achievements at the school, what the public perceives the school to be about.'

With respect to current relationships with the LEA, one chair of governors thought that 'LEA policies do have perhaps some effect' Later, she explained that the LEAs 'can affect enrolment but they don't have a lot of room to manoeuvre'. In fact, this respondent felt that the parents possibly had a strong, though indirect, role in the operation of enrolment policy: 'I think at the parent level, they are looking at the school and what it has to offer their particular child, and what kind of images the school promotes whether it has specialist facilities they want'. Ultimately, the parents' choices directly affect a school's budget and, indirectly, its enrolment policies. The power in this instance lies with consumers.

On the other hand, one parent governor felt that primarily the LEA, and not the school regulated the politics of school choice. Those governors who are non-teaching staff, or those from outside the school operations, thought that local politics

operated primarily between the school and the LEAs, while the deputy principal of another school agreed that the LEA is ‘totally responsible for the policy’. A parent governor who expressed a recurring sentiment endorsed this: ‘I sometimes think that I don’t know what is going on.’ She described the issue (and this school is a popular choice school) as follows:

...they [the LEA] set the number of students they can take, the number applying goes way above this limit, so they end up taking more children than capacity, and still more come, following appeals. Ironically, although hers is a popular school, she feels that ‘our school is seriously under funded, as well as being oversubscribed’.

The problem of oversubscribed schools, often as a result of local political decisions taken during the appeals procedure, raises all kinds of other issues, including health and safety issues, as well as the fact that they ‘don’t want their class sizes to go up’. Requiring extra teachers takes money, which does not come from the additional enrolment until the following year. This may in turn adversely affect the quality of learning.

Another parent governor felt that ‘a political party deciding whether a school ought to take children or not is wrong and no matter how broad based the education authority may be, and how it can be weighted or non-weighted depending on what political party is in power, I do think education should not be a political issue’. Her feeling was that politics at the national level played too much of a role in local matters, where things are best decided locally. Some decisions, she conceded, need to be made in respect of school enrolment numbers, but she felt sorry that these decisions had to be made politically.

One principal pointed out that one had to distinguish between LEA officers and the elected political members of the local council. The former group he feels are

helpful, in so far as they consult the principals in relation to school policies, but of the latter group:

If you were asking me whether elected members understand the implications of the policy, then I think the answer is 'no'; they have not got a clue because they do not get into schools to understand what is going on.

This principal pressed for the need for decisions to be made at a truly local level, by people who understood the implications of policies. He went on to say that 'the only way they find out is through officers presenting papers to them at local authority level and only what the officers know by talking to the heads, then it is a filtering and you can well imagine it is well diluted by the time it gets back to them'. He went on to say that 'unfortunately, we have not got any councillors on our school board' and that 'schools who have [elected officials on their Governing Boards], are in a better position to be able to access them directly on all sorts of points'. He concluded by saying the budget was the main issue, not so much admissions policy, albeit the former influences the latter.

LEA officers, on the whole, were more convinced that admissions policy is driven 'by national policy, and legislation'. One such officer went on to say that:

...Under this government [Labour administration elected 1997] ... [admissions policy] is more and more dictated from the centre. With the issue of the 'code of practice' on admissions, and so on, that is an attempt to clearly set down how authorities should operate their admissions procedure.

This 'code of practice' (DfEE) was the first time central government had published any such document, outside of circulars. He did go on to admit that 'the code of practice itself actually encourages authorities to seek out local agreements on how the admissions process should operate'. However, another LEA officer felt, on the whole,

that 'we comply with statutory requirements and I cannot think how we can [work that into] a local strategy'. Others expressed similar confusion, 'I'm not really too sure to be honest', another officer said, 'I'll bite my tongue and keep quiet on that one!', while another officer said, 'I don't think I can comment in detail on that one because enrolment is such a statutory process, that I can't see how, from my input, local politics affects that. It may, but I don't have the evidence'. On the whole, there was a sense of helplessness in the face of statutory and national requirements. Very rarely was there a sense that the local officers felt responsible or autonomous in terms of the decision making process in relation to admissions.

Social and Economic Factor

Schools in this area tended very much to be affected by the social and economic occupational structure of the area. For example, two of the case schools were located in a working class area, located on the 'overspill' municipal estate. One teacher governor summed up the kind of response inherent in the local parents' response to education: 'what good is it going to do them? It never did me any good, why should it do them any good?'

Although most respondents felt that 'social class' was not 'an outstanding issue' in the mediation of enrolment policy, nevertheless it became apparent that it did affect enrolment policy in a number of ways. For instance, the type of housing students came from was an indication of their social status. According to one deputy Head, he felt that the local culture was very class based, which he felt was 'distinctive to the area'. He went on to explain that:

it is more on a personal level than on a global level.....people in this area make judgements on a personal grounding...well, my son goes here, I don't want him to be any way near that one, or this one...the judgements are very much more internal private judgements than anything. And you tend to find that whole rows would tend to go one way, not necessarily for the reasons you think. You know, it may go back to social issues.

It appeared from the perceptions of respondents that the differences in housing, either terraced, semi-detached or detached and whether houses were council owned or privately owned, made a big difference insofar as neighbourhoods and their schools were judged. One parent governor felt that such housing differences did affect their intake. In this school, she believed the locality to be primarily a middle class area, with some 'element of council estate children' in the area. According to this respondent, children who come to school from other estates to this middle class area tend to 'upset local residents'. Their reaction to this crossing of boundaries is to 'send their children elsewhere because of that'. The reason they do not like to see children from city estates attend the schools in LEA B, as perceived by this parent governor, were that they are perceived to be 'troublemakers' and 'all sorts of things', and these children are often thought to be 'of lesser ability'. Therefore, there was a strong element of class-consciousness and social stratification within the neighbourhood of the suburban high school. Self-preservation strategies were taken by some parents in order to maintain their *status quo* that is to say migration to schools in neighbouring towns within the same LEA - a similar reaction to the 'white flight' phenomenon in the USA, although in this particular city, there is no ethnic issue, only social class.

Another governor from the same school felt that it had 'a fairly mixed intake', including a lot of 'disadvantaged'. However, he also admitted that 'a lot of our intake comes from private housing, so it is a very mixed intake'. A second non-teaching staff governor reported that their school had a reputation for being middle class as it was

located near a University, and the perception was that professional families' children were schooled there. While that was partly true, a significant number did not send their children there for social reasons. For instance, one respondent was advised when she moved to the area (a decade earlier), that she should try to select a school by looking 'at its potential supply of children...where the children are from, what sort of families they were coming from'. And, as she discovered, although the middle-class children from the locality were thought to go to this school, this was not always the case, and with open enrolment policy actively pursued in this area, this is becoming even more evident.

On the other hand, one deputy principal, in an LEA A school, claimed that often 'you have *more* trouble with some parents because they just send their child to the school that is closest to them and they have no expectation and do not give the school a great deal of support because that is not important to them'. Some local people were not interested in actively seeking a place in the school, did not have to fight for it, took it for granted, and had no real interest in the school. For that reason, people from outside the traditional catchment area were often more desirable for the school in so far as the parents and children were generally interested and worked hard to gain entry to the school. All this poses questions about the purpose of a school in relation to the local community.

It appears in this area that those of a certain social standing, and those who are 'interested' in education only exercise 'consumer awareness'. These are the parents who move their children to 'better schools'. From the accounts of the respondents, this did not include, for example, those families who had been involved in the traditional local industries, now areas with high unemployment. However, one LEA education advisor did admit that, although such communities have 'extremely low

aspirations for a raft of reasons', parents in the city authority area are 'just waking up to the fact that education exists, there is a choice, and they have got rights'. In other words, there is a growing awareness of the opportunity for choice of school and its potential significance for children's lives.

The economic factor can be viewed in two ways, one of which is more significant than the other in terms of this research: firstly, the funding mechanisms relating to the school and the LEA; and secondly, the relationship between the school and the local economy. The former is the more important here.

It became clear from the outset that the policy is mediated by the way in which funding operates for the simple reason that funding for the school comes on a per capita basis which is 'determined by a formula which is approved by the DfEE'. In the words of one chair of governors, the schools have 'no control over that, as it relates to pupil numbers'. He believed that their school felt 'under the whim of the local authority' when trying to secure additional funding. He admitted that this depended on 'the government, in terms of the standard spending assessment formula'. Nevertheless, he felt that the LEA constituted an extra layer of unnecessary bureaucracy.

The Finance Officer in LEA B believed that 'if anything is going to change a school's budget, and the school's financial position, I would say in one hundred percent of cases, it's the numbers of pupils in the school....which may change the number of staff it has got'. The intake of the school, in terms of economics (per capita formula funding) is therefore a major factor in the mediation of enrolment policy. Similarly, the parent governors felt that the most significant part of the intake procedure was that every student came 'with a price on his or her head'. Most felt that this was inadequate to meet the day-to-day running costs. Children with special

educational needs brought in extra funding, enabling the school to have 'extra funding for staff and facilities'. These extra funds come with children who have a statement that requires the child to have special facilities that aid her/him in terms of the curriculum.

It is the role of the management board to oversee the whole budget and to approve of it. The job of finance is usually delegated to a sub-committee. In one school, this was called the 'Finance and General Purposes Committee'. This dealt with the 'nitty gritty' of the budget. For example, the number of Special Educational Needs (SEN) students a school takes in varies from year to year. The staff governor of this school maintained that the school's intake is crucial to the school's budget, and this was the main driving force in trying to attract students.

The finance officer of LEA B also spoke about the issue of 'fair funding'. It was his estimation that more and more freedoms will be given to schools so that 'they can have full control over their estimates and we [the LEA] then will have more of a monitoring role'. Certain schools received funding from various foundations that the principal, along with selected governors, bid for. The principal of one school was clearly successful in obtaining such grants. This money was converted into equipment for extracurricular school activities that, according to the teacher governor, 'enrich what goes on in the school'.

With respect to the local business community, it was perceived not to affect the mediation of enrolment policy in any general way. While some governors admitted that business communities might have an input into the curriculum and in establishing school to work links, on the whole, they do not have a major role. Even the 'industry governor' felt that they could have some influence on curriculum, but not on intake. One staff governor felt that the business community 'has a vested

interest' in the kind of population, 'the profile of people who come here'. He went on to say that they did have a growing interest in the school as well as the community sphere, but, at the time of researching, he felt that businesses did not have a profound effect. Even in the case school that had obtained considerable support from local businesses, including IT equipment, respondents felt that industrial involvement was not a major factor in getting 'people through the door'. Therefore, the deputy head at this school concluded that business involvement was 'not a big issue'. The law does not permit vested interests; as one chair of governors put it: 'I think the law is quite strict on that'.

Similarly, an adviser in LEA A felt that while the business community did not have any direct impact on school enrolment, he did acknowledge that the schools are trying to work 'closely with business and industry in [the city] to impact on curriculum and to impact on relevance in terms of curriculum delivery'. He added that their efforts to include business were having a curious effect:

The Economic Development Agency in [the city] is working enormously to develop businesses to attract industrial growth and obviously new workers and families into the city. Although, by and large, the reports are that those families are not living within the city ... [and] ... are sending their children to schools outside the city.

So, while LEA A successfully attracted new workers and their families into the city through job creation, they have not been so successful in attracting families to either live, or school their children, in the city. Thus, the initiative to bring more families into the centre has failed, as these families prefer to reside in suburban areas which happen to be in another LEA. So, while the business community tries to exert positive influence at the periphery, their involvement, though welcome, is limited both in its influence and also in its desirability on the part of schools.

5.3 Documentary Outcomes

Documentation was gathered at the local level both from individual schools and the two Local Education Authorities. Reference will be made at this stage to a selection of each.

5.3.1 National Level Sources

Relevant sources of the 1988 Education Reform Act are to be found in *Appendix A*, but as indicated in one of the responses it is only much more recently that central government – the DfEE – has issued specific guidance on school admission in the public sector. In 1999, it issued the *Code of Practice: School Admissions*. This is a very clear document comprising five sections and two annexes. Together they cover: aims and objectives of the admissions policies and practice; making admissions easier for parents; better local admissions arrangements; general guidance; the law on school admissions; guidance on pupils from overseas. Although clearly presented the number of different issues and circumstances covered in this document reflects the residual effects of an evolutionary educational history, as discussed in chapter 2. If one then takes into account the idiosyncratic educational history of any location such as the one selected here, the complications are compounded. The following extract from section A5 of Annex A *School Admissions: The Law* show how important the individual school can be.

Admission arrangements, in relation to a maintained school, mean the arrangements for the admission of pupils to the school, including the school's admissions policy. It therefore includes any selective process including forms, timetables, waiting lists, and admission arrangements for pupils with disabilities, special educational needs or challenging behaviour (p.17).

5.3.2 LEA Sources

The two most relevant types of document sought from LEA sources were in relation to a) finance and b) enrolment, as it appeared from the empirical survey that the two were closely connected. Almost all of the budget allocated to the school related to pupil numbers and the per capita grant per pupil is not only age related – there being three successive bands at secondary level – but also subject to negotiation between the LEA and the DfEE. There is considerable scope for mediation at this stage between national, regional and local players with respect to this aspect of the *economic factor*.

From LEA ‘B’ it proved possible to obtain and discuss more detailed documentation than from LEA ‘A’. This was partly due to the fact that the latter was undergoing an OFSTED inspection at the time. The significance of the age-weighted pupil funding for secondary schools can be seen from the following figures (1999).

<u>Year Group (Age)</u>	<u>Funding per Pupil (£ per annum)</u>
11+	1544.78
12+	1578.18
13+	1600.42
14+	2131.32
15+	2278.66
16+	2796.61
17+	2870.28

Although the per capita allocation for the other LEA will be different in detail, it is broadly similar. The fact that they are not exactly the same has significance in respect of the cross-border flow of funds when parents successfully choose a secondary school in the neighbouring authority.

The role of mediation between the LEA and its schools also becomes clear from the temporal cycle of budgeting and flow of funding. Although the managing

boards were the responsible authority, in effect owning the land and the buildings and hiring and firing all types of staff, they were under pressure to budget under penalty according to the systems laid down by the LEA and the DfEE.

Both LEAs in this case location provide parents of prospective secondary level pupils with substantial booklets concerning the procedures to be followed in respect of transfer from primary to secondary schools and transfer between secondary schools. These booklets not only spell out how the preference (school choice) system works, but they provide data on the nature of each school, expected number on the roll, admissions limits for that year and the number of first preferences expressed by parents at the previous year's enrolment process. The following information is abstracted from the booklet of Local Authority A (the City) in respect of the schools involved in the preliminary, pilot and main study visits of the researcher. Pseudonyms are used as in the discussion of the empirical findings above:

<i>School</i>	<i>Type and Age Range</i>	<i>Expected No. Enrol</i>	<i>Admission Limit</i>	<i>First Preferences in Previous Year.</i>
A	Comp.11-16	950	190	297
B	Comp.11-16	1340	240	320
C	Comp.11-16	1580	330	378
D	Comp.11-16	850	240	109

It is interesting to note that despite the national policy of 'open enrolment', and the abolition of catchment boundaries as a result of the 1988 Education Act, this LEA (the City) made the issue of local catchment their priority in advising parents, stating:

You should be aware that if you do not express a preference for your catchment area school, your child may not be allocated a place at that school.

The other LEA (B) gave no such warning in its 'Guide to Parents', though it is a national consequence of the Rotherham Judgement (1997) that the situation described by Local Authority A also applies within the area of Local Authority B. The latter does, however, express other constraints in its booklet as follows:

- I. *It is important to note that attendance at a particular feeder school does not guarantee a place at the secondary school to which the majority of pupils in the feeder school normally transfer.*
- II. *Residence in a school's catchment area: The criterion for residence within a school's catchment area will normally be that the pupil must be resident by 31st December in the year before admission. Therefore, moving into a school's catchment area after that date will not guarantee admission to that school where it is full to its admissions limit.*

Clearly then, the national policy of open enrolment is being mediated by LEAs as well as by schools in what they perceive to be their best interests. For example, the City LEA (A) announced a scheme at the end of 2000 to provide additional resources, opportunities and challenges to the top 10% achievers. This could well be a response to a finding of its Research and Analysis Office the previous year to the effect that not only were 8.5% of Year 6 pupils 'lost' to secondary schools in LEA B, but they also represented the higher achievers at Key Stage 2. This outflow was noted in the OfSTED Report on the City LEA in the following terms: 'The number of pupils leaving the area at secondary transfer has increased steadily for at least five years, and is now almost three times the 1992 figure.'

The exodus is even more striking in the light of the Report, noting that there is a 'need to remove some 2400 primary places and to reduce the capacity of under-subscribed secondary schools'. The LEA responded to this by carrying out a review and coming to the decision to close three secondary schools on the western side of the City adjacent to the main receiving schools in LEA B. This might be interpreted as

acceding to the loss. Alternatives were possible since, as one correspondent to the local press pointed out, one of the City high schools is actually located across the border on land owned by LEA B! If this school were to be transferred, with its current intake, to LEA B, the number of places in the City LEA would be reduced by some 1500 at a stroke. Whether or not this is feasible, such a case illustrates the significance of the geographical factor and its scope in mediating the policy.

According to the local press in January 2001, the current round of enrolment applications for places in the secondary schools of LEA B includes over 700 applications from residents of the City LEA. This could prove problematic for applicants from LEA B who may wish to exercise their preference for a school outside their immediate locality. It prompted the following statement from the Director of Education to the effect that: 'Parents have the right to say what school they would prefer their child to attend but they need to use that right sensibly and carefully'.

The City LEA also perceived the significance of upgrading the quality and skills of management boards in order to equip them to deal with increase in their responsibility, offering over 300 training courses and providing a clerking service for management boards' meetings. In respect of the work of management boards, the OFSTED Report noted that: 'Much of the credit for the improvement is due to the LEA'.

5.3.3 School Sources

All schools involved in the researcher's preliminary pilot and main study visits were willing to provide institutional level documentation of two kinds: a) reports on the

school by external authorities (e.g. OFSTED and LEA inspections), and b) documentation generated by the school itself (e.g. Prospectus, Staff Handbook, Principal's Annual Report). In some cases, it was possible for the researcher to read minutes of school board meetings but not to abstract or quote from them. At this stage, observations will be confined to documentation provided by the three main study schools.

The OFSTED Report for one school (1998) gives a clear indication of the results of an open enrolment policy despite the restrictions alluded to above. It should be noted that there has been no significant population increase within the 'catchment' area. The Report states:

The school takes pupils from a very wide area, including the city of (LEA A). The proportion of pupils from outside the immediate locality of the school has increased significantly since the last inspection, resulting in the school population rising from 1145 to its present size (1507). It now takes pupils from 35 primary schools. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average.

Despite the rapid growth in numbers at this school, and its size being comparable to the other two case schools, the numbers of SEN registered pupils is distinctly lower at 142. Whether this is due to the make-up of the population in its local area or to the nature of the significant intake from the other LEA is not clear. Certainly the Governors are clear in their statement to the Staff Handbook of 1999-2000 that: 'The school board is aware of the notional LEA allocation for children with SEN and allocates the funding in the light of its statutory duties, the Code of Practice and this policy'. However, this school has also to meet the demands of the travelling community, there being a designated travellers' site close by, and it is able to draw on 250 hours of support per week from the Travellers Education Service.

The documentation provided by this school for its current and prospective pupils and parents is clear and well presented, but with no attempt at 'brochure type' publications. There is no need for that. At the time of writing, a substantial building programme is under way.

From discussion and other documentation, it was found that this same school is making a strong enrolment drive at the 16+ level. This is due to the fact that: a) the neighbouring (City) area has a Sixth Form College in fairly close proximity that is attractive and open to post-GCSE students from this school; b) that the age-weighted *per capita* amount is much higher for older than for younger students. In order to combat this situation and work it to its best advantage, the school has entered into a consortium with three other high schools in the suburban area for the provision of an integrated 16-19 programme. This is actively marketed in the area as well as with younger pupils at the school, and indeed promoted as a selling point to parents at the entry point of 11+. It was covertly admitted that promotional literature from the sixth formed college was 'binned' – a practice commented on by Ball (2000) in his presentation on the extensions of the market in British education.

By contrast, the promotional literature generated by the non-denominational high school in the LEA was very professionally produced by outside printers, colour illustrated and with photographs and maps. It was, however, intended for the existing clientele in the immediate catchments, with the intention of maintaining current custom, as well as for potential collaborators in the local business community, the LEA and even the DFEE. The school has been extremely active in pursuing many avenues of potential additional income, and even though it is located in a relatively difficult environment with, by national standards, a modest performance in the league tables, it is seeking to invest in itself for future development. At the heart of this are

the pupils themselves. This follows the appointment of a new Principal in April 1998, who announced in October 1998 in his *Report to the Governing Body* that: 'The school intends to submit for specialist school status in technology within this academic year. This was an opportunity created by the decision of the LEA, on gaining Government support for an Education Action Zone (EAZ), to support specialist status for one of the two high schools in the EAZ. The other high school being in 'Special Measures' at the time, this was achieved, and the title of 'Technology College' added to the name of the school. In the school brochure referred to above the new status is highlighted to the effect that: 'As a Technology College [the school] becomes the centre of any technological development in the area....', and this claim is justified to some extent by the industrial and commercial links that have been established to mutual benefit. In his interview referred to above, the principal explained that the colour brochure was 'not to get more pupils but to show what the school does, and also to attract good staff.'

An important element of its public documentation is the school development plan which charts year by year a gradual improvement by all the normal indices such as: increasing the number getting A – C grades; lowering truancy levels; and fewer exclusions. As the data above shows, this school is over subscribed, but that is partly due to the fact that its nearest neighbour is a school which is in 'special measures' and is consequently under subscribed.

According to the information pamphlet for parents and pupils (2000) the composition of the management board is as follows: Parent Governors (6), LEA (5), Co-opted (5), Teachers (2), Non-Teaching Staff (1), Principal (1). This contrasts sharply with the composition of the management board of the third case location school – the Catholic high school – which is: Foundation Governors (12), LEA (2),

Parents (3), Teachers (2), Non-teaching staff (1), Principal (1). This gives the 'church' (Foundation Governors) an overall majority, and the parents, teachers and principal will also be Catholic.

The documentation derived from the Catholic school is, not surprisingly, very different again. Being Catholic and voluntary-aided, it receives application for admission direct from parents, and can more than fill its maximum quota of places from Catholic applicants alone. This inevitably has an effect on the non-Catholic population in its local catchment area, most of whom will have to seek placements in other catchments. The admissions policy is clearly spelt out in public documentation and illustrated as *Figure 13*. In practice, as indicated in the empirical research, the school can fill its places from applicants meeting the first two criteria alone. Furthermore, being the only Catholic secondary school in LEA A, and there being no such school in LEA B, it also admits cross border.

Although the per capita allocation for the other LEA will be different in detail, it is broadly similar. The fact that they are not exactly the same has significance in respect of the cross-border flow of funds when parents successfully choose a secondary school in the neighbouring authority.

In September 1999, the number of applicants and admissions (in brackets) in each category was as follows:

<i>Category</i>	<i>Applications</i>	<i>Admissions</i>
1.	184	183
2	47	46
3	77	11
4	251	0
<i>Totals</i>	559	240

It is perhaps significant that in the Bursar's Report to the School board in 1999 it is projected to keep a ceiling on the intake of Year 7 at its present level of 240 at least until 2002.

Given the criteria for admissions, and the strength of 'mission', it is not surprising to find that nearly 250 students qualify as having Special Educational Needs. According to an LEA quality assurance report 'Spiritual development is further enhanced by daily lunch-time celebration of Holy Mass'. LEA influence on admissions, even though the school is voluntary-aided, is illustrated by the example given in the staff bulletin of May 1998 that the budget allocation per pupil following adjustments to the AWPU had been reduced by £106 for year 12 and £94 for year 13. This of course refers to competition for enrolment in the 16 to 19 age range. This is a significant issue in this area and has connections with enrolments in year 7, which are reflected in the Principal's caution: 'I believe there are significant challenges to our current 11-18 status.'

Being voluntary-aided, this school has direct access to the mediation of market related policy, and in addition has its own clearly identifiable market. This has denominational and geographical parameters that do not apply to other secondary schools in the area.

Figure 14: Admission Criteria for a Roman Catholic School: English Case

Admissions Policy

The Governing Body will use the following criteria, in order of priority, when considering applications for admission.

- 1 Roman Catholic children from the area.
- 2 Brothers and sisters of children actually in attendance at the College at the time of entry, and children of full-time staff at the College, employed by the Governors.
- 3 Practising Christians whose application is supported by a letter from their Minister.
Preference will be given to those children attending a Catholic Primary school.
- 4 Other non-Catholic children whose parents are willing to support the aims and ethos of the College.

At all times each case is considered individually, and the Governors have the right to admit or not to admit, depending on particular circumstances.

June 1998

The documentation produced by this school, including its prospectus, is clearly focused on its distinctive mission. Subsequent to the researcher's field visits, the school was successful in its bid for half a million pounds over four years to create a 'centre of sporting excellence'. This is part of the government's drive to create at least one thousand 'specialist colleges' by 2004. Such diversification is said to be in the interest of enriching opportunities for parental choice but, given the strictly denominational criteria for admission to this school, it is not immediately clear how this assists such a policy.

The catchment areas have, in theory and according to the legislation, been abolished. However, *de facto*, they are still in operation in the local LEAs. Here, they place people in their first choice of school, and if that school is full, their next choice should be taken. However, on closer examination of the documentation, this is not the case. The documentation states quite explicitly that unless the applicant chooses the closest school as their first choice, they run the risk of being placed in any school with available space. The only schools with available spaces are generally those least desirable from the point of view of being placed quite low in the performance league tables. Parents also run the risk of having their children placed in a school some distance from their home. As a result, and to avoid such inconveniences, parents are encouraged to apply to their local school as their first choice to avoid such possibilities. Therefore, the 'catchment area' is still an important feature of the enrolment procedure.

CHAPTER 6 UNITARY ANALYSIS: IRELAND

6.1 Introduction and Setting

Initially, the *situation* of the Irish case study location will be described. Then, as in the preceding chapter, the factors will be examined on the basis of stakeholder responses. Finally, the evidence collected from primary documentary sources will be reviewed.

The Irish location is a long-standing provincial city with a considerable hinterland which forms the county in which the city resides. Partly as a result of materials imported by sea, there is a range of manufacturing and processing industries from the traditional to the microelectronic. The latter is a strong feature of the contemporary boom in the Irish economy that was sustained through the 1990s and is still ongoing at the time of writing (2001). The city has always been an important service centre in view of its location and regional significance. Given some decline in traditional industries, the tertiary sector of the economy is now dominant, including as it does the longstanding features of local and county administration and social sector services. Simultaneously, there is growth in the tourist sector as well as information-oriented fields such as data processing.

The pattern of urban structure and morphology has the usual components of most conurbations - based on the clustering of related activities and a range of socio-economically related residential sectors. There are significant areas of municipal housing, including a sharp divide between the north and the south sides of the city, the former being predominantly working class, and the latter middle class. So, while there is a degree of urban social segregation, it has minimal ethnic dimensions. The

increasing mobility of the population since the 1990s economic 'lift', as well as improved infrastructure for transport, have led to significant exurban development. This has the effect of bringing nearby towns into the sphere of influence of the city.

The political and administrative structures of this area are illustrated with special reference to education (see *Figure 15*). This is clearly much more straightforward than the English case, there having been no significant reforms to the systems of either second level provision or local government. The second level sector in Ireland is national and unitary except for the vocational sector which is the responsibility of the county. The milieu includes both types of provision which are also represented among the schools selected for the empirical research.

6.2 Empirical Outcomes

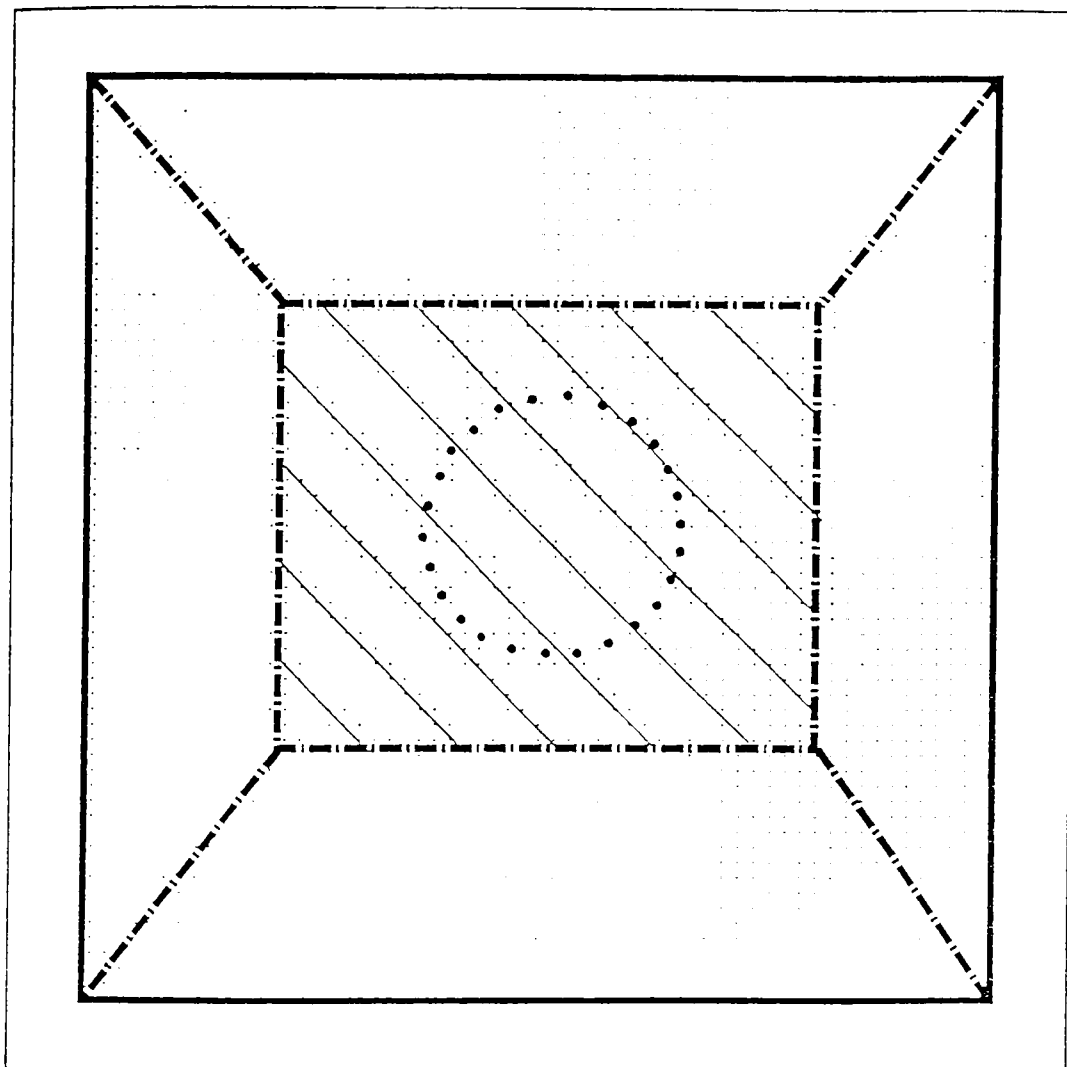
As before, the factors will be paired.


6.2.1 Stakeholders' Responses

Historical and Cultural Background

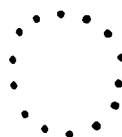
In the three case locations, these are the current situations: one well-established school in constant demand; another relatively well-established school, again in demand, and a reasonably new community school, again in demand. Their enrolment policies determine their cohort. All three schools have an enrolment procedure with set criteria where different factors are prioritised depending on the school.

Figure 15: IREsite



 State System
(Irish Republic)

 Local Authority
(County-Vocational Schools Only)

 Milieu
(Urban).

Rosarii Griffin

The schools share a common feature: that is, they feel they are designed to serve a particular community, be it past pupils, the local community, or both. The schools have therefore identified a cohort of people they wish to serve. The enrolment policies are designed to perpetuate these patterns, and so build up or maintain traditional patterns of schooling.

Although the schools feel obliged to serve their designated community, they do not feel obliged to go beyond their own capacity in *how* they should achieve this. Over-subscription is not a welcome feature in any of the schools, and so each school, although it tries to cater for the demands of the community, has a strong sense of its own limitations, and exercises power in the light of this. This power is exercised through the formulation of school policies. In respect of these policies nobody can dictate or exercise influence apart from the assigned management board, chaired by an influential principal. School policies are constrained by national government policies. In general terms, the autonomy of the schools is maintained by the existence of the board. Even the vocational sector, which has a regional administrative body, has limited influence on enrolment policy. This remains the exclusive domain of the school itself, to decide as it sees fit, not only to benefit the community, but also to ensure the longevity of the school itself. In preserving itself, it indirectly preserves the quality of education at the point of delivery, by establishing policies to ensure that both the school and the community are well served.

It is instructive to consider the historical roots of the case schools. The first case school was set up in the area for girls who could afford to pay for a secondary education when such a thing was rare. This school's origins catered for the needs of the middle class, which would emphasise not only academic values but also behaviour. This school is over one hundred years old, and although it has no local

established community the school is always oversubscribed, primarily with past pupils demanding the same education for their own offspring as they had received themselves. This particular school was run by a female religious order.

The school survived primarily on the reputation it had built up over the years. As the school could not expand its facilities, as it was gridlocked, it remained small. This is also part of the school's appeal. The school has not changed much over the course of the century. On the downside, the school was said, by one parent governor, to be fairly run down, cold, without many modern facilities; yet this did not deter parents from wanting their children to be educated there, the reason being that the child 'would be happy'. The atmosphere which the school engendered, and 'the type of girl' to emerge from the school - caring, concerned, well behaved, well disciplined - appealed to many parents.

The second school, the boys' school, was set up much later by a male Christian religious order over thirty years ago. It originally was set up to cater for a rapidly expanding community that was primarily made up of middle class professionals - the University is near by. It also catered for skilled manual workers who had aspirations for their children. As a result, the school had a strong academic focus, with a strong academic curriculum. The school's achievements were an important part of the school. The fact that most of the boys would continue on towards third level and the professions was an important selling point.

The third school was set up only ten years previously to cater for a population explosion. This population was mixed in terms of its social class background, as well as its geographical background. Quite a number of parents would have migrated from the country to the city in search of better employment prospects. The school was set up as a community school, precisely to serve the needs of the community. However,

unlike the other two case scenarios, it was not set up by a religious group, but rather by the state. In spite of this, the school still has a very strong Christian ethos upheld by the principal and staff. As the vice-principal pointed out, it reflects the make up of Irish society, but is in no way discriminatory towards other ethnic minority groups. The only traditional pattern the staff could see was the fact that they 'modified the pattern of going into the city [centre] that would be the only thing'. So, this school broke one traditional pattern and established another. People attended the new school for the following reasons: they were a population new to the area, and had no real affinity with a particular school, so a new school and a new area was all part of the package; access to a local school was easier; transport arrangements (including walking) to the local school were more convenient, less expensive and less time-consuming. The local new community school got an immediate response from the community it was designed to serve, which means a great deal in itself in view of the place of the school in Irish culture.

Geographic and Demographic Patterns

On analysis of the transcripts, enrolment policies in operation in all schools in the Irish location seem to relate closely to two issues: proximity and local community. This also raises the question of accessibility and the notion of 'catchment' itself - a notional geographically bounded territory for the purpose of allocating students to a particular school.

Geography is most definitely a factor in the mediation of policy in this case. The closer a school is located to an urban centre, the greater the demand.

Demographic patterns determine the demand for schools, and demographic trends affect enrolment policy.

The notion of 'catchment' in Ireland is very loosely defined. For historical and cultural reasons, it usually refers to the general community or parish area. There are no strict boundaries, and movement between catchments is not problematic. However, schools have formulated their own policies to suit their local communities; their prospective customers. For example, the offspring of past pupils usually have first preference into the school. This is an attempt to retain a sense of community, continuity, and tradition within a given area. Originally, the catchment area was set up to 'accommodate students in order to come to their nearest post-primary centre'. It is permissible to go outside one's catchment area, 'but', according to the local transport liaison officer, 'transport is not provided' and 'it is made difficult for [parents] all right...you won't be offered the full free, or a concessionary transport'.

Accordingly, proximity to the school was given to the researcher as *the* top criterion for entry into most schools. The reasons for this varied from 'people can identify with the school' to 'people...have great confidence in the school and what it is doing'. In certain locations, there tends to be 'a certain affinity to the school by the community at large'. The local community tend to view the local school as 'their school'. As a result, the schools never felt the need to advertise themselves. They felt they were well known by the community and had a long-standing good reputation with the locality, demonstrated by the fact that the schools were always fully subscribed.

However, one parent governor did point out that the number of feeder schools was dropping as a result of the demographic trend in terms of children per family. So far, this falling of school rolls at the primary level had not yet affected the secondary

schools, but there was evidence to show that principals were 'gearing up' to face the potential problem of fewer students for the places they have to offer. This is evidenced by the commencement in some schools of 'open nights' for parents - responding to parental demand, as well as the commencement of advertising. So far, this has been 'low key', but nevertheless schools have become more aware of the need to 'display their wares'. This development is tempered by the fact that schools appeared co-operative with each other in general terms of defining their catchments, and disapproved of poaching students from other catchments.

One such school in the case location felt, in regard to other schools in the location, 'we have a good relationship with them. They are not affecting our intake'. Whether if they were adversely affecting the intake, the nature of the relationship would change is questionable, in view of traditional cooperation.

Where there were two schools in close proximity serving the same local community, the 'boundaries' were less clear. Nevertheless, one school made an informal agreement with the other, and identified a notional catchment. Since enrolment decisions for these schools are taken at the school, it is the schools' responsibility to create their own enrolment policy, and to decide the limitations to be applied.

The only situation where this differed slightly was with the third case school, which was located in a peculiar location insofar as it had no real local community. That was because its location was near businesses and an array of small apartments that housed single people or young childless couples. Hence, this school's 'catchment' depended very much on people coming from outside its immediate area or locality. These children usually consisted of the offspring of past pupils. Ironically, although this school was located almost in the city centre, a considerable proportion

of its intake came from outside the city, mainly from the surrounding suburban or rural areas. Consequently, this school had a more flexible enrolment procedure insofar as it did not prioritise proximity, but rather the daughters of past pupils had first preference, and those who already had siblings in the school had second preference. Only after that was proximity considered.

Access in to the local secondary school was often guaranteed to children from local 'feeder' schools that were 'tied' to one school or another. Urban, particularly inner city schools, where there might be a few 'competing' secondary schools in the area, arrange to have their 'open night' on the same night. This is done for administrative reasons. Because enrolment is organised at the point of entry (*i.e.* at the school), parents might apply for a number of schools, especially if they fear they may not get into one because they do not fit the school's enrolment criteria. This can pose a problem for the schools because the numbers arriving may be considerably lower than expected if some parents make choices overlapping with other schools. In order to prevent this, schools arrange to have their open nights, and sometimes their diagnostic 'entrance examinations' and application day, all on the same day/evening to reduce the effects of duplication. This helps schools to plan their budgets for the year, as well as their timetable and classroom allocation.

Where the single sex girls' schools in the case location were located next to a boys' single sex school, or in the case of the community school, which was mixed, this heightened the school's chances of being selected by parents who had several offspring of both genders. Driving them to school was then described as a 'one stop job'.

Locating a school in the city centre also had negative consequences. Safety was an important issue for parents, particularly in the case of the all girls school. This

affected the mediation of school policy in so far as the school had to accommodate this factor. As a result, the school allowed girls to 'stay on in school' following the school day, for the purpose of study. This was an attempt to minimise the time the girls spent in the city.

Transport and mobility are associated with the geographical factor. In all the case locations, the vast majority of children walked to school. Most of the remainder children came to school by bus. In the case of the school which had very few children from the local area – being primarily a business area - these children tended to be driven to school (as their parents drove to the city to work each day).

The availability of transport within the urban area was another attractive feature, which generally meant that neither parents nor schools need have to worry about transport as there was plenty of public transport for their students. According to one principal: 'the location is good for ease of transport: the fact that, for instance, the city bus routes all converge on the centre, makes it easy for people to come straight in rather than go criss-cross country'. In the case of this particular school, some students 'found it easier to get transport straight into 'town' (*i.e.* the city) than going to their nearest school...where there wouldn't be direct access'.

Political and Religious Dimensions

Given the influential role religious practices had to play historically in education in Ireland, it is not surprising that religious and political issues are so closely related in the Irish context.

The Government's Circular (M15/93) informed all the schools' enrolment policies (see *Appendix B*). This states that schools should not select their students on

the basis of academic ability. Hence, any entrance examinations must be held purely for diagnostic purposes. These diagnostic examinations usually follow the enrolment procedure.

All of those interviewed were adamant that discrimination on the basis of academic ability was never entertained - particularly since Circular M15/93 was issued - but also for a number of other reasons. Firstly, it went against the notion of the school's relationship with the local community. Secondly, it went against a prevailing preference for mixed ability teaching and finally, selection on the basis of ability was perceived as being almost immoral. All of the schools had a strong Christian ethos even if religious groups did not run them. This was strongly manifested in the notion of 'inclusion'.

It was generally perceived that policy decisions are made at the state level. Nevertheless, it was brought to light that there was some autonomy at the local level, certainly at the board of management level, to mediate policy as they see fit. In spite of this, some schools did operate 'scholarship' prizes, *albeit* only for rugby and football. Even at the local level, and in spite of government policy, some schools find ways and means of 'getting around' the regulation. But on the whole the rule seemed to be respected and defended on 'Christian' grounds.

Most of the schools felt that their religious ethos had a lot of influence on why parents chose to send their children there, but very few thought that this was parents' main concern. The religious ethos certainly influenced enrolment policy in terms of the non-selective element of the criteria. For the most part, schools adhered to this.

Given the high level of consensus and cooperation, it is not surprising to find that the selection procedure for the Irish schools varied in detail but not in kind. For example, all of the applications were made *to* the local school where the parents

wished to enrol their child. So, in one of the schools, the procedure was simply that the parents telephoned and gave their details over the phone. If the school was in demand, parents would have made their wishes known years in advance, that they wished to send their daughter or son to that school. As a result, the schools had 'waiting lists' for years in advance. Most parents had to make direct application to the school. Forms for application were both sent out to the local feeder schools, and distributed among the sixth year pupils (11-12 year olds) for completion by the parents. These forms had then to be returned to the school for processing. Other procedures included the secondary schools asking their current pupils if they had any siblings intending to come to the school, and then they got a form to fill out. Otherwise, parents rang the school and requested forms to be sent out for completion. The criteria for preference were clearly indicated on the form, or explained over the phone, as was the order of priority among criteria. It usually went as follows, although the order of these criteria varied slightly from school to school: proximity to the school; children of past pupils; siblings of current pupils. Other criteria varied depending on the school's location and other circumstances. For instance, in the case of the school which had no neighbouring community, their criteria usually began with daughters of past pupils (as it was an all girls school); proximity (but flexible); siblings. For most schools, applications were accepted on a 'first come, first served' basis.

Once schools fill their allotted quota - and this is usually determined by the staff as to how many they could manage - pupils are allocated places along the above lines. One school imposed a quota number of pupils from its feeder schools. This particular school held a 'lottery' for the remaining places.

For the other secondary schools, each application that exceeds the limit is examined individually, and taken up on its own merits. Sometimes appeals were made, but the principal of the school usually settled them directly. Sometimes appeals would go to the board of Governors, but usually the principal's opinion was paramount. Disgruntled parents sometimes sought the intervention of local politicians, local radio, or local parental pressure groups, usually to no avail. On rare occasions, and only in exceptional circumstances, schools would accept extra students. But schools were also confined by the rules of the teachers' union and the optimal teacher/pupil ratios. Sometimes schools would accept extra students, especially if they were hoping to expand their premises. Accepting extra students was often seen as a political tool to demand more money, resources or buildings from the Department of Education and Science. It was generally felt that the quality of education deteriorates when a school exceeds a certain capacity, and that it begins to become depersonalised. None of the schools investigated felt that the growth of the school was necessarily a good thing beyond a certain number.

The application procedure is usually preceded by visits to the feeder schools by the principal of the local secondary school, or other members of staff. All schools tend to have an 'open day' or 'open evening'.

The only really inhibiting factor for children entering a secondary school is the accommodation limit. At this point, the enrolment criteria are carefully examined, and those who least fit it are not granted places once the school's capacity is reached. This is usually the only basis for refusal.

All of the schools in the case study location were in fact oversubscribed. The school's first priority was those people who lived in the 'catchment area'. Most of the

schools had their own designated feeder schools and then shared some feeder schools with other secondary schools.

Political and religious factors in respect of public secondary schools in Ireland are intertwined. In the cases of the two case schools which were previously run by religious orders, their board of management now consists of a number of nominated trustee representatives. When there is an appeals case whereby a child is refused entry into a school, the decision goes to the board. The final 'court of appeal' lies with the Chair of the board who is ordinarily a trustee nominee. In most cases, appeals are refused on the basis of capacity. The school's enrolment policy is the ultimate factor. The board takes note of the principal's view on the issue, and usually acts accordingly. The board of management's decisions about an appeal is final.

In the Vocational Educational sector, appeals may be made through the local VEC office. Again, the decision is made at the local level, by the school board, whose principal appears to be very influential on the outcome of such appeals. While they did have procedures, recommendations and codes of practice at the regional level, the final decision lay with the board of management in much the same way as it did for the secondary schools and their management bodies.

As far as local politicians are concerned, the view was widely held that they had no role in enrolment issues. Although, on occasion, they would try to intervene on behalf of a disgruntled parent in their constituency, they had little or no influence. Local politicians had contacted all of the principals at one point or another, but on every count, the enrolment policy was upheld. Ultimately, in the words of one principal, 'I don't see that there is any interference by the politicians, or any input really by local politicians.' Even the Vocational Educational Committee (VEC), in the words of one vice-principal, although they had 'public representatives on the

committee', she saw 'no interference by politicians, or any input really by local politicians'. Those that did 'interfere on behalf of their community', did so as they perceived it to be their responsibility to make representations on behalf of local parents. Principals understood this to be the case, but remained firm in their resolve. Some other members of the School board saw the interference of some politicians as an exercise to get more votes, but those of this opinion were in the minority. On the whole, politicians had little or no influence on the mediation of enrolment policy in their schools.

Local *politics*, however, seemed to have a little more influence, although being defined by one parent governor as 'the politics of people talking to each other'. He recalled a time when politics with a big 'P' was an important factor *i.e.* those 'people of influence' included the local doctor, teacher, banker and priest. They were the 'movers and shakers'. Now, the politics of the locality operated at a different level. Competition, the media and 'the ordinary people', he believed, influenced this. He felt that 'society is a bit more open now than it was, and also there is a higher level of education in society': people are more aware of their rights now, through the media, through further education, through talking to others who are more informed.

The media is perceived as a powerful lobbying force, but still without any real influence at the level of the school. This parent governor gave the example of how a number of years ago there was a spurt in the population and a lack of corresponding secondary school places. The local media got involved in trying to please parents and publicise their issues, particularly in relation to placement at the local school. Although the local school - one of the case schools - did try to offer more places, as it saw fit, it did not bend to pressure. That pressure often came from the local VEC office (as it was a VEC school). Neither did the school give way to the local people.

The school accommodated the community to its full capacity and then refused people entry on the basis of the school's own enrolment criteria. Both the principal and the management board were united on their policies without bending to pressure from any quarter. Although it did result in friction in some cases between the local principal and the local VEC office, there was nothing the latter could do to change the situation. The school was governed by the board, which was directed by its principal.

The other source of pressure was parents calling continuously (either in person, by letter, or by telephone) in order to put, in the words of one parental governor, 'pressure, pressure. They just keep coming to the door. From what I know, yes. People coming up and down, you know. Until they wear them down'. Ironically, this tends to be the most effective. In the case of one [now] parent governor, this was what he had to do in order to get his daughter into the desired case school. He called often, enquired often, rang often, kept showing he was very interested in having his daughter enrol in the school. Despite the fact that the school was over subscribed, and that he failed to meet any of the desired enrolment criteria, she was allowed entry, but only at the 'final hour'. Hence, this kind of 'excessive' interest, shown by or on behalf of parents, can sometimes work for the benefit of their offspring. However, if this kind of pressure is applied following the submission date then, in the words of one parent governor, 'when your quota is filled, your quota is filled'. Parents, such as in the previous case, usually begin some years in advance to try and get their offspring into popular schools.

Social and Economic Factors

All the board of management interviewees recoiled at the notion that a pupil's religion, their parents' occupation, ethnic background, or social class might influence

in any way the mediation of enrolment policy in the school. On every occasion it was pointed out to the researcher that such discrimination was illegal. Most interviewees were adamant that to ask such a question was preposterous.

No, there is no consciousness in any form or kind against any ethnic group that come in. We have schools that are multi-national, multi-ethnic, and there is no bias there.

All of the interviewees made the point that theirs was a Christian school with a Christian ethos, which they perceived as 'a great strength' as well as being very tolerant of any other person of any other denomination present in the school. Although the schools have people of other religions, the vast majority of the students were Roman Catholic which, as one vice-principal pointed out, reflects the nature of Irish society.

Given the community orientation of Irish secondary schools, it is not surprising that one local inspector said that primarily all the schools in the case location are also a product of the socio-economic situation in which they find themselves. So, for instance, the boys' school in the case study is located in an affluent environment. Similarly, the community school is located in an area where it is mixed, some middle class, and some working class; their cohort of students would reflect this. This community school also has a number of students who come from surrounding country feeder schools. This, according to the vice-principal, gives the school a nice 'cultural mix', and 'softens' the attitudes that are sometimes associated with 'town' folk.

This inspector did go on to speculate that 'if it happens there is a preponderance of working class children, middle class parents will send their children elsewhere', reflecting a common social bias towards one's own class. In spite of the

inspector's beliefs, all of the schools claimed to have a cross-section of students from different social strata, as well as from a wide variety of occupational backgrounds. One school trustee did admit that while they do not discriminate between students, the school was a fee paying school, and had a reputation for being strong academically - traditionally the 'forte' of the middle class.

The principal of another school felt that, because they were primarily an academic school, this meant that 'on the whole, rightly or wrongly, our girls would be more or less middle class, but not by any means exclusively'. However, another principal felt that now, since education became free in 1968:

We have a mix of students from all strata I would imagine, nowadays we have, that wasn't so in the past. When it was fee-paying, it would have been a different type of school, because it would have been mostly academic...but nowadays, everybody stays on, and it makes it more difficult for the teachers if they are not interested.

Although one principal conceded that he may be getting a greater proportion of students from one social level, he felt that this was primarily because of the location of the school in relation to the catchment area, and also that the middle class have more access to transport, and so can get their children to the school more easily. Another parent governor of one school claimed that:

The school is open but maybe it would encourage more to those type of, I think it possibly hits on more middle ground. It is not catching the far right, and it is not catching the far left. If you had a sort of standard deviation, it is catching a lot in the middle, very middle ground.

While none of the respondents believed that social class was an issue *per se* in enrolment, they believed that people were generally self-selecting and that schools' reputations were built more on their traditions in the past, be they academic or

vocational, and that this attracted certain groups. The only person who was adamant that social class was a major influencing factor was the local inspector who said:

I think social class is a crucial determinant. I think middle class will send children to schools that will profit middle classes. My perception.

The economic dimension comprises the funding mechanisms that bring most of the recurrent budget to public schools and also the potential involvement of the business community.

A steering Committee was set up in 1999 in response to the White Paper *Charting Our Education Future* with the aim of ensuring equity in school funding:

Funding Mechanisms will be developed to ensure that all non-fee-paying second level schools will be funded on an equitable and transparent basis. Common criteria and entitlements will apply to the funding of schools in the second level sector. A Steering Committee will be established to draw up a recommended funding framework which would ensure equal treatment for different schools within this sector, while taking account of the needs of these different schools (Report of the Steering Committee, 1999a, p.i).

For the second-level sector, there were three different mechanisms of funding for the three different sectors, each of which have advantages and disadvantages in terms of equality and transparency. The committee recommended that there should be a trade off between these two principles since ‘formula funding can be transparent and manageable but is limited in its capacity to ensure complete equality of treatment in the allocation of funding to schools, while a budgetary approach can facilitate greater equality but often lacks the necessary element of transparency.’ In their recommendations, the committee suggested that there should be a) *application for, and targeting of funds* - i.e. greater targeting of assistance, in terms of the free book scheme and other resources, particularly to disadvantaged groups in both urban and

rural areas; b) *thresholds and differential support* were recommended since the same per capita allowance for all does not necessarily work out best for the most disadvantaged groups; c) a *combination of schemes*, the committee recommended 'an integrated strategy to address educational disadvantage' which is 'consistent with the National Anti-Poverty Strategy'; d) *Impact of educational disadvantage*, it was recommended that the Department of Education and Science (DES) should review the impact of disadvantage on educational achievement on a regular basis and finally; e) *evaluation* - the DES should review, through macro analysis, its national strategies on a regular basis (pp. 38-39). The outcome of the Steering Committee's report was commented on by the now Minister for Education, Dr. Michael Woods, in a press release (11/04/2000). He announced that in respect of funding, 'one size does not fit all' and that he wishes to 'encourage greater decentralisation of decision making' in respect of funding. The new proposed funding initiative has at its core the 'concept of the individual school planning the delivery of its educational services to its pupils, reviewing its priorities and its needs'. This new approach is expected to confer greater flexibility on schools in the deployment of resources.

All of the respondents were adamant that the business community had virtually no role in enrolment policy, nor generally in the affairs of a school either. In fact, the business community were not perceived to play any significant role in education nationally, regionally or locally. The only capacity in which they were involved in school affairs was when they contributed to fund-raising efforts usually at the local level. On that front, they were generally acknowledged as being 'good support when we raise funds for a particular thing.'

The idea of business community involvement in education was treated with less suspicion in the local community and vocational school, for obvious reasons.

Here, their input in terms of 'a resource in curricular initiatives and as guest speakers' was 'highly valued' yet it was quickly added, 'but that would be the extent to which the business community would have an influence'. The principal of one school explained that:

The whole ethos of a community college is to serve the community and therefore any vested interests would have absolutely no input into enrolment policy. We would be abhorred at that [sic].

The role of the business community was very clear in relation to educational issues. They had a role to play as mentors, as speakers, and also in the formation of some curricular issues which pertained directly to business. Any other kind of involvement, any vested interest, was considered undesirable. Members of management boards do not perceive the notion of markets in education, and the direct influence of business and the private sector as good bedfellows.

That is not to say that the input of the business community is not wanted or is not desirable. It was thought to be both useful and desirable, as long as their aims and objectives were conducive to the aims and objectives of the school, and only in so far as their interests did not go beyond the bounds of particular activities such as fund-raising, sponsoring, liaising with schools for potential employees, trainee work experiences, *etc.* Again, the Vocational Educational Committee (VEC) actively sought positive partnerships with industry

6.3 Documentary Outcomes

6.3.1 National Level Sources

National documentation includes press releases from the Minister's office on issues relating to decisions made on school enrolment, issues of inclusion, school funding and school performance indicators. According to Groeger (1991), Irish education can *be seen* to be decentralised with the Government acting more as a funding agency than a school board. This is reflected in the fact that individual schools are allowed to determine the curriculum they wish to provide, in accordance with what Hannan and Boyle (1987) called their 'charting objectives'. This is tempered by the State's involvement in funding. In spite of the autonomous nature of Irish education, it is still considered a centralised system, organised primarily from Dublin. As a result, the type of documentation gathered here to date has tended to be on a national scale.

The teacher unions are also strong: they too generate documentation relevant to the handling of policy, the governance of schools, and the reports and responsibilities of classroom teachers. Their documentation included in-service training brochures. One such training programme was a one-day course for prospective teacher representatives on schools' board of management. The researcher attended this training session. This one day training course was geared towards teaching teachers to become 'an effective teacher-governor' and to mobilise teachers to act, not only in their staff's best interest, but also in accordance with teacher union policy. The day conference was well organised and attended. It highlighted the fact that most governors do *not* attend such training and, as a result, do not maximise their influence on policy or decisions.

The Irish Government's Documentation for the Regulation of Secondary Schools

The government's *Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools* (1999/2000) give an interesting insight into the Irish education system. The purpose of the book is to make 'the following rules for the purposes of the said Acts' (1999b). A glance at the table of contents gives an insight into the *modus operandi* of the Irish second level system of education. For instance, section one (one page) gives a list of definitions, section two and three (constituting three pages) gives details on 'conditions for recognition of secondary schools - general regulations' and 'additional regulations for the recognition of new schools' (pp. 5-7). The bulk of the Department's rulebook is devoted to the prescribed national curriculum, from which educators can choose. It includes the rules and regulations attached to the national examination system.

An interesting aspect highlighted in this book is that just about anyone can set up a school, so long as it is within the broad framework of the national curricula and prepares the students adequately for the national examinations. It seems that one needs only to prove that there is sufficient demand for the school, and that local provision is inadequate. In 1999, parents in the researcher's hometown decided that they needed a 'Gaeltacht' (all Irish school) primary school for their children. As was the case with Charter schools in the USA, the parents found premises and set up the school on their own accord: the teachers were paid by the parents and community. Though reluctant, the Department of Education was forced to recognise the school, and agreed to fund it in accordance with national regulations. The constitution, as aforementioned, also supported the parental demand for such a school. The case was not challenged legally by the Department; the parents' constitutional right was not challenged either.

Another interesting facet of the Irish education system is section twelve - labelled 'general powers' (Ireland, 1999b, Articles 77 - 79). Of particular interest is Article 78. This article states that 'the Minister may publish such particulars of the results of the Certificate Examinations and such other information relating thereto as the Minister may think fit'. In 1999, the then Minister for Education, Minister Martin, was put under considerable pressure from certain parents' groups to publish examination results in the form of league tables in a similar fashion to that in England. However, following submissions from the public, including the groups of 'stakeholders' involved in the National Convention, as well as general submissions from the public, the Minister decided *not* to publish league tables, and removed the item from his agenda as an issue not up for further discussion. However, within the regulations of the *Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools* it was at his discretion. Needless to say, pressure *not* to do so would have been particularly strong from the teachers' unions. However, the fact remains that under Section XII - General Powers (p.27), the Minister has considerable power to act if she or he so desires. Article 79 states that 'the Minister's decision upon any question that may arise upon the construction of these rules shall be final and conclusive' (p.27).

Another interesting aspect to note in the above publication is the reference to the school principal as 'The Manager' and teachers and auxiliary educators are referred to simply as 'the staff'. This gives an interesting insight into the power-relations and structure of the Irish educational system. There is no reference at any point to regional bodies. The Department deals directly with the 'Manager' whoever that may be.

6.3.2 Regional Level Documentation.

There was very little documentation at this level because the Irish education system does not have regional boards apart from the VEC sector. From the VEC, the researcher received a copy of the 1930 Vocational Education Act, subsequent documents relating to the curriculum and assessment of the VEC sector. More recent documentation involved the restructuring of the Boards, and decreasing the number of VEC regional offices.

The researcher interviewed the Transport Liaison Officer for the VEC area. He presented the researcher with a lot of documentation to do with the free transport scheme for which students qualify if they are travelling further than three miles. This is ironic, since it seems to encourage families *not* to go to their local schools. On the whole, the transport liaison officer said he sees very little movement between areas. It was the Transport Officer's belief that families tend to send their children to other schools only for pragmatic reasons and *generally* not because one school is perceived to be better than another, although he conceded that this too could be a factor.

Other regional documents collected included newspaper articles, which cannot be referred to since the location of the case schools would be identified. Since school choice is not a new or controversial issue, it has not featured very often on the news. There do not appear to be any controversial public appeals for school places.

6.3.3 Local Level Documentation (School Level Sources)

Similar to the situation found at all levels of analysis, it is true to say that Ireland is not fond of paper work. When the researcher asked the school authorities for related

documentation on the enrolment issue, the researcher was given a single brochure issued to them from the Department. This single leaf brochure is, as is customary in Ireland, written in both English and Irish, and is a simple user-friendly document. The accompanying official Circular can be seen in *Appendix B*. The Minister is quite clear about the Department's view of selection on the basis of academic achievement.

Other documentation given by the school included: a) the school brochure; b) financial reports to the Board of Management; c) minutes of the Board of Management meetings and, d) school brochures and magazines. Most of the above material (a to d) referred to the local day-to-day decisions that went on in the schools. What was interesting to the researcher was the negligible amount of money or effort put into school brochures to market the school.

Most of the school brochures, including those of the pre-pilot and the pilot schools, were printed internally at the school. The brochures on the whole were of high quality, even though they were amateur in-house productions. In other words, the schools did not invest its money on commissioning outside firms to help it market itself. It appeared that, in general, the schools did not feel a need to do so for three main reasons. Firstly, the schools were oversubscribed and did not feel the pressure of falling numbers. Secondly, it may be perceived by other schools as 'poaching' their students which was generally frowned upon by the education community. Finally, the schools already make adequate use, free, of local media such as local radio or newspapers, when publicising school events. These events include school plays, charitable events or awards received by pupils.

CHAPTER 7 UNITARY ANALYSIS: USA

7.1 Introduction and Setting

The American case will be introduced in relation to the range of factors examined in the empirical and documentary analysis below. Then the paired factors will be examined sequentially as in the preceding chapters.

Like the other country counterparts, the American location is a well-established conurbation of regional significance. Although for obvious reasons the USA case does not originate as many centuries ago as the other two cases, the historical periods of its urbanisation and growth are comparable with them. The American case exhibits the structure and urban morphology associated with manufacturing industries in the mid-nineteenth century to early-twentieth century as well as the effects of the subsequent decline of large-scale factory-based manufacturing. It is also a regional centre for the provision of professional, social sector and retail services through mid-Massachusetts with a hinterland of very similar proportions to those of 'Engsite' and 'Iresite'. Within this growth of service industries is included the microelectronic element.

There are, however, some distinct differences. The origins of the local school district, which are of concern here, are of longer standing than the administrative units in either England or Ireland. Local democracy, and its parameters in terms of political geography, is fiercely safeguarded in the American context. Consequently, as the conurbation in question has grown, largely due to the influx of Hispanic immigrant

populations, administrative reform has not grown with it. School districts remain small and several share this urban area, though the one with which we are concerned occupies the core and has sufficient residential variations to compare with the others. Whereas, as aforementioned, the other cases are relatively homogenous in respect of ethnicity, 'USAsite' is less so. The fact that the majority population in the area (American Hispanics) is not found to any significant degree in English or Irish case locations, is not an issue of prime concern in this research. Certainly, the fact that in national terms Hispanics are referred to as a minority group, and therefore in some of the local literature, is anomalous. It is the Afro-American and to a lesser extent, Russian groups, that constitute the local minorities, as well as Caucasian Americans. USAsite is illustrated in *Figure 16*.

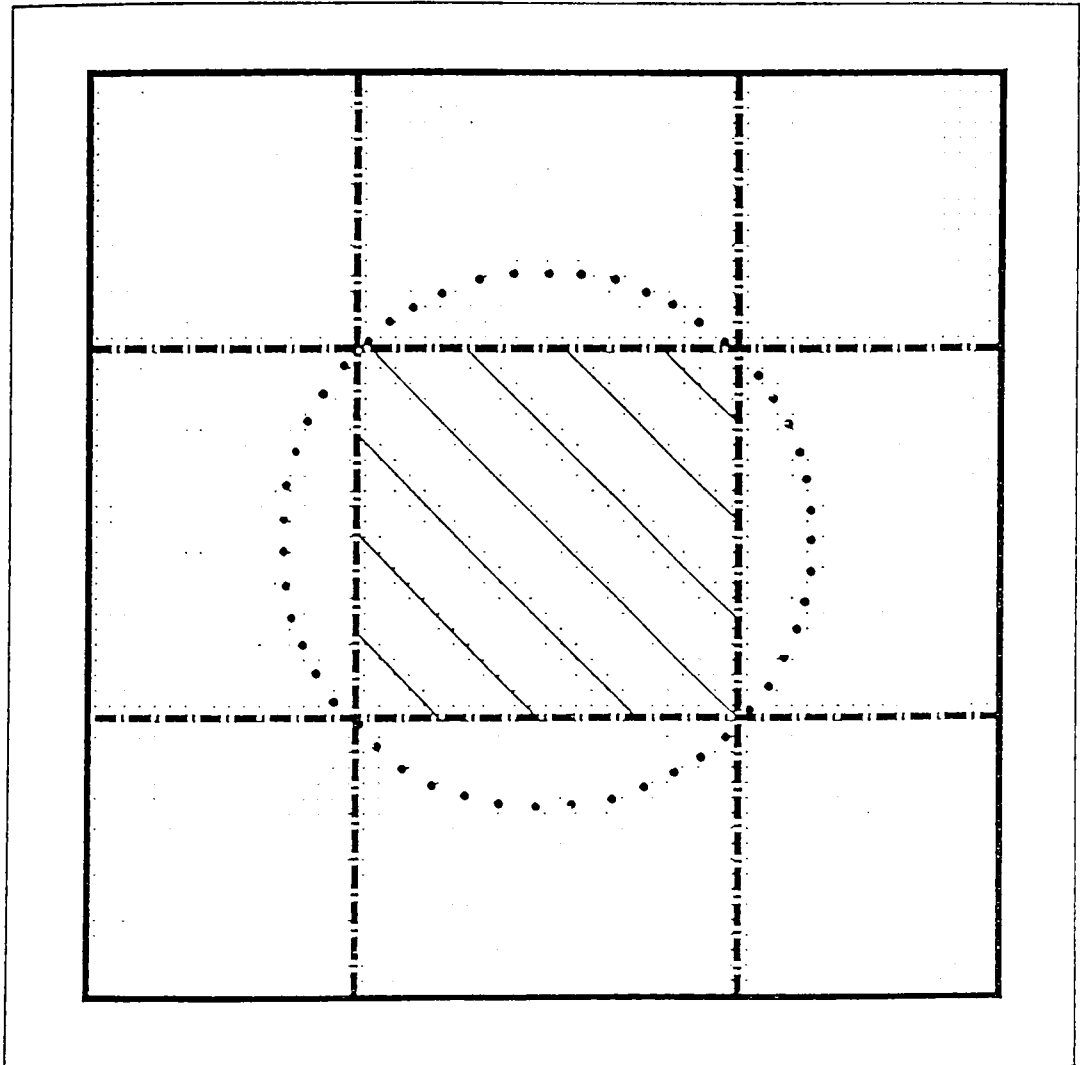
7.2 Empirical Outcomes


7.2.1 Stakeholder Perceptions

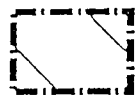
Historical and Cultural Background

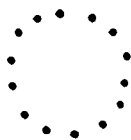
The degree to which this location fits the general pattern and culture of the development of public education in the USA can be seen from its chronological story. The first recorded schools here were noted in 1641, barely three decades after the first European landing near Boston, a considerable distance to the east. By 1685 compulsory school attendance was required and then the pattern of schools in the township was consolidated, apparently in the context of conflict between the indigenous Indian population and the settlers.

Figure 16: USAsite



 State System
(Massachusetts)

 Local Authority (School District)

 Milieu
(Urban)

Rosarii Griffin

By 1828, the first high school was in operation, a very advanced idea in those days though there were parallels in Boston. With the appointment of the first Superintendent in 1840, the first in the USA - it was closed, then reopened in 1841. By 1852 there had been a further consolidation and the creation of the new city-wide School District that still operates today. So, the provision of public schooling was a central feature of the urban community culture - a culture of inclusion well illustrated by the recognition of special needs provision as early as 1873. Philosophies of equity and community were expounded that survive today.

By the 1840s, the district had pioneered a junior high school sector, and all five high schools were established by the 1950s, two at the turn of the century. A plan to accommodate the increasing ethnic diversity was drawn up which proved a valuable basis for accepting the 1970s influx of Russians and Vietnamese, as well as the Hispanics and Afro-Caribbean Americans.

So, it would appear that this location epitomises the continuation of the inclusive tradition while accommodating diversity both in terms of ethnicity and structural change, as when first magnet and then charter schools were established alongside the mainstream provision.

The Geographic and Demographic Factors

There is no catchment system *per se* for high schools. The city district is the catchment area. Students from outside the district area may attend school in the district if there is space in the 'host' school. However, there was at the time of the field research a waiting list. The conurbation is substantial, and it is estimated that approximately 95% of the student cohort are bussed, the remainder walk. The furthest

they travel is about one hour. The reasons for the choice of school are often based around the question of ease of accessibility and convenience, which is directly related to the issue of transport. Most of the primary and junior high school students either go to their local school, or are bussed to one nearby. But, as indicated above, most of the high schools are centrally located with students bussing in from all quarters of the city.

The multicultural nature of this school district incorporates a range of ethnic groups and cultures. The social make-up of the area under investigation was described as follows by the local superintendent:

It is a 26,000 pupil urban school system that is largely minority: Hispanic, Puerto Rican and African-American and about 90% of the kids are under the poverty level, they are on free and reduced lunch...so, it's basically an urban centre.

The local superintendent did not know if there was a relationship between the reforms and the kind of students they were now getting. However, he said 'I will tell you that I have poorer kids and more of them, and more Hispanics'. He went on to say that:

In general, the enrolment in the school district has increased by about 4,000 students in the last ten years. Specifically, that increase has been largely minority, largely Puerto Rican. We got about 41/42% of the population now is Puerto Rican, when I got here, it was only about 30%, 29%.'

Multiculturalism is clearly a feature of the case school district. It appears from interviews with both this superintendent and that of a neighbouring district that there is a 'brain-drain' of primarily white middle class from the inner city to the more affluent suburban centres. English being a second language for a significant proportion of the population poses challenges for education in this district.

Political and Religious Dimension

On the basis of the 1993 Reform Act the State of Massachusetts offers a school choice programme in respect of which districts have to choose to 'opt-out' of, as opposed to choose to be part of. The school districts, which are part of the school choice programme, have the opportunity to accept students from other districts, as well as giving their own people in the district the opportunity to be educated in a different district, if it be the parents' choice. The district under examination was part of the 'school choice programme', but, for various reasons, some of its immediate neighbouring districts were not. The district under examination has an open enrolment policy and a 'self district system' which, according to the superintendent of schools, means that 'parents have a choice of schools within their sub-district and if they want to provide for transport, they can go out of their district'. 'That', he says, 'is what we call a "school choice" programme'.

According to this system, a parent can choose any school they want for their children. The district office keeps the records of the schools that are most and least popular. The schools are then assessed 'in terms of the market, as an indicator of the effectiveness of the school both in marketing itself and in delivering quality education'. Therefore, according to the superintendent, the marketing of the school takes equal precedence to the quality of its educational output.

One of the main issues affecting choice, according to the superintendent, is that 'many parents...pick a school that's further away from their house so that the child can be bussed and they don't have to worry about them walking in the

streets...that's because of the issue of safety' which he believed 'is a phenomenon that is late occurring'¹.

Massachusetts Education Reform Legislation

The new law, which was passed in 1993, identifies a minimum amount of money that has to be spent on each child, which is based on the tax base of the community. All school districts are now equalising the amount of money spent on each child because it has been found that education is a constitutional obligation in this state which obliges each district to educate every child equally. However, what has happened is that 'the law equalises the amount of money spend per child while not equalising the amount of money that each community must spend'. In other words, depending on the local tax base, education can be significantly differentially funded between districts.

Prior to 1993, there was never a compulsory set of educational requirements, such as the inclusion of physical education in the curriculum. Now a curriculum is mandated and there is a testing programme called Massachusetts Curriculum and Assessment Survey (MCAS), which is conducted on a state-wide basis. This serves as a reference point portraying how well each district and school is doing academically. MCAS is now mandated by law to operate throughout the state. According to the state legislator in Boston, communities determine their own enrolment procedure, with some mitigating issues such as racial segregation. On the whole, the state legislator confirmed that 'we really do have a lot of autonomy amongst our schools, it is a widely touted virtue of part of our civic culture that schools are locally controlled'.

¹ This heightened interest in safety may be as a result of the Colorado shooting incident which occurred on 20th April, 1999 where two pupils of Columbine High school killed 13 people and injured more than 30 others using guns and bombs in a five-hour rampage after which they both committed suicide (*The Hutchinson Almanac 2000*, p.498).

There was considerable resistance to the 1993 statewide reforms at the local level.

The perception of one such respondent was as follows:

Although the state legislator being as it is largely unacquainted with public education because most of them didn't go to public schools. They don't realise that it takes longer than five years to change a monolith like public education in Massachusetts for 50 years, or more. It will take them much longer than they expect to change public education.

One of the aims of DOE was to establish state examinations called the Massachusetts Curriculum and Assessment Survey (MCAS). This was the reaction of one sceptical respondent:

Even with direct orders, it will take much longer than they anticipate. They think that can prevent kids from graduating in 2003 because they don't pass the state Test, they are looking at two-thirds of the available kids who graduate. That will never happen. They are politicians. All those people represent voters. Believe me, it will never happen.

The Role of the Local Superintendent

The local superintendent is responsible for the smooth running of the district's educational system. Each district is independently operated. The superintendent gets a state allotment based on a formula to do with wealth and tax base. The Superintendent may then raise school funds separately. Other aspects of the role of the superintendent include issues such as safety, transport, assigning students, special education services, hiring and firing of staff. With respect to the last two items, hiring and firing, the law changed the relationship of the school committee to the superintendent. The local school committee has now no authority over hiring and firing. Prior to 1993, the superintendent would recommend such cases to the school committee and they would approve or disapprove. Now, according to the superintendent, he 'does all of the

appointing and the school committee has no authority [in this respect]. That is a change since 1993’.

The local superintendent believed his role was to initiate change. Part of the way of achieving this is by bringing another factor into the equation that will change the way public schools operate. By introducing schools which compete for public funding, the public schools will have to ‘sharpen their act’ so as not to lose their students to these new schools, and *ergo*, funding. The following quotation highlights the role the superintendent had to play in creating change and generating competition.

..in order for change to occur and in particular to accelerate change, you need catalysts, lightning bolts so to speak, that sparks the change, engines of reform and I call charter schools part of the engine of reform. They basically accelerate reform. And the way that they accelerate reform, people look at them and say, well if they are doing better than we are doing, we are going to end up not having Public schools and we better do better. So, it encourages people to do better. Now, the Unions will tell you that this is not so. But, I can tell you that I see that and the way that people talk about the charter schools, and the way improvement has taken place in the district. It is not the only engine of reform in the district, but it is one of the engines.

The superintendent also felt that when the only choice is the public schools, then it is a ‘limited choice’. Hence, he stated, ‘that is why I support charter schools that are either not for profit or for profit’. He went on to say that there were now four charter schools in the city. As they are public schools, supported by public funds but not operated by the superintendent, this is what makes him rather unusual. He proceeded to explain that in the for-profit school, he encouraged its opening:

I continue to sit on its board separate and apart from my responsibilities as superintendent. So, I am a school board member, a member of the board of Trustees of our charter school which is a bit convoluted but I felt that I wanted to have some say in what the school looked like.

The local superintendent argued that change occurred because of the fact that, at the national level, the political will for change was there: 'Now, we are entering a new period, I might say that it sounds very altruistic that the politicians were wonderful when they passed this new law'.

According to the local superintendent, since school choice came into operation, schooling patterns have changed and it has been noted that 'now parents will go to the high achieving schools and the schools that have a good reputation'. Another recent phenomenon is that now there are waiting lists for schools. The experience of the superintendent led him to believe that parents choose schools based on the following criteria, and in order of importance: safety, academic achievement, the programmes a school has to offer, schools that are convenient to them in terms of transport, and after-school extracurricular programmes.

The vice-superintendent felt that there were different motives behind the parental choice of school: some parents 'go and visit the schools before they make their choices' and would make their choices primarily on the basis of 'quality of education', and would also ask themselves the question 'is this building a safe environment?'; another set of parents choose the local school for convenience, 'it's my local school, it's close by'; while the third category of parents want their children 'on a bus picked up early in the morning' before the parents themselves leave for work, in which case, the convenience factor is the consideration. Some parents who perceive their children to be interested in manual-oriented careers usually choose vocational schools. On the other hand, some other high schools offer advanced placement courses with a strong technological emphasis, or an emphasis on the arts. Students gravitate towards the school which most reflects their interests or their desired career paths.

As there were a number of school districts comprising the conurbation, it was decided to interview one of the neighbouring superintendents whose district, unlike the case district, has not experienced any major changes in enrolment patterns within the past decade. This was primarily because they were not involved, or rather, had 'opted out' of the school choice movement. The neighbouring superintendent did not see much difference apart from the decline in the parochial schools from seven to four, some of which became public schools. Outside of that, there was no notable difference in movement of students from one school to another.

The main reason why parents moved children was primarily 'work related' in bringing their children to school *en route* to work, as opposed to distinct dissatisfaction with their local school. However, this district did not have any students coming into its area because of opting out of the school choice programme. In this neighbouring district, the pupils do not have to go through a central bureau, but rather they are assigned to their local school in the same way as catchments used to work in England, and what is loosely defined still as catchments in Ireland. In this district, the superintendent did not believe that parental choice was a big issue, nor that most parents were actually aware of school choice. Rather she believed that 'they are satisfied with their schools, so they wouldn't be looking for other options, and if they were looking for other options, they tend to go to parochials'. She went on to say that 'we have a large Catholic population in [named district] anyway, so ... the parochial schools are all Catholic'.

Therefore, for districts such as the one that opted out, the 1993 Legislation does not affect the school 'except by students leaving the district, because then that funding goes to the district that is receiving those students'. When asked, 'But it doesn't work in reverse?', the neighbouring superintendent replied:

No. That's a choice of the community and our schools are pretty packed. We don't have room to exercise school choice now, bringing in other students right now'.

However, she did concede that if those from outside the district were applying for placement, 'they would have to come through the central office'.

One of the teacher respondents felt that parents used different criteria for choosing which school to attend. First of all, they felt it was siblings, if already one was at the school, there was a tendency for the family to follow. Secondly, if the school offers a good quality education; and finally, 'word of mouth' was considered an important aspect, as expressed by one parent - 'well I sent my child there, very good, you should send your child there. They choose in that way'. However, an interesting observation made by this respondent was that, especially in middle schools, 'there has been a change because they are not neighbourhood schools any more. You don't go to the school that is closest to your home...for racial balance purposes'.

The Parent Information Centre

Returning to the case-district, an important innovation that assists with parental choice of school is the parental information centre. The centre is similar to a central admissions bureau: organising all applications to the elementary and middle schools, while taking set criteria into consideration such as gender and racial balance. According to the director of the parental information centre, the 'main role is to function as an enrolment centre for kids or their parents when they first come to [named city]'. It was set up in 1990. In addition to this primary function, it also provides services including 'workshops for parents...nurses on the staff that provide

and help...with immunisation...we also do the pre-school screening...language assessments...special educational pack facility for parents...' as well as information on how to understand an IP which is the 'individualised plan' for the student. The centre also contained information relating to computer facilities, transport and different social services including parental classes and pre-school care. The purpose of the centre therefore was to have as much information as possible in one location. The centre saved time for students and their parents, as well as for schools, who now do not have to 'expend time tracking down records, updating charts or immunisations, or doing language assessments to see where this child is in terms of their own language abilities'. In brief, the centre was described by the director as 'a self-contained unit'.

The main interest in the centre from the point of view of this study, was the fact that the parent information centre controlled the admissions procedures for all the public schools in the district below the high schools and as such, was the locus point of mediation in respect of enrolment policy at that earlier stage.

The city/school district itself is divided into six zones and, as mentioned above, the Parental Information Centre advises and directs students of this age range according to their place of residence and the policy of ethnic mixing. It is only if parents of student in this age range wish them to attend one of the six federally funded magnet schools in the area that they will normally be permitted to enrol out of their zone, though restrictions do not apply to high schools.

The official 'Factors for Consideration in Assignment' of applicants to public schools are listed as: racial/gender balance; available space; special educational needs; sibling preference (elementary and middle school only); education zones (elementary schools only); place of residence (elementary school only). It is evident therefore that

choice of public high school, which is what the researcher is concerned with in this study, is much less regulated than that of elementary and middle schools. Furthermore, at that level, there is also the additional choice rendered available by the greater diversity apparent in the American context of Magnet schools and charter schools.

Once parents have made their selections, points are allocated as follows: first choice (4); second (3); third (2) and fourth (1). Allocations of points for other reasons do not apply to applications for High school places. Information is provided in the documentation on all the schools available that are publicly funded, including the Magnet schools in a clear and mutually fair format. (see Appendix C for USA enrolment documents.)

The Charter Schools

The charter schools in this location, as in some other states, are chartered by the state of Massachusetts to operate as a public school. However, charter schools in this particular school district were actively encouraged and supported by the local superintendent. This was perceived as unusual as superintendents tended to perceive the charter schools as a threat to the public school system. According to the principal of the charter school, 'the charter school movement was coming forward in the States and [the superintendent] decided that he might be part of it and actually he wanted to create some competition for the district public schools'.

In the charter schools, enrolment was by way of a lottery system. This means that the students were selected from 'out of a hat'. This was perceived as the fairest mechanism of selecting incoming students. Even so, the charter school had agreed to 'go along with [the named district's] 'control choice' programme'. This is basically a

racial balance programme, which means that the students who are assigned are based on a racial balance model. According to the principal, the school broke along the following racial lines: '31% Afro-Americans, about 30% Latino and about 37% White, and the balance would be Asian students'. The principal further explained that the 'control choice' system also takes gender into account. He concluded that 'we don't select our students, our kids. They are sent to us through the [named district's] public school system'. Following the results of the lottery system and the 'controlled choice' criteria, the following was the account given by the principal as to what *subsequent* action was taken following the acceptance of a student:

They make an appointment to come in, I like to meet with the parents of the student. I feel parents have to be involved in the enrolment of students... then we schedule a meeting for...students to take a placement test, just to find out their strengths and weaknesses...And once that is done, we either place the student in the grade level that represents the testing...We talk about the rules and regulations. We give them a tour of the school...

This process was similar in procedure to that of the private schools. In the interest of comparison, the researcher also went to a local private school and interviewed staff there. Although this was not part of the pre-pilot, pilot or main study, the researcher felt that interesting contrasts could be made. The following description from the private school's enrolment procedure was very much akin to the charter school in terms of its criteria and autonomy, except that the private school applied this process as its enrolment criteria, as opposed to a subsequent action following enrolment as in the case of the charter school:

Yes, there is an admissions process. There is an application and in the application there is a section filled out by the parent, a section by the student, and that includes an essay, there is a transcript request which is the release form that the parent signs that the school that the child is currently at, they can release to us. That would include any testing as well. There is an interview that

is required. And, SAT, which is a Standardised Test that is given around the country on set dates, it is not given by [private school named], I mean we proctor it, but it is a Standardised test.

Hence, the private sector indeed has more control over its direct intake, unlike the charter school, which is still subject to the local district's public school selection criteria system as well as a random lottery.

With respect to interviews conducted at the three case locations, the principal of one of the charter school explained the lottery system: 'All the names are put into a computer by the date of entry and as we have openings, for example, as in next year when we are taking three hundred more students...children...will be offered a place on the list, will be offered positions at that point'. He reported that 'basically it is a first serve basis except when siblings move to the top of the list in each grade level. And racial balance plays a role in that...'

However, the charter school has gone along with the district's 'controlled choice' programme. This means that their student cohort are assigned to them on a 'racial balance model' (quoting the principal). Two thirds of the student cohort are from minority (coloured) groups. One third are 'white' Americans. So, the charter school does not select its own student body, it is assigned to them by Springfield public school system. It is also gender balanced. Siblings tend to have priority. The principal approves of the lottery system. Although he admits not to having a whole lot of influence, he likes it because 'it's straight, whoever applies can get in'. The waiting list tends to be problematic as he constantly gets calls from parents wanting to get their children enrolled. Indeed, the superintendent reported that the local charter school is growing rapidly due to demand. Although they have to lease the facilities and get no capital for this, there is a waiting list of about one thousand two hundred. So, according to the principal, the charter school 'is an effective option' for parents.

The High School System of Enrolment

With respect to interviews conducted at the three case locations, the principal of one of the high schools explained the enrolment procedure in relation to the Parental Information Centre:

Well, you cannot come directly to a school and enrol a student. There is an information centre. It is called the parent information centre... the parents go there with their child, and there are people there who are trained to find out all the information that the school will need and then that Officer assigns the students.

This means that while high school enrolment is totally open, the 'Parent Information Centre' can still assist them. The principal then explained that the students: 'bring in a whole packet of information and in the meantime they go to see what their ...home language is and ...if they are inappropriate for mainstream classes, someone must test them to see if they need to go into the transitional bilingual programme'. Students covered by a special education plan are also noted, because the school will have to be able to implement whatever their individualised plan (IP) is. The principal continued, 'they come to our school, the social principal interviews them to see if there is anything that we need to know about this student that isn't obvious'. This was an interesting issue that related directly to the safety issue about which all the principals and board members expressed concern. In case of potential risk to security, the principal asks questions about the applicant such as:

...did the kid just get released from state prison or something? Because those are questions we ask and you'd be surprised in the course of the year, we'll find three or four who are coming right out of the correction system.

According to the principal, when that happens in this city, 'there is a process to follow' which is that 'anybody from the correction system goes to a different office and a determination is made there whether they remain as separate programme or whether they return to a large high school'. This procedure applied to the five major public high schools in the city.

Religion and Education at the Local Level

In respect of the religious factor, as church and state are separated in the USA there is no official involvement of the church in education: no religious education is permitted in publicly funded education. However, the district does allow Bible clubs for example. This club has a leader, a teacher-leader but the district does not object as it 'doesn't have a formal relationship'.

As was mentioned above, due to lack of financial and human resources, the number of parochial schools in the neighbourhood district dropped from seven to four and in this district, the main parochial high school was experiencing falling rolls. According to the vice-superintendent, 'the cost has gone up and some people can no longer afford to send them to parochial school. That's a big issue'. He felt one needs to distinguish between a parochial (Catholic) school and a Christian school. The vice-superintendent said, 'there was a distinct difference in the mindset of the people at least'. He believed this distinction to be:

A Christian school is usually a Protestant school and people would send kids there because of religious commitment and belief so it is different than the parochial schools in some ways. And they are predominantly white as well. And some people choose to go to parochial school for that reason as well. So, it is not quite a diverse population ...I think that diversity is wonderful. It is the way to go.

Clearly, the vice-superintendent felt that there was a racial issue, as much as religious, and possibly ethnic, when parents choose to send their children to parochial or Christian schools. He also mentioned that Jewish Academies also existed but were comparatively small in numbers.

Parochial schools have a tuition fee and for parents who are parishioners, their local tax dollars are going to fund the local public school system which they are not utilising. This has lent another angle to the debate on school vouchers, as to whether public money may then be used to fund parochial education.

According to the principal of the public vocational school, 'currently, the state is in controversy with that'. She concluded that the argument to allow school vouchers for parochial schools *in lieu* of public schools would not win a court battle under the right to freedom of expression, as there is another law which has 'Constitutional Precedents' which say that one has to pay one's taxes whether or not one agrees with government policy.

The religious schools in this location operate the same school year as the public school system in order to correspond in terms of transport and in terms of taking days off, this makes it easier for parents to avail of public transport. The Catholic schools appear to be the most popular, apparently because of Catholic numbers and that they are historically associated with good academic schooling and discipline.

Social and Economic Factors

In this district, it appeared that social class is not so much an issue as is race. With the requirement of the Federal Court, districts have to take into account the racial balance.

According to one respondent:

Under the current court order, we have to racially balance a school within 10% or +10%. And in [named district] where the majority is the minority, it becomes increasingly difficult to do it...some of that plays out how these patterns work out, obviously.

Therefore, Court Orders relating to racial issues and desegregation play a major role in influencing the way in which enrolment patterns occur.

This nearby district, which did not operate the school choice programme, was also primarily a 'white', middle class district with very few minority groups. There is no incentive to give places to students from the neighbouring 'choice' district as there the receiving district does not get funding for those students. Hence, the district tries to monitor quite closely its intake of students, and insists that only residents in the district should be allowed places within its schools.

Charter schools are not necessarily 'middle class'. Indeed, the socio-economic class background of the students in the charter school visited is that over half are on free or subsidised lunch. It has attracted some very bright and some affluent children as well as having attracted 'some difficult students'. So, in terms of social class background, ethnicity and race, they have quite a diverse population. However, all the high school principals that were interviewed made the same point about diversity.

The superintendent is intent on improving the standard in local schools in terms of both structure and content; and not only through charter schools. In one of the local high schools, radical attempts were made to improve his schools' curriculum, and gain added status by attempting to introduce the *International Baccalaureate*. This involved a substantial investment of public funds.

We closed the school. We refurbished it entirely, spent 43 million dollars and put in new programmes and we are trying to get the International Baccalaureate Programme in. So, we have a new theme, we have lots of training for teachers, we have a new principal, and it seems to be working.

One of the reasons the Education Reform Act of 1993 was initiated was inequity of funding for students between districts which some superintendents felt gave less well-off citizens a lesser kind of education than those in, for example, a middle class district, where the taxes on property are higher and yield more returns for education. In order to bring about 'balance', the superintendent reported the following:

..but the reality is that a few districts including myself had sued the state and we'd sued them through a few students charging that the system was illegal and biased and didn't fit the constitution: a local system that only relied on local levies. And that municipalities and cities that were tax or property poor, there was an inequity. We had come to a fork in the road where it was ruled in our favour and this law stopped our proceedings, but if they don't continue with providing us the support, we will be right back in court. We are a bit spunky here!!!

So, the initiative for reform seemed to stem, not only out of an interest to raise standards in education, but also to provide more equal opportunities for students at school. The superintendent went on to describe his philosophy behind the 'School Choice Movement', and also raised the issue of 'vouchers'.

And, I just wonder, if it's not easier to be on the supporting end [of the school choice reform movement] so that there are not, vouchers don't become negative instruments and destroy public education and create a 'have not' and 'haves' system. Because the 'haves' will know how to access the system, and the 'have nots' have traditionally, whether it is in Europe or London or here, don't have a good understanding of how to use the system to their advantage. So, you have to be very careful about that. That is what public education is about.

The superintendent believed that increased enrolment in schools did not 'heighten significantly the financial well-being of the school' as they need 'more teachers, they need more aides, they need more staff for disturbed students'.

There is a state law that allows for districts to declare vacant seats and districts, or people, can apply for those seats. There are students coming into this

district from the outside and similarly, the district has students who go out. The superintendent estimated approximately 280 from this district.

7.3 Documentary Evidence

7.3.1 National (State) Level Sources

As is well known, the Federal level has no direct authority in respect of education policy except through the Supreme Court as in the case of desegregation of public schools in the 1950s. Nonetheless, there has long been a vigorous public debate on the issue of open enrolment and competition between schools in media organs that have nationwide impact, such as the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and cable television channels such as CNN and NCB. All these, for example, made headline news across the USA of the unprecedented step taken by George Bush Sr in 1989 at the height of the debate on improving America's public schools of calling together all 50 state Governors for a Conference on this issue (Cuban, 2000). As a more recent example of such national coverage one may take the article by Charles Wheelan in *The New York Times* of 25th May, 1999, 'Turning the Tables on School Choice', which contains some very pertinent points about the mediation of the issue, even though Wheelan does not use this terminology.

Writing as a Democrat, Wheelan's argument is that 'it's illogical for Democrats to be against vouchers and he claims that his party 'are on the wrong side of the school choice issue' because they feel politically unable to oppose the nation's largest teachers union *The National Education Association*, which in turn opposes

school choice and vouchers. Wheelan's position is that the argument put forward in support of this view is flawed, namely that: a) vouchers will destroy public schools, b) vouchers will benefit wealthy families more; c) some parents will not exercise their right to choose, or will make bad choices; d) school choice is bad because the Republican party supports it! Instead he suggest that, in favour of the middle classes having vouchers as well as the working classes:

Vouchers will bolster urban tax bases by stemming the flight of middle-class parents who move out of the city because they do not trust urban public schools and cannot afford private ones. Vouchers are pro-city, which is something that we Democrats are supposed to care about (PA 27).

At the same time as castigating his party for opposing choice and vouchers for the wrong reasons, Wheelan also urges caution because a) 'data on how effective vouchers would be in improving student achievement are far from conclusive; b) how will schools select students?; c) will parents be able to add money to the value of their voucher?; d) will students with special needs to integrated into the system?; e) can religious schools legally participate? He concludes by asserting that:

These are the issue that we need to be discussing. But we should stop clinging defensively to a system that, if it were presented to us today, we would blast for what it is: an assault on the poor, a waste of resources and a disgrace to the principles that the Democratic party stands for (Ibid.).

Moving down to the level of regional media and the leading printed origin of public debate, in Massachusetts, *The Boston Globe*, one may select the article by Katherine Merseth and Jeff Coolidge of May 20th, 1999 and one that makes a telling contribution under the title 'How to ensure that charter schools deliver the goods'. They provide both advocacy and insight, identifying - though not extensively - several of the factors selected by this researcher in her conceptual framework. Their concern

is with the survival of the charter schools in the various districts of Massachusetts as they say:

Because of the size of the school population in the 'host' district, any charter school in a district with five schools or fewer has a severe impact on the district school budget ... there is little incentive for the district to co-operate due to the Pioneer Institute's competitive model which encourages competition between charter schools and local school districts to the point where superintendents believe they must eliminate the charter schools to allow the district schools to survive.

Although charter schools utilise public funds, they are contracted with the State, not the district authorities, and so lack of co-operation with the local district can be fatal to both charter and mainstream alike. As a shining example as to the way ahead, Merseth and Coolridge select the same school district as that chosen some six months earlier by this researcher. With forty-three public schools, including five high schools as indicated above [Winnievillle] has already welcomed four charter schools, and the authors' report that:

The driving force according to [the superintendent], is the public's demand to be more involved in how schools are run and to have more choice in items such as class size and curriculum. These demands require change and the way to achieve it in [the superintendent's] view, is to stimulate reform from the outside via the charter schools.

This, the authors claim, is in contrast to 'bifocated and hostile districts' where the superintendent resists them, and they also go on to state that 'another answer to the Massachusetts's charter school dilemma, may be in charter districts'. Meanwhile, 'the people of Massachusetts should look closely at [Winnievillle's] relative success' in stimulating positive responses from the mainstream.

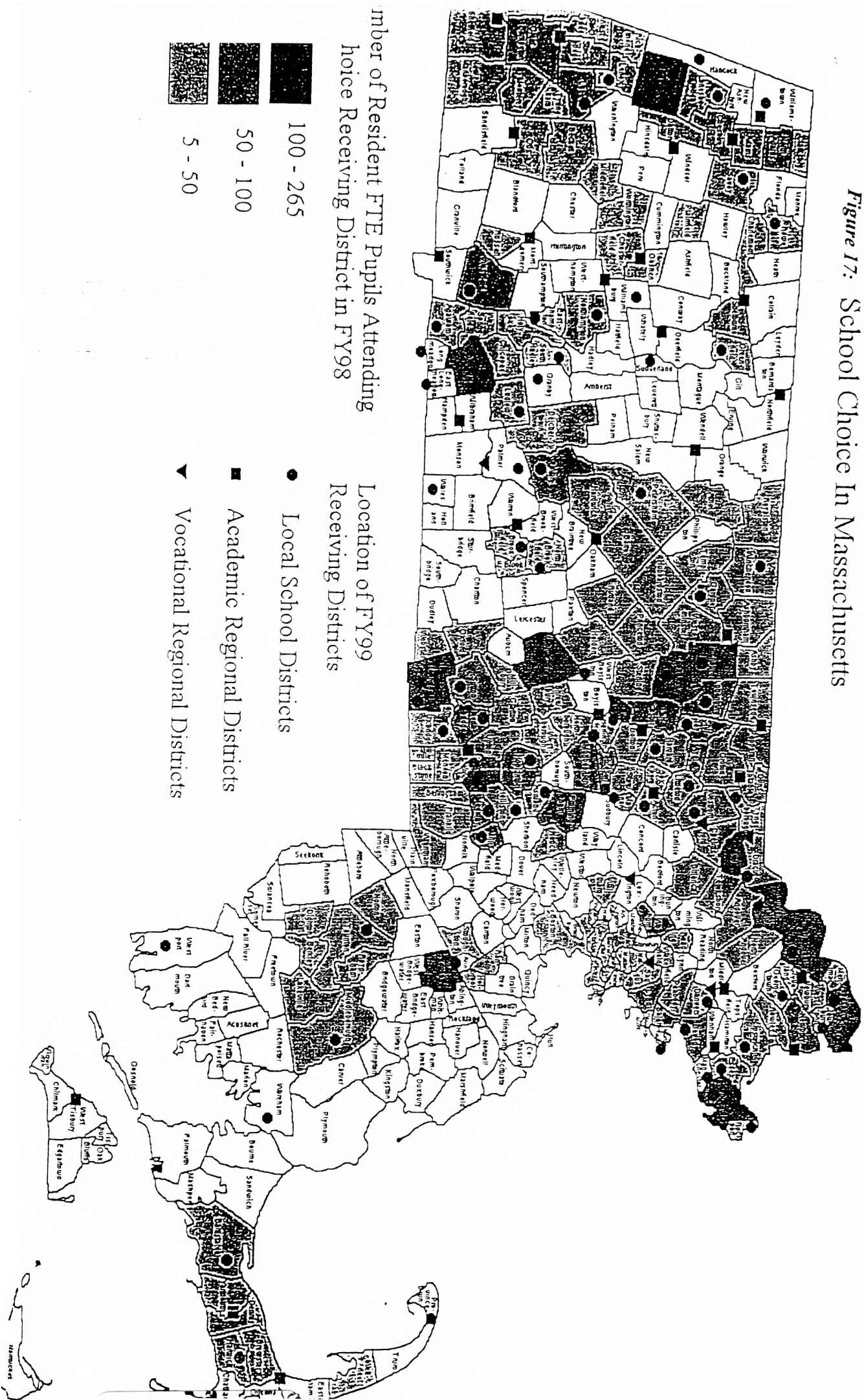
Documentary sources were obtained from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Education (DOE) on the issue in question, for example:

School District Profiles (July, 1998) which provides budget spending profiles for all districts in 1997 according to budget levels and *The Massachusetts Charter School Initiative* (1998) and *Advisory Opinion on School Choice* (1994). The last named is of special interest as it was published with a foreword by the Commissioner for Education, in which he states that the document, 'summarises the major changes in the school choice law...as it has been amended by the Education Reform Act of 1993 and by subsequent legislation'. The document comprises three sections: a) changes in the school choice law; b) questions and answers and; c) The Massachusetts School Choice law itself. Of particular interest is the following:

Unlike the prior school choice law, the law as amended contains a presumption that all Massachusetts school districts will admit non-resident students under the school choice programme. Withdrawal from the school choice programme can only occur when a school committee has held a public hearing on this issue, followed by a school committee resolution to withdraw from the school choice programme.

Such a resolution can only be passed if the public have the opportunity to participate in the debate; as of the academic year 1999-2000, 117 out of 330 districts had opted to participate in the 'School Choice Receiving Programme'. The distribution of these districts is shown in *Figure 17*. The number opting in has risen from sixty-three, the

Figure 17: School Choice In Massachusetts



highest figure before the 1993 Reform Act, and the number of students involved in cross-district school choice movement had doubled from 3,715 in 1992/93 to 7,486 in 1997/98. As already indicated in the case study location [Winnieville] is in the 'receiving scheme' which means it can also lose students. DOE data reveal that while very few students came in cross-border, the exodus has since reduced from well over 100 in 1998 to something over 50 in 1999. Precise figures are not given in the information obtained.

The public authorities are under some pressure from the Pioneer Institute in Boston concerning the implementation of school choice reforms in general and charter schools in particular. It is interesting and informative therefore to compare the DOE 1998 report on *The Massachusetts Charter School Initiative* with *Massachusetts Charter School Profiles 1997/98* from the Pioneer institute. They are broadly comparable, and indeed the main demographic profile graph for the school in Winnieville would appear to have been 'lifted' for the DOE version. While there is agreement on enrolment (108) there are discrepancies in respect of percentage of qualified teachers (50% in the PI document, 67 % in the DOE). While average pupil tuition cost is given as \$US 6,278 by DOE for 1997/98, the PI have a per pupil budget of \$US 7,572 for the same year.

The Pioneer Institute is clearly a vigorous and influential player in the mediation of school choice initiative in Massachusetts and confines its activities to a focus on that State. It produces a range of high quality pamphlets, all of which of course promote school choice. Their sponsored book, *Competition in Education: A Case Study of Interdistrict Choice* by Arnor and Peiser has been analysed in the literature review above and they have critiqued a *Harvard Study on School Choice* which was published in 1995 under the title of *the Cultural Logic of Families: the*

Political Rationality of Institutions. However, the focus of this thesis is on the mediation of choice policy, not the efficacy or otherwise of the mainstream or charter schools, but it is clear from the work of the Pioneer Institute that it is an influential single issue player in the politics of the state, especially in the field of education.

7.3.2 Regional Level Source

At some point between the level of the state and the local (district), documentation was obtained from the Regional Education and Business Alliance (REBA) which has been mentioned above in respect of the empirical evidence gained from an interview with its Executive Director. The documentation generated by REBA is clearly less partisan than that of the Pioneer Institute, aiming to enhance the quality of education throughout the public system as the following extract from its mission statement indicates:

The Regional Education and Business Alliance is dedicated to promoting measurable improvement in student learning. Bringing together human and financial resources, the Alliance offers levels of training and support impossible for districts of finance By sharing lessons learned in the restructuring of over 200 school districts across the country, the Alliance provides public schools all over the region with a proven model for change. An active coach and partner, the Alliance helps districts persevere through inevitable difficulties to achieve long-term progress.

In general, REBA makes it clear that it is not interested in ideological positions and posturing or political action in the partisan stage. The focus is also explicitly on the *public school system* as its business members are keen to see an enhanced quality of employee in the future. Most of the work is at the grassroots as:

Each school district in the Alliance has designated district-wide and site-based teams which cross all boundaries by including administrators, school committee members, teachers, union leaders, parents students and community groups: they develop plans for improvement and evaluate progress.

The reality of this mission was observed at first hand by the researcher, not only in the interview with the Executive Director as recorded above, but also in attending events that took place while she was on field visits to Massachusetts.

In addition to regular local level activities as described above, REBA publishes a *Programme Guide* each year. The edition for 1998/99, covering part of the time of the researcher's fieldwork, comprises five sections: a) selecting services right for you: the role of the dlt; b) scheduled programmes; c) customised workshops; d) on-site technical assistance; e) programme selection and registration requirements.

It is clear from the documentation of REBA, as well as first-hand observation of its practice, that especially through the DLT and site-based activity, it does bridge the gap between individual schools and the district office that in the English and Irish cases is covered by the management board of each school and its virtual control of budgets. In this sense, REBA does mediate between school and district through its DLT, though it plays no part in the enrolment process. The only caveat, and this is apparent from the documentation, is that there are only 17 participating districts in the consortium, though this includes the case location for this research.

7.3.3 School District Sources

These can be divided into three categories: Professional, popular and public documentation and are explained as follows:

- a) *Professional documentation* is that which, although publicly available, is largely generated for the professional planning purposes of the district administration. These include several reports on test scores and other aspects of student and school achievement. Since they are not, as per the English school performance tables, intended to influence parental choice of school, they are not of concern at this stage.
- b) *Popular documentation* is that which informs the community about the development, and especially the achievements of the public schools in this district. The Annual Report on the Public schools comes into this category, comprising sections on: The Mayor and the school board, the superintendent, overall figures and illustrations by both students and adult learners within the District, basic data on aggregate grade levels, performance as per ethnicity, teacher recruitment and development, special educational needs and language programmes.
- c) *Public documentations* are other documents concerning school choice. Here there are two main booklets, one on the general regulations and procedures regarding choice of school in the district, the other being a set of profiles of the public high schools of which there were five in operation at the time of this study – a sixth was in the process of rebuilding. This particular documentation, which cannot be quoted due to the need for anonymity, is very clear, straightforward and non-partisan (though Carr (1999) would argue that nothing can be partisan). From the point of view of mediation, it enhances the support of a genuine open enrolment system within the inevitable limitation of ‘space’ in respect of each public high school.

As with the national and state levels, local media play their part in the genuinely public debate that surrounds school choice in the USA. Because of this, even the most local of newspapers is likely to carry news relating to this issue from any part of the country. For example, during one of the researcher's visits to the case-location, one of the several local daily papers carried a prominent article under the title of 'High Court Opens Door to Vouchers' on 10th May 1999. This was in fact referring to a case in the state of Arizona where, according to opponents, 'an Arizona law allowing tax breaks for gifts to religious schools violates the separation of church and state'. However, the Supreme Court rejected their appeals and according to the paper, this was 'a victory for backers of tuition vouchers and other aid for families whose children attend private schools'. The article details other related cases in Florida and Louisiana.

Given the quality and detail of the information produced in the district documentation mentioned above, it is not surprising that, as compared with the English case for example, school-generated material is more modest. It varies a great deal from school to school, and much of it is directed towards transition from the middle school to which the staff of all the high schools make promotional visits, including audio-visual presentation: a strong marketing pitch.

CHAPTER 8: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE MEDIATION OF POLICY

8.1 The Comparative Method and the Factor Approach

In this chapter the use of Bereday's comparative methodology, explained above, will be taken a stage further. Following the interpretation of primary data from empirical and documentary sources, juxtaposed in the form of the identically structured serial chapters five, six and seven, it is now necessary to move to preliminary comparison and the establishment of criteria for comparability, leading to an hypothesis for simultaneous comparative analysis.

This process is complicated further because both factors and countries/locations are being compared; eight of the former and three of the latter. It will therefore be taken in two stages.

- The factors will be *paired* according to their status as either 'direct' or 'indirect' as indicated in the conceptual framework (*Figure 2*). They will be analysed in pairs with the aid not only of the analysis of primary data, but also of the contribution of information derived from secondary sources presented in chapters two and three. Each pair of factors will be discussed in respect of each of the three countries/locations. At the end of this stage it should be possible to generate one or more hypotheses to be tested in the next stage.

- The analysis will then move on to *simultaneous comparison* by comparing pairs of factors with each other in an integrated way across all three countries/locations. As indicated in *Figure 12*, which illustrates the whole process, this stage comprises just six permutations that together should enable a better understanding of complex of relationships within each milieu and locale. From this, outcomes will be identified for final discussion in Chapter 9 which concludes the thesis.

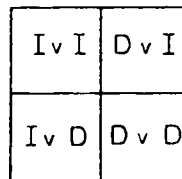
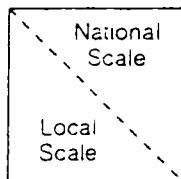
Before commencing the juxtaposition of paired factors it may be useful to review the potential influence of the eight selected factors in relation to each other. This is summarised in the form of a 'key word matrix', *Figure 18*. As will be seen, based on a combination of documentary and empirical evidence, it is suggested that each of the factors has some potential to influence the mediation of policy. It can also be seen that, although four factors are categorised as 'indirect' and four as 'direct', it is possible for the latter group to operate both directly and indirectly. This is because, in addition to having the 'representation' in the form of stakeholders in decision-making processes, they may also act contextually. For example, the social factor includes the actions of parents and students in respect of choice of school as well as the social class structure of the *locale*. Likewise, the political factor includes the decisions of individuals such as local councillors and administrators as well as the legislative framework within which they are made. Similar distinctions apply to the economic and religious factors.

Figure 18 enables a very basic cross-check of fifty-six items arising from the potential interaction of each of the eight factors with each of the seven others, and presents twenty eight at the local level and twenty eight at the national level.

Figure 18: Key Word Matrix by Factors and Scales

	H	C	D	G	P	R	E	S
H	National Local	National Educational Philosophy	Broad Demographic Change	Boundary Changes	Legislative Legacy	Formative Influence	Evolution of Natural Economy	Emergence of Social Classes
C	Local Educational Culture	National Local	Family Patterns	National Cultural Complexes	National Education Policy	Religion in National Culture	Business and Education	Education and Social Class
D	Micro Demographic Legacy	Household Features	National Local	National Population Distribution	Disparities in Provision	Religious Population Structure	National Occupational Structure	National Patterns of Well Being
G	Location of Schools	Local Milieux	Local Population Distribution	National Local	National Regulated Space	Distribution of Religious Activity	Distribution of Industry and Wealth	Urban v Rural Dicotomy
P	Legacy of Local Decision	Local Political Culture	Community Support Initiatives	Local Regulated Space	National Local	Regulations and Strategy re Church Schs.	Funding Mechanisms	General Election Outcomes
R	Church Schools	Local Denominational Patterns	Religious Population Structure	Religious Clusters and Networks	Religion and Local Education Decisions	National Local	Contribution of the Religious to the Economy	Ethos of Schools
E	Employment Legacies and Changes	Community Cultures	Local Occupational Structure	Location of Employment	Funding Levels	Religious Funding and Ownership	National Local	Private v Public Image
S	Social Class Patterns	Local Attitudes to Schooling	Urban Social Segregation	Settlement Structures	Local Election Outcomes	Denomination and Class	Private v Public Provision	National Local
	H	C	D	G	P	R	E	S

KEY



D = Direct
I = Indirect

Rosarii Griffin

The intermediate, or regional, level is implied in some of these interactions. The remaining eight permutations are the interaction between the national and local level of each of the factors. For example, while each of the locations is influenced by the legacy of the historical development of the public education system in general, the particular story of each *locale* will be a variation on that theme. This key word matrix has assisted in the formulation of the comparative analysis. With these observations in mind the juxtaposition of cases will proceed, utilising the four sets of paired factors shown in *Figure 12 Stage 2*.

8.2 Juxtaposition

8.2.1 Historical and Cultural Legacies

Although the cultural factor may well affect the mediation of policy, it is difficult to isolate, encapsulating as it does the entire way of life of a people in any particular place. This all-embracing quality results in the milieu within which this examination of mediation is taking place, and which is undergoing modification as the historical process unfolds, hence the pairing of the historical and cultural factors. As indicated above, the provision and operation of education is a culturally embedded phenomenon, and as the focus of this research and thesis is on an aspect of education, in this section it is the *culture of education*, as informed by residual historical influences, that will be discussed. This will be presented serially, case by case.

England

In the English case location, the residual effect of the traditional industry, even though long since dead, still apparently has a significant effect on shaping the attitudes of some locals to education. This is especially so in parts of 'LEA A', the 'city authority', and indirectly this attitude affects the mediation of policy (in a literally disinterested way). The traditionally occupied community, strongly maritime in orientation, had a weak relationship to formal schooling because in its heyday employment was virtually automatic. Consequently, leaving school at the earliest opportunity was a viable option. There was, in effect, no culture of education, and when the industry suddenly died in the 1970s there was no educational safety net for the community. The interviews repeatedly revealed the educational world as unfamiliar and uncharted territory. Family structures broke down as a pattern of unemployment and single parenthood emerged that has now affected more than two generations. A significant part of this underclass was further dislocated when forced to move from its dockside location to a newly and poorly constructed municipal estate on the city's edge wherein case study school A is located.

In this predominantly working class location there is an attendant culture of insularity. The researcher was often told how most people rarely venture outside the city. Indeed 'abroad is outside the city'. This intense localisation is still reflected in school enrolment patterns when parents tend to send their children to the schools they themselves attended.

Relating this to the history of secondary education in England, it was not surprising to find that the uptake of the neighbourhood comprehensive model in the 1960s was speedy and automatic, and it was from this location that one of the most notable rebuttals to the Black Papers emerged (Rubinstein and Stoneman, 1970) This

location had of course been subject to the prior history of selective secondary schooling in England, discussed in chapter 2 above. For reasons difficult to determine now, the number of grammar schools in LEA A was few, and in the late nineteenth century a prestigious private day school for boys 'creamed off' the best 11+ selections funded by LEA scholarships. This relative difficulty of 'success' served to strengthen the assumption of translation to the local secondary modern schools. There were of course middle class areas with more ambitious attitudes. These provided a disproportionate number of grammar school pupils, and this too has left a legacy in the culture of education in the locale. Indeed in the largest such area in the northwest of the conurbation an anomalous situation obtained in relation to selection, but that will be described under the geographical and political sections below.

At this stage, before simultaneous comparison, it is safe to say that historical and cultural factors in the English case have produced a particularly sharp epitome of the national picture which serves well as a context within which to examine the mediation of market related policy on public secondary school provision. This is especially so since, despite the residual attitudes of localisation there is a vigorous uptake of the market opportunity as indicated above.

Ireland

Because traditional patterns of schooling are closely identified with the Church in Ireland, this is probably education's greatest cultural and historical influence, and the role of the religious is discussed further in conjunction with the political below. With respect to the historical legacy and the culture of education, the combination of Christian learning with Celtic cultural traits has provided Ireland with a strong and positive educational ethos. It also provided the country with the first of a succession

of partnerships. Hundreds of years of British oppression, including the suppression of formal schooling for the majority Catholic population, helped by default to strengthen the tradition of the word, the story and the song. During the long period of internal self-government in education that followed the lifting of the penal laws, the culture of schooling, provision of which rested with the Catholic Church, necessarily included the reinforcing of tradition and cohesion. This was given further expression after the Independence of the South with the compulsory learning of the Irish language in schools – a major cultural initiative.

The legacies remain, in general well supported, in the current system, including in the case study location, where the culture of education is still cooperative, consensual and community-oriented. These cultural traits in educational terms, strengthened as they are by the relative absence of private schooling, have found modern expression in the easy infusion of the vocational and comprehensive schools described in chapter 2, and the reaffirmation of the partnership ideal in the Education Act of 1998. This general inclusiveness of Irish educational culture has also informed and enabled an uncontentious massive expansion in terms of provision and access in recent decades. Similarly, a collaborative internationalism, especially in respect of the European Union (Byrne, Cremin and Griffin, 2000), and the phenomenal growth of the economy have reinforced the culture of inclusion.

So, as with the English case, the Irish location has provided a vignette in keeping with the national picture, while necessarily exhibiting idiosyncrasies that will be illustrated through the discussion of direct factors below.

USA (Massachusetts)

In the USA there has always been a long-standing tradition of self-determination at the local level. Both documentary and empirical work by the researcher confirm this to be a leading factor in the contemporary culture of education operating at the community level, that is to say, the *locale*, as well as at individual level. Ultimate responsibility for the provision of public schooling still rests with each of the 50 states, but the school districts are the effective power, capable of mediating policy – even to the extent of opting out of it in the case of the open enrolment components of the 1993 Education Reform Act in Massachusetts. With some of the oldest and smallest such districts being in Massachusetts, often regarded as the ‘blueprint state’ for the evolution of public education in the USA, such relative independence is keenly safeguarded. Here, stemming from the days of early immigration into the USA from different origins, especially Europe, the right of communities to determine their own educational destiny is a core feature of American society.

Such long-standing independence has survived and incorporated subsequent mass immigration from many parts of the world, so that while the case-study location is predominantly Hispanic-American in culture, with the bulk of the balance representing other minorities, the local culture of education retains its root traits of inclusiveness and meritocracy.

Summary

For different reasons it would seem that the cultural inheritance from historical events in education has been one where the local scale of operations is the determining one in all three cases in respect of the mediation of policy on the provision of public secondary schooling. In the USA it is a legacy of the culture of political history and

the local scale of regulated space; in Ireland it is a legacy of the culture of religious history and the local scale of the parish; in England it is a legacy of inertia and some degree of local capacity to neutralise centralising reform.

8.2.2 Geographic and Demographic Landscapes

These come together in the form of the spatial legacy of the cumulative effects of historical events and cultural evolution. Educational activities both contribute to these landscapes and are influenced by them.

England

The history of public secondary school provision has bequeathed a pattern of distribution that is disparate in the extreme. While the majority are today 11-16 or 11-18 comprehensive schools, the origin and location of each depends on whether it began life as an endowed school, a science school, a church school, a post-1902 grammar school, an inter war central school, a post 1944 secondary modern or technical school, or a contemporary purpose-built comprehensive. The outcome of frequent systemic change and local government reforms has created disparities of distribution but also legacies of identity both of which are potential mediating influences in respect of open-enrolment choice.

All the above variants are present in the case study location which, like any conurbation, has a unique internal structure. In this case it is split in two – east and west – by a river with a limited number of bridging points. The latter is the more commercial, professional and affluent, the former being the more industrial and poorer. The majority of the housing in the west is owner occupied, while in the east it

is municipal. Furthermore, the aforementioned relocation of the traditional industrial community resulted in a shift from the west to the east. Subsequent decades have seen a demographic downturn in the city due to a combination of an ageing population and out-migration. This has created spare capacity in secondary schools coinciding with the introduction of market related open enrolment policies. Hence, this resulted in an unexpected vigorous uptake of choice opportunities in some parts of the city.

As Brock (1985) has illustrated, every city and conurbation has its 'geography of education' with areas of clustering and concentration and others of relative scarcity. Here, whereas there was only one former grammar school on the East side, there were three on the West plus two Catholic secondary schools and two private schools which accepted some LEA-funded pupils at 11+. The fact that the more affluent suburbs on the western side are in a different LEA (B) (as illustrated in *Figure 13*) created a further anomaly in that the two grammar schools available to this massive sprawl were in another town with LEA B. They were also small and prestigious, taking only the top 11+ students from the conurbation. This left the unusual situation of relatively affluent suburbs with only secondary modern schools. When these became comprehensive they were more readily accepted as neighbourhood schools, especially as they had sixth forms added and were able to lead directly to higher education. Such a background creates long-standing attitudes to individual schools that indirectly influence the mediation of market oriented policy.

Ireland

The long period in the development of Irish secondary schooling when the Catholic Church was in effect the sole provider had two main geographical legacies. The first

was that of idiosyncratic location according to the different orders involved, and the second was a degree of territorial identity related to the parish and the community.

Exercise of public secondary school choice was nonetheless disparate until rapid growth following the decision to grant free access in 1967. Already, with the creation of vocational secondary schools from 1930, according to the patterns of regulated space of the counties, came the possibility of locating expanding suburbs and estates which more recently was also taken up by comprehensive schools. Consequently the provision of public secondary schooling has been easily adjusted to the demographic cycles of the second half of the twentieth century in Ireland. Despite this tripartite pattern within the public secondary sector, the fact that almost all schools have a clear Catholic ambience tends to override the kind of legacies of identity and status found in England. That has been no selective tradition or system in Ireland means that the 'grammar school' issue is not a mediating influence.

While the growth of Dublin as a main city has been phenomenal, attracting large numbers from all over the Republic and beyond, that of the case study location has been more modest until the 1990s. Nonetheless there has not been the issue of spare capacity which helps to engender the exercise of choice which has always been available here, as elsewhere in Ireland. Recent suburban and exurban expansion in the area, related to rapid economic growth, has been accommodated with increased capacity on a non-selective basis. However, geography does play a significant role in the mediation of enrolment policy, as observed in the case – secondary schools, which did take a certain number of students from feeder primary schools in the surrounding countryside. This, it was explained to the researcher, was done for the purpose of having 'a mixture' of country and city in the classroom.

USA/Massachusetts

The very small scale of the majority of school districts in Massachusetts is itself a prime geographical factor, with positive implications for the accessibility of all types of school. Indeed, the strong association of the public school with the township often places those schools in central locations. This is not the case in the expanding suburbs, but as these are often not in the same school district, that is a different issue. Certainly the USA case location fits this pattern because the School District in question lies at the heart of the conurbation of which it is part. The locale therefore comprises the central business district, the traditional industrial area and the inner suburbs.

Most of the public high schools in this area were founded at the turn, or in the early decades, of the twentieth century, on the main thoroughfare of the city. Some have relocated and one is a new foundation, but they are all still on the main spine road and easy of access. There is little locational advantage to be had, so in the complete absence of catchment areas at high school level, choice is as open as it can be. In other words, this aspect of geography – the relative location of public secondary schools - is only of mediating influence in the sense that it helps to facilitate, even encourage indirectly, the exercise of choice.

These schools are not, therefore, neighbourhood or community schools except in the sense that in this case ‘the community’ is the city. This has implications for the structure and style of political authority in operation. This is discussed below. However, the ‘community’ for which most of these high schools were established is long gone. Industrial decline led to demographic downturn and out-migration, and the city became repopulated with incoming minority groups, especially Hispanic Americans - now the majority ethnic group. The provision of school buses further

increases accessibility, but the researcher discovered an unexpected use of this facility in the context of open enrolment across school district boundaries. A minority of middle class parents in suburban areas adjacent to another school district that had opted into this aspect of the 1993 reform had successfully located their children in the schools of that district because the distance involved qualified them for bussing. This meant that neither parent had to be involved in daily trips to and from school.

As indicated above, one American response to open enrolment competition has been to diversify, and in particular to enable the establishment of Charter Schools. In this school district the location of these schools is not always as central as that of the high schools, which is therefore not to their advantage. The reality of competition in response to the reform, due in part to almost equal access in geographical terms, is seen in the carefully prepared and keenly marketed presentations given by the staff of high schools to parents at all the 'middle schools' in the district.

Summary

The geographic and demographic landscapes of all three country cases in general provide contexts for the operation of choice of public secondary school that could be termed 'positive', though for different reasons in each case. The compactness of the American case, together with complete absence of catchment areas and easy bussing makes this especially so. The English case is more complex, but massive spare capacity at secondary level in one of the LEAs, due to demographic downturn, has also enabled the exercise of choice, together with the abolition *de jure* of catchment areas. In the Irish case the connections between church, community and school tend to encourage localisation, though increasing affluence and mobility may enable a new geography and population structure to encourage more active choice.

8.2.3 Political and Religious Providers

These factors have been paired together because, historically, 'Church and State have been the two main forces for the provision of education, public and private (Tulasiewicz and Brock, 1988; Walford 1996d). The discussion in chapter 2 has illustrated how they have been related in the evolution of national philosophies of education (Lauwerys 1959). Furthermore, the conceptual framework (*Figure 2*) shows both to be operating at all levels of scale with stakeholders active at the local level with which this study is especially concerned.

England

In England 'faith-based schools' still account for a significant minority of the secondary schools in the public sector. The majority of those schools are of the Established Church, the Church of England which, *de facto* and *de jure*, makes them less distinctive than the minority of such schools that are mostly belonging to the Roman Catholic Church.

The term 'belonging' is significant in respect of the issue in question here, the mediation of market-related policy for the provision of public schooling as, due to their originally endowed state, they mostly retain voluntary aided status. They have 'foundation governors' who in effect represent that small degree of independence. Small it may be, since the state dominates in all aspects but one, but that one – the power to control entry to the school – is crucial, especially in a system with a history of selection, and in the context of a minority group.

Both Anglican and Catholic schools, provided they meet all the requirements of the National Curriculum, may provide an additional focus on the religious dimension – and do so. There may be additional classes in this field, regular

visitations from the parish priest and services conducted on school premises. Such an ethos may attract parents to attempt to enrol their children at such schools and would therefore be a mediating influence. It may also repel. However, the fact that they are widely regarded as not just desirable in this way but also effective in delivering educational goods in respect of results, prompted the Government to announce, in January, 2001, the creation of 100 new church schools (80 per cent of them Anglican). If this policy is carried through, and depending on whether or not these schools will have voluntary aided or foundation status, it will represent a remarkable convergence of the religious and the political and a clear mediating influence.

In the English context there is a distinction between the Anglican and Catholic schools in this regard. While the former do try to create a Christian ethos, they are less differentiated from the majority of secular schools. In enrolment terms they tend to operate on a 'local catchment' neighbourhood basis, despite their opportunity to be more selective. This fits the pattern provided for in the system – similar to the 'controlled choice' of the USA (Walford 1994). Catholic schools, however, serving a minority in the population, have a historic mission to help support and maintain the Catholic community. In most places this 'community' is geographically dispersed within the population and so the opportunity – on the basis of voluntary controlled status of their schools – to reinforce that community through selective enrolment within the public sector is naturally taken. This has been clearly illustrated in Chapter 5 with regard to the criteria for selection operated by the case study Catholic school (*Figure 14*).

Both Anglican and Catholic churches have their own geopolitical structures in the form of dioceses, which do not conform in spatial terms to the pattern of secular geopolitics. But in respect of particular locations and schools, diocesan boards of

education may exert some influence, especially in the appointment of principals. Given the massively increased power and responsibility of principals of public sector schools this can be a crucial intervention. Churches may also be represented on any management boards, and certainly will be in church schools. Here, especially in view of the power over selection for admission, they may have a mediating influence. Liaison between denominational secondary schools and their feeder primaries tends to be regular and positive, so as to ensure the admission of those already acculturated and 'acceptable'.

As indicated above, the 1988 Education Act greatly reduced the powers of the LEAs, but in respect of enrolment in the vast majority of public secondary schools it left the decision-making machinery in their hands. This has proven to be a strong political factor in the mediation of policy and is at odds with the reform of financial management (LMS) which passes almost all funds to the institutional level. Given the creation of the Grant Maintained Sector (GMS), open to all public schools by majority parental vote, it could be that the Thatcher and Major governments were assuming that selection for enrolment at every school would be in institutional hands anyway. In the event the GM sector proved more popular with researchers (*e.g.* Power *et al.*, 1993) than parents. However, with the advent of the Labour administration in 1997, most GM schools were designated as 'Foundation Schools' thus retaining control of their admissions. Subsequent policies towards the diversification of schooling in the secondary sector may carry the same powers, and if so, the residual tradition of selection will be maintained. The power over enrolment decisions was thus in the hands of the LEAs and, where applicable, the management boards of faith-based schools.

The 1988 legislation allowed for choice to be automatic only where spare capacity existed, but as indicated in the previous section this could – and often did in older urban areas - come about through ageing of the population or out-migration. Both situations exist in LEA A (the city) in the English case, and became mediating influences. However, in this situation, other aspects of the legislation enable the power of national government to come into play. The DfEE, through OfSTED, can require LEAs to reduce capacity so as to save public funds. This means closing or merging schools, a contentious and fraught process involving lengthy consultation with the public. This process and its outcome is inevitably a mediating influence on the operation of enrolment policy.

The issue of capacity is therefore subject to political decision at various levels by both secular and religious authority alike. For example in LEA B, schools in the middle-class suburbs have been accommodating the considerable demand for places from parents in LEA A. This is achieved by adding temporary accommodation or by adapting the use of existing space. That is a political decision involving various levels, but primarily in the hands of management boards of individual schools. The attraction is additional income and maintained popularity. The researcher also discovered a similar device being used by the principal and management board of one of the city schools for the opposite reason of reducing capacity. This decision to reduce enrolment by re-designation of space from ‘classroom’ to ‘workshop area’ was made in order to avoid the ‘dumping’ of excluded students and appeal losers by the LEA. In other words, there are micro-political games of ‘cat and mouse’ being played out between institutions and authorities made possible by the increased power of the principals and management boards as a result of the 1988 and subsequent related legislation.

Meantime the Catholic high school in the area is careful to keep capacity at the current level, despite gross over-subscription and land available for physical expansion. Such a decision is in the power of the church-dominated management board which wishes to maintain and preserve a particular denominational ethos.

Ireland

In Ireland, few political decisions are made without the consultation of the 'social partners': the Church (RC), the teacher unions and the parents. The last named will be discussed in the following section, but this is a clear example of the convergence of mediating influences.

As indicated above in chapter 6, the teacher unions in Ireland are a potent political force alongside the national government (DOE), the Vocational Education Committees and the Church. The relative influence of this range of partners is perhaps made more significant by the centrist position of the major political parties and the coalitions they form in government.

In terms of scale or level, power is divided between the national and the local except in respect of vocational secondary schools, which, in any case, run according to national regulations. Although the Church and the unions have organisations at the national level, in respect of issues of enrolment, power and influence will be brought to bear in the community and in the management boards of individual schools. The fact that over two-thirds of public secondary schools are privately owned and managed by the religious speaks for itself. As has been seen in the cultural discussion above, communities generally accept this. Consequently the political touch of the church is a light one, albeit ever-present. The most potent influence in terms of

geopolitics is the link between parish and community, though this is not manifest in any precise catchment area.

The general perception regarding enrolment of those interviewed in both pilot and main field work was that there is still an 'open door policy'. Given the community ideal, the majority of the intake comes from the neighbourhood of each of the schools visited. If there is still space after all local demand is accommodated then entry is open to other applicants.

Neither the religious nor the politicians are likely to be involved in enrolment policy at the institutional level. On occasion they may receive appeals for support from parents who, normally for reasons of over-subscription, are unable to enrol their offspring at the school of their choice. Even if support is forthcoming, for example in the form of a letter to the management board, it will not normally carry influence if the school is full.

The only overriding directive of central government, in the form of strict guidelines from the Department of Education in Dublin is that selection on the basis of academic results or profile is forbidden. This applies to all types of public secondary school, including the majority that are owned by the Church.

USA (Massachusetts).

Since we are concerned here with the relationship between the political and religious factors in respect of enrolment policy and its mediation, the fact that religious involvement in the provision of public schooling in the USA is forbidden by the Constitution means that there is no such relationship to discuss in this case. Or is there?

In fact there may be indirect effects that need to be explored, if only to be eliminated. The parochial schools in the USA form part of the private sector, but this should not be viewed as either highly elitist or expensive. They are Christian and predominantly Catholic, and this is certainly the case in the state and case location in this study, where both Irish and other European immigrants were involved in its industrial development and the current majority population is Hispanic American. However, this is a relatively poor district with, for historical reasons as outlined above, a concentration of public high schools easily accessible in central locations.

Furthermore, arising from the interviews conducted, it would appear that the perceived salutary effect of open enrolment competition between the public high schools has enhanced their collective popularity. This, plus possibly the influence of the newly established charter schools receiving public funds and officially encouraged by the Superintendent, is said to have adversely affected the parochial high school, which had a traditionally high standing in the community. As yet there is no official move to invoke some kind of convergence, if only because the funding mechanism that might achieve it – vouchers – is not on the agenda in this location.

Elsewhere in the USA, however, as indicated in the documentary review above there have been cases, some as yet unresolved, where attempts have been made to enable parents holding public funds in the form of vouchers to enrol their children in parochial, even totally private, religious schools. These are as yet few in number, but court decisions have gone in both directions and illustrate in yet another way the significance of the local and regional levels in the USA, as opposed to the national, in matters concerning public education provision and access to it.

On the purely political front in the USA, there are a number of issues that make this a dominant factor in the mediation of State policy on open enrolment.

Firstly, the superintendent is a very keen supporter of the policy, even to the point of being pro-active in its favour. This is just as much a feature of mediation as efforts made by his counterparts in some other school districts to frustrate it. By strongly encouraging the founding of Charter Schools in his district, and at the same time making all principals of high schools directly accountable to him – rather than to Deputy Superintendents – he is forcing the issue and achieving an active response from the mainstream as well as the alternative sector.

With respect to the cross-border enrolment between this and neighbouring districts, one that is adjacent is not participating but over 200 students are lost to the others. Micro-political decisions are being made by principals and site-based teams at the public high schools to maximise their distinctive profiles and set out their stall in the market place for junior high school graduates.

Summary

The pairing of the political and the religious factors at this stage of the analysis provides a fascinating comparison in respect of the possibilities for the mediation of policy in the provision of public secondary schooling in England, Ireland and the USA. Both the political and the religious are long-standing establishments, with a history of providing educational opportunity at school level. While the religious spectrum may be wide, the predominant players in all three countries are the Christian denominations. Given the virtual subsuming of the Anglican Church within the state system in England, this leaves the Catholic Church as the main distinctive example of the religious factor in all three cases. Its dominance in Ireland, albeit weakened since the establishment of the Department of Education, has enabled a community-oriented, parish-related inclusive enrolment policy to survive. As O’Sullivan (1999) has noted,

in the absence of strong secular political centralisation the only likely challenge to the theocentric paradigm is a market-oriented one. Given the historical absence of catchments and the further political enhancement of parental rights in the 1998 Education Act, the result of a loose consensual relationship between Church and State could be an enabling factor in bringing this about.

In England the minority status of the Catholic church, but with a right to maintain schools within the public sector on a voluntary aided basis, creates a situation of cultural preservation by political means: that is to say, mediation by selection. The case location epitomises this with the Catholic secondary school invoking the right to control entry within a policy of maintaining its enrolment ceiling at the current level despite massive over subscription and the opportunity to expand. This contrasts with the American case where, although the Catholic church is the main provider of parochial schools and the church of the majority of the population of the District, its exclusion from the public sector of schooling appears to be counter-productive on account of increasing popularity of publicly funded alternatives. Whether vouchers will be introduced in this location remains to be seen, but interviews did not indicate that this is on the agenda at the time of writing.

8.2.4 Social and Economic Environment

The pairing of these two factors is also appropriate in that they enjoy significant relationships in respect of their connections with the sphere of public education, its provision, operation, and the mediation of policy informing these dimensions.

All populations have their structures, including those based on social and economic status. Social class and occupational structure are naturally related as indicated in such colloquial terms as: working class, professional class, blue collar

and white collar. The history of public educational provision in any country relates to such patterns of human groups and their interaction in a distinctive way as has been noted in Chapter 2, above. Longstanding attitudes to public schooling can have distinctive residual effects, and the economic may interact with the social in a number of ways: through the particular mechanisms for the delivery of public funds; through reaction to possibilities to augment those funds such as competing for specific opportunities created by regional or national government; through connections between schools and the local business community.

The case locations and milieu were, as explained, selected on the basis of comparability. Nonetheless each displays sufficient of the distinctive socio-economic convergences of their respective countries in respect of the provision of public secondary schooling to be regarded as 'typical'.

England

In England the derived selective model of public secondary schooling was strongly class-based. Its universal institution from 1902 was on a fee-paying basis, which meant that academically able students from poor families were not able to take it up (Stephens 1998). The location of grammar schools in terms of social geography often favoured middle-class locations in owner-occupied suburbia (Lacey, 1975, Brock 1992). With the reorganisation of secondary education in the 1960s, former grammar schools often became the favoured comprehensives, and there is a case in point in the case location on the east side of LEA A where such a school draws lower middle-class students from the natural catchment of one of the case schools.

In LEA B where, for historical reasons, middle class communities in the western fringe of the conurbation were served only by secondary modern schools, the

demand for sixth-form provision became an issue, and when one of these schools was permitted a sixth form it naturally gained kudos and demand, as well as additional per capita public income. Since in England per capita allocation for public schools is age-weighted, this is now an important factor in the competitive environment of the 16-19 age-group, and is now also a significant feature of the mediation of enrolment policy for middle class parents in adjacent areas of LEA A. It emerged during discussion with principals of these schools that they have formed a consortium to provide, collectively, a range of options at this level that would compete both with the sixth form colleges and with the further education colleges in the area. Competition is intense to the extent that one deputy-principal disclosed that marketing material deriving from these competing institutions was routinely trashed!

Insofar as the publishing of school performance ('league') tables in the national and local press influences parental choice of school – and it is certainly intended to do so at considerable public expense (Gibson and Asthana, 2000) – the calculated omission of contextual (*e.g.* socio-economic) and value added (*e.g.* school improvement) is a denial of the social and economic realities and is therefore, like those realities, a potential mediating factor in itself. In such a situation, the marketing of every school becomes to some degree a necessity. All schools in both pilot and main study stages of the research indicated that they were sensitive to this issue, if only to retain their local catchment population. With control of budgets now firmly in the hands of principals and management boards it is entirely up to them how much they spend on marketing literature and the courting of local media.

As far as the business community is concerned, the education reforms in question were informed in part by observations and interventions from this sector, and the subsequent involvement of those with business skills, such as Lord Dearing, in

chairing or contributing to important national committees and commissions. At the local level such skills and perceptions were sought in the assembling of management boards and OfSTED teams, but from the interviews conducted in the case study location and schools it does not appear that the business community as such has any influence as stakeholders on the mediation of market related reform. What has happened however, is that public secondary schools have become more businesslike in their management structures and operational efficiency.

Convergence between the business dimension of the economic factor and the social factor is more evident in the socio-economic environment of an LEA or a school catchment, and if such an environment presents the opportunity for tapping additional funds through the initiative of principals then this might make a school more attractive to parents.

Ireland

Here again, social class is an issue. The tradition of localisation means that in general schools reflect the class structure of the locality. Rather than engender diversity, parental choice it seems, tends to maintain the status quo, and in some cases to reinforce it. Consequently, in the case location and schools, whether each was working-class or middle-class, the issue of class itself did not appear to have a mediating influence. However there is some incentive for a school to try to increase its intake in order to maximise overall income. The longstanding inclusive nature of Irish public schooling would be an enabling factor in such a policy.

Additional funds in the Irish case often come from parental contributions, and in the case of those owned by the religious about 5 percent of the income derives from the Church. There could be some socio-economic convergence in the sense that larger

contributions might be sought from middle class parents, but this would not have a bearing on enrolment other than to reinforce the status quo. Likewise, with regard to the vocational secondary schools, only 80–90 percent of funds come directly from the central government via the VECs and the remainder has to be raised by parental committees and other fund-raising events. Here again, the middle class communities will be able to contribute more, but it has no bearing on enrolment. Nonetheless, there are some situations where schools are concerned to maintain their optimum numbers in the face of demographic shifts and increasing parental mobility, and as in England marketing is beginning to appear. Whether this is the beginning of the uptake of the open situation that has always been available remains to be seen.

In Ireland, from all the interviews conducted, it was perceived that the business community as such had no direct influence in mediating the open enrolment situation. As in England there are likely to be some business people on management boards, but again they are advising on businesslike managerial issues such as the efficiency and effectiveness of the school. Some schools place students in local companies for work experience, and in the case of VECs even react to requests for post-school workers. There may also be some sponsorship for specific objectives, but not to do with enrolment.

Connections with the business community tend to be enhanced in relation to those students involved in an organised ‘gap year’ between the two main state examinations for secondary students. In general this year has been a great success, and it could be that if a school gained a reputation for a really attractive ‘gap year’ programme then parents might think in terms of changing their enrolment focus, but there is no hard evidence of this at present.

USA (Massachusetts).

The obvious connection between social class and occupational structure also obtains in the USA, and in the particular circumstances of the case location. However, unlike the other two cases the locale in question includes a smaller proportion of the middle-class suburbia of the conurbation. Furthermore, as indicated above the location of all the high schools is central and so they do not have a community or neighbourhood focus. Consequently, within the public sector, the situation of 'working class schools' and 'middle class schools' does not arise.

In the USA, however, since the development of industrial urban areas in the nineteenth century, there has been a keener interest from the American business community in public education and its products than from its counterparts in England or Ireland. As Cuban (2000) has related, this took a different emphasis in the late nineteenth century, when it was more vocational, than in the late twentieth when it was more managerial. But throughout that century and later, the business community has maintained active dialogue and interaction with school district boards and individual schools, especially at secondary level, have been encouraged to seek support from this sector. Schools have consequently benefited from commercial and managerial advice and material support, and it was clear from each of the high schools visited that such support was substantial and ongoing.

In the case location, because the high schools are not community focussed in the neighbourhood sense, each has developed a curricular focus and sought support for that, e.g. science and technology; commerce and business; technical and vocational training respectively. To the extent that these special areas attract enrolment, the business community can be said to have an indirect but positive mediating effect on the policy of open enrolment by helping to provide clear choices

that are accessible to all in the locale. In this situation it is not surprising to find well-developed marketing techniques and schedules.

All this is at the district level of the locale, but at the broader regional level in this part of Massachusetts the business community has developed and funded an organisation under the name of the Regional Education and Business Alliance (REBA). This is an advice and support network for all schools, primary, junior high and senior high from the business community, a number of which is seconded and paid full-time by the Alliance to manage and administer the network. A wide range of activities is promoted, which collectively are aiming to promote business awareness, relevant skills and employable graduates. To the extent that individual schools may relate differentially to REBA, and that the efforts of the Alliance will meet with varied degrees of success, the resulting outcome of this interaction between the social and the economic has the potential to mediate the open enrolment policy.

Summary

In England and Ireland there is a strong social class and neighbourhood orientation within which the occupational structure of the population plays a part. These factors, whether individually or in combination have no direct influence on the mediation of enrolment policy. Business and management techniques and systems, however, are increasingly employed in order to make the society (the school) operate in a more efficient way, given that financial responsibility lies with the management boards of individual schools. This is including the increased use of marketing, largely in order to maintain market share, which in practice means retaining the support of the parents for whom it is the nearest school.

By contrast in the USA case location, the diversity of accessible secondary schooling offers a real choice backed by the active participation of commercial and industrial communities. Consequently it is clearly possible that the economic dimension will impact on the social in a way that attracts or repels potential students and their parents. If so this would represent a form of mediation of the open enrolment policy for Massachusetts public secondary schools.

8.3 Hypothesis

Give to any hypothesis which is worth your while to consider just that degree of credence which the evidence warrants. And if the hypothesis is sufficiently important there is an additional duty of seeking further evidence. (Russell, citing James, 1967, p.770).

At this point we should be in a position to put forward a hypothesis that will be tested through the process of simultaneous comparison as per stage 3 of *Figure 12* on the basis of evidence generated thus far, the following hypothesis is put forward, that:

- Mediation of enacted market-related policies on the provision of public secondary education is differentially effected by a range of factors and stakeholders at different levels from international to local and that understanding of this is enhanced by cross-national comparison, especially at the local level.

It was clear from the key word matrix above (*Figure 18*) that every factor had a potential mediating influence and some degree of relationship in this regard with every other, but now, as indicated in the hypothesis we are seeking to differentiate between the factors both within themselves and in terms of their effects in the three case-countries and locations.

8.4 Simultaneous Comparison

The next stage of the process of analysis is the comparison between every one of the paired factor outcomes with each other. This provides for a maximum permutation of six interactions, as illustrated in *Figure 12*. The object of creating this controlled complexity is to get as close as possible through this model to the real complex of the milieu.

The strategy for the simultaneous comparison of the six permutations of related paired factors has been focused further into three categories of policy mediation: temporal, spatial and operational, as all elements of mediation necessarily take effect sometime, somewhere and somehow. Given the simultaneous comparison, all three countries and case locations will be incorporated in an integrated discussion within each of the three categories.

8.4.1. Mediation and the Temporal Perspective

We may usefully begin this discussion with the timing of the respective legislative acts under which the provision of public secondary education currently operates in England, Ireland and Massachusetts, USA. As indicated above these are the 1988 Education Act in England, the 1998 Education Act in Ireland and the 1993 Educational Reform Act in Massachusetts USA. Aspects of their enactment with regard to open enrolment will be discussed below under the operational theme, but here we must regard them in temporal perspective and in comparison with each other.

First of all these Acts represent a form of mediation of the global discourse on the market in respect of the provision of public education: a mediation at the

national/regional level by well-established systems. So working in from the periphery of the conceptual framework the first example of mediation is the differential adoption of a market related international discourse arising mainly from the USA.

Although the first of the American states to embrace this approach in part did so in 1989, the 1988 Education Act in England was not only one of the first, but the most thorough-going enactment of such a policy at a national scale. While the speed and coverage of this reform was enabled by the power and commitment of the political leadership in England at that time, this in itself added to the greater mediation of the discourse in the USA as the independence of the states, their political variety and the plethora of school districts within, resulted in a disparate reaction in terms of state-wide legislation.

In any case there had already been a piecemeal market-related approach in some states through the introduction of diversity of school types such as magnet schools, and this has continued to be the style in most. Massachusetts presented the first statewide legislation through the 1993 reform, and even this was mediated within itself by the opt-out clause immediately taken up by one-third of the school districts.

In Ireland, where it would appear that a latent market, as yet unrealised, has existed since the inception of formal schooling, the timing of the first explicit official mooting of a market-related approach to the provision of public secondary schooling, the *Green Paper* of 1992, was most likely influenced by the discourse. The first incidence of mediation of this proto-policy was swift, decisive and intended, in the form of the calling of a National Education Convention in 1993. In a situation where regulation of formal education had been undeveloped, it would seem that even potential regulation to deregulate was anathema. The time was not right for competitive marketisation, but a reinforcement of customer (parental) rights to select

a school for their offspring was a way to encourage it that did not offend traditional cultural traits. That the intervention of a change of Government in 1995 both delayed the enactment of a major Education Bill and strengthened the time-honoured partnership ideal was mediation by reaction. Consequently the fact that the key legislation of 1998 leaves little time to observe its mediation is insignificant, since it was born through mediation.

The timing of the English legislation relates in part to the coincidence of neo-liberal administrations as between the UK and the USA, but whereas the enactment of legislation for nationwide systemic reform in the latter was constrained by rooted decentralisation, in the former it was impeded by a sea change of self-interest. Despite a massive parliamentary majority the Thatcher regime was unable to gain the support of its own conservative constituency for a return to overt selection. Tory communities and LEAs appeared content with neighbourhood comprehensives in leafy suburbia and small town shires. Selection by mortgage was preferred to allocation by examination. Their resistance on pragmatic grounds stood four-square with that of Labour LEAs on ideological bases. Central government had therefore to neuter local government in order to realise its educational objectives. Indeed some, with Ozga (1990), would go further and suggest that education reform was the instrument to achieve the major objective of Local Authority elimination; an objective only achieved in the one case where such an authority was almost solely educational in its *raison d'être*, the ILEA. Whether this theory is more widely applicable or not, the time taken to formulate the eventual legislation, enacted in 1988, enabled the mediation of the ideal to fashion the instrument of reform.

In different ways in these three national cases, the temporal dimension came into play in enabling other factors to enjoy scope in mediating market-related reform

of the provision of public secondary schooling from its conception to its birth. Aborted by consensus in Ireland, fragmented by decentralisation in the USA, and still born by stealth in England.

All this accords with bringing into question the conventional model of the emergence of policy in terms of formulation, enactment and implementation, an intrinsically linear process in temporal terms. Clearly the temporal factor does not operate only at the macro level as discussed in this section. The temporal factor's influence at other levels will become evident in subsequent sections under spatial and operational paradigms.

8.4.2 Mediation and the Spatial Perspective

The provision and operation of education, public and private is an inherently spatial activity, and especially so in the former context, within which this study is located. In the private sector, except where consortia of schools exist, one is not dealing with regulated space whereas this is a key issue in the public sector.

The issue of scale is also inherently spatial, though here it has been termed one of 'levels', as the researcher's model (*Figure 1*) was developed from the multilevel discourse of Bray and Murray Thomas (1995).

In respect of mediation of the policy in question in the three countries and case study sites concerned, we need to identify key spatial and locational influences arising from the interactive relationship between the various factors that can now be viewed as a series of complexes.

Beginning at the outer level, the global discourse in the marketisation of education is by definition spatial, utilising modern means of communication and interaction to operate. As mentioned above, the issue of open enrolment backed by market-oriented philosophies has a long pedigree in the USA, and especially through the high profile of the advocacy of Chubb and Moe (1990). This is said to have been an influential component of the so-called 'transatlantic discourse' (Finegold *et al.*, 1993) in education and training reform. However, Whitty and Edwards (1998) counsel caution in respect of attributing much in the way of influence to the intellectual chattering classes with regard to cross-national influence. The fact that the neo-liberal market-oriented approach in governmental policy – including in education – is near global in its manifestation testifies to the likelihood of mediation of policy in its formulation.

This does not mean that national or regional governments formulate such policies within the same territorial contexts, or with the same objectives, which is the burden of Bondi's comparative analysis discussed above. At this level, involving the bodies responsible for the enactment of policy, the primary objectives behind apparently similar policies may be very different, as indicated in the previous section. Also, the levels at which they operate vary as between countries. To take this latter point first, for very different reasons the national level in both Ireland and the USA appears to have had only a modest effect on provision of public secondary schooling through a market-related mechanism. In the latter, despite increased interest on the part of successive federal governments, this is due to continued adherence to a Constitution that, albeit indirectly, devolved responsibility for education to the regional and local levels. This spatial separation of responsibilities, together with the high degree of decentralisation – there being 50 states and thousands of districts involved – has inevitably meant a mediation of the policy in question to such a degree

as inspired the title of the Stuart Foundation Report *A Thousand Flowers Blooming in the Dark* (1999). It also inspired one of the main conclusions of that report, to the effect that a great deal of regional and local level research will be necessary before any clear understanding will be gained of what is happening in respect of market-oriented reforms of public education. Massachusetts is exceptional in having enacted a clear statewide reform based on this policy; hence its inclusion in this study.

In Ireland, there is a situation of a unitary system of education, centralised and largely funded at national level, with no local authorities involved except in respect of the minority of vocational secondary schools, but with a strong community orientation deriving from the historic role of the Catholic Church and its parish structure. To date, this has mediated such considerations of market-related reform that began to emanate from national politics in the form of the Green Paper of 1992. The Government was left with the restatement and strengthening of parental rights – which had existed through the constitution in any case – as a strongly mediated outcome but one that could activate a market situation if parents so wished.

Curiously perhaps, it is in England where, by comparison, the strength of national policy in this regard was greater, that mediation through spatial constraint appears to be most evident. This, as Ozga (1990) has observed, calls into question the intent of the reform, but also enables various opportunities for mediation. The statutory abolition of school catchment areas and local authority boundaries – as far as choice of school is concerned – enabled open enrolment. In certain circumstances, as has been illustrated in the case location, this is possible, but in general it has been constrained by another spatial mediator, namely the regulation arising from the Rotherham judgement (*see Appendix A*) - that of priority of nearest school choice, as has been explained above. Moreover, the survival of Local Education Authorities in

every other respect means there is regulated space within which, for example, to bring pressure to bear through *de facto* redefinition of catchments – the new definition of ‘local’ – and through placement of students excluded by other schools. This may also involve a school in having to accept students whose appeal against their placement has not been upheld. One of the schools in the case location was carrying 30 additional students on this enforced basis, without related per capita income until the following financial year.

In the English context, spatial dimensions of demography become significant, especially serial changes in population structure, according to ageing or out-migration as they lead to falling rolls and wider opportunities for school choice. In both England and Ireland, especially in the urban context of the majority, the quality of public transport enables easy mobility to enhance school choice should the clientele wish to exercise it. In the former case location, a significant number have done so, but in the latter, not. This could be due to the presence or absence of spare places rather than to the community ideal. Whether the rapidly increasing affluence – and related mobility - of a significant proportion of the Irish population leads to greater invoking of parental choice remains to be seen. The aforementioned case location school in the city centre without a local community, but fully subscribed, provides a clue, though its situation is idiosyncratic. Nonetheless, as the ‘American’ context illustrates, diversity encourages choice, which is further enhanced by statutory provision of bussing and the clustering of high schools in the most accessible part of the city, the centre.

It became evident in the field as well as through the literature that social class is still a key issue. This is a familiar theme in respect of social and cultural

reproduction, but viewed spatially it has interesting manifestations in all three case locations.

In Ireland, the strong community/school connection reinforces the clustering that promotes such replication through the generations. Identification with 'the parish' and the local church – including through the school, even where secular - seems to bring a strong likelihood of parents accepting the school they knew as being appropriate for their children. In the USA, the combination of 'white flight', the small scale of the school district and the influx of so-called minority populations, leaves the locale in question predominantly Hispanic and Afro-American. This, together with totally open enrolment at high school level and ease of mobility and accessibility tends to break down school/community links in the neighbourhood sense. The English case, where the greatest degree of mediation appears to be evident, has social class connections in that much of the cross-LEA enrolment takes place within a middle class suburban zone that happens to have the boundary running through it. Within the 'city' authority containing predominantly working class residential areas, such homogeneity eases the exercise of school choice made available by naturally falling roles in an area of ageing population.

8.4.3 Mediation and the Operational Perspective

In addition to the mediation of policy as it develops and is enacted, and the influence of location and space on potential and actual exercise of choice, the third major category of integrated influences is that concerned with the day-to-day operation of the provision of public secondary education. It was with this aspect that the focus of the empirical research conducted by the writer was concerned, as discussed in

chapters 5 through 7 above. The simultaneous comparison of the cases in this regard indicates at least three areas of cross-related mediating activity: political interaction, financial regulation and institutional management. All are informed by temporal and spatial considerations but have their own individual and collective dynamic.

Political Interaction

Firstly, while it is true that the act of educating, and provision for it, are culturally embedded, its systemic operation is inherently political. Even at the local level, perhaps especially so, there are moves to be made and games to be played in respect of the delivery of policy. First of all there must be political interaction between the local polity and the regional or national authority, whichever is responsible for the policy and its implementation. As has been noted in the Massachusetts case, mediation was built into the reform itself in respect of cross-district open enrolment by the opportunity for school districts to opt out. However, enthusiastic endorsement of the policy can also be a mediating influence in effecting the enhancement of opportunities for choice and the fostering of a market ambience. In this case location the Superintendent is a pro-active supporter of both the policy of open enrolment and the creation of diversity through the establishment of different types of school, especially charter schools. So, at the level of local/regional (state) political interaction, there is strong mutually supportive activity. At the same time, the Superintendent operates closely with the school board of the district, which in this case is co-terminous with 'the City', and is the management board for all public schools. This concentrates power at the 'City level', and is enhanced even further by his relieving of the deputy-Superintendents of routine interaction with the high schools. The principals of all such schools have, therefore, to interact directly with the

Superintendent who clearly sees the reform of both open enrolment and MCAS as having the potential to raise standards in schools through competition.

Such a situation contrasts markedly with the English case where there would appear to be a confrontational relationship between local and national government. This is not surprising since one of the main objectives of the reform was to minimise the role of LEAs in the provision of public education, their main *raison d'être*. The political 'colour' of the LEA therefore no longer guarantees ease of interaction with the centre, and the fact that the Labour administration of 1997 – 2001 chose not to soften the blow, means that tensions continue. In the case location, the fact that two LEAs each have part of it inevitably leads to sensitive political interactions relating to the cross-border flow of students and per capita funds. Interaction between each LEA and its high schools is steeped in micro-politics and trade-offs. Some such activities are referred to below in the section on funding regulation. Others relate directly to the issue of school choice, for example the fact that in relation to most public high schools the LEA receives parental preferences and makes the allocation to schools. It also handles appeals from parents against the allocations made, although members of the neighbouring LEA, in the interests of transparency, populate appeal panels. Since cross-border enrolments at secondary level are common in this and other locations, and considerable financial implications ride upon placement decisions, this aspect of political interaction is a clear mediating factor whether the appeals are upheld or not.

Another significant issue in the English case is the political interaction between local and central government that operates both directly and indirectly. The creation of both LMS and GMS under the 1988 Act and subsequent legislation was a fundamental shift of power towards the centre. The translation of GMS to 'Foundation School' status under the current Labour administration placed such

schools back under LEA auspices but allowed them to retain power over admissions on the same basis as voluntary aided schools. As LEAs are under regular routine scrutiny by the DfEE, they are subject to pressure to act in relation to such issues as overcapacity caused by demographic downturns. Related decisions that directly affect enrolment, such as closure or amalgamation of schools, are mediating the policy of open enrolment, especially from the parental viewpoint. Less direct initiatives such as the creation of Education Action Zones (Power, 2000) the work of the office for standards in education (OfSTED) and the Technology College initiative, which may affect the relative status and therefore the potential attraction of individual schools, are all aspects of political interaction as a mediating influence. Although OfSTED is a quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisation (QUANGO) its power and influence is considerable, inspecting both individual schools and LEAs, as we have seen in chapter 5.

In the USA a similar interaction between school districts and the federal Department of Education may occur in relation to federal projects. One example would be in relation to funding for bilingual projects that might be allocated differentially between schools (Coleman, 1991; Cipriano, 1995). Such allocations may well have opaque rather than transparent objectives in political terms, but it is also open to individual schools to bid for federal project funds where applicable. There is a tendency for schools in favoured social locations with high quality staffing to be more successful than their counterparts in the inner city, and this creates wider disparities. Some such funds are specifically earmarked for underprivileged locations, and in the case of the American location in this study the high schools are all equally accessible in central locations. This may have the effect of mediating policy

implementation in a positive way since choice of school carries no geographical disadvantages.

In Ireland the historic preference for consensual partnership rather than legislation in respect of public educational provision has led to a different kind of political interaction – that between partners in the provision of a public good (Hogan, 1995). At least up to the Education Act of 1998, and possibly beyond, the government ‘touch’ has been a light one, not influenced differentially by any change of party in power. The only comparable interaction to that between national, regional and local political agencies is between the DOE in Dublin and the VECs as outlined in Chapter 6. Operational interaction comes mainly at the local level where political, religious and institutional actors relate to each other and to parents in an apparently culturally embedded manner that respects the relationship between school and community. Whether a significant number of parents recognise the endorsement or enhancement of their Constitutional position in regard to the 1998 Act is a matter for another research project.

Financial Mechanisms

It is clear from the documentary and empirical research conducted that any degree of marketisation of public educational provision is necessarily strongly influenced by the financial mechanisms involved. This is also true in the private sector but in a much simpler open market situation. It is also clear that the financial dimension is intimately linked with the political, but here we need to consider its distinctive role in the mediation of the policy in question.

In all three countries and case locations involved there is a direct connection between the number of students enrolled in second level public schools and the income received by each school from public funds. Although in every single institutional case researched, additional income is generated, the per capita formula funding accounts for the bulk of the income. There are, however, significant differences as to how this works, which are therefore mediating influences on open enrolment.

The Irish case is the most straightforward; with the majority of schools receiving funding direct from the national Department of Education to the principal and the management board. From the empirical work conducted in this case, it would appear that almost all effective power of decision, and therefore mediation, resides with the principal and chair of the board. Although few principals now come from the religious, with the majority of secondary schools being Church-related, and the parish ethos still significant, additional funding from parish and diocesan sources gives the religious factor a stronger mediating relationship with the economic than in the other two countries.

With at least three sources of funding in the US case, the issue is more complicated in respect of both the regulatory and discretionary forms of mediation. Although opting out of the open enrolment dimension of the 1993 Act in Massachusetts is a real opportunity exercised by about one third of the numerous school districts, it does bring with it some financial loss. Presumably this is seen as an acceptable trade-off for perceived social benefits. When there is cross-district enrolment the State DOE originated funds flow according to a formula and a time lapse as in England. Furthermore, the charter schools – welcomed more in some school districts than others – receive their funding from the State and are subject to a time bound contract with targets attached. In this particular case location, one of the

charter schools belongs to an international consortium and has the possibility of receiving financial support from 'the family' as it were. Such a financial situation obviously mediates the political effect of district and state regulation.

The higher levels of interest and involvement of the business community in public sector schooling in the USA as compared with Ireland and England has clear mediating effects in a number of ways and at different levels. The REBA in central Massachusetts described above serves *inter alia* to enhance the financial skills of individual school administrations and provide contacts for public and private financial support both in cash and in kind

Possibilities for greater interaction with the business world are also evident in the English case, not only through national and local government-related schemes but also through the discretion now enjoyed by individual schools. These are mediating influences, in that income so derived ameliorates the constraints of regulated public funds, which are on a per capita basis and therefore directly linked to enrolment. Additional income permitted under both public and private enterprise does not necessarily affect enrolment *per se* but enhances what can be done to make the school more attractive to potential customers. This leads us directly to the third element of the operational paradigm, institutional strategies.

Institutional Strategies

At the most micro of levels, that of the locale itself, lies the third component of the operational paradigm in respect of the mediation of policy. Clearly elements of the political interaction paradigm and the funding mechanisms paradigm operate at this level, but here we are concentrating on the 'product' that is on offer to the public in terms of an education service that is itself a component of the milieu within the locale.

We need to consider such authority as operates at this level as well as the individual schools, and while the other two paradigms focussed on what the research shows to be two major mediating factors, here all factors and stakeholders have to be considered in an holistic approach.

In terms of authorities operating within and as part of the milieu there are very different scenarios as between the cases. In England the LEAs involved in this study have not only experienced the same downsizing and erosion of function and status as their counterparts throughout the country, but they also share the milieu and the locale in a situation of competition, different political identity and financial gain/loss. In both cases they have had, through the same legislation as created the quasi market in secondary schooling, to learn how to be in partnership with schools as opposed to being in authority over them. In relation, however, to enrolment policy it is the LEA that both determines placements according to national guidelines (DfEE, 1999) and only passes the formula funding through to schools after negotiation on agreed numbers. Consequently LEAs still have a considerable mediating influence on the operation of market-related models of provision. In the English case location LEA A, the 'city authority' is entirely contained within the conurbation, is politically stable and despite coming from a very low base in terms of the performance indicator (league) tables is strongly focussed and committed to school improvement as witnessed by the very positive OfSTED report of 1999 and the outstanding progress of its primary schools. It operates from a position of respected authority and drive. The LEA personnel appear to work hard to maintain credibility. By contrast LEA B is geographically large, predominantly rural and politically marginal. The part of the locale for which it is responsible is untypical, being massively suburban. The disparate nature of the human environment of this LEA contributes to its political

fragmentation. Policies and procedures are less focussed and in these circumstances the significant inflow of second level students and funds cross-border from LEA A is as much of a problem as a benefit. This leaves the four high schools in the locale of this case that are under the auspices of LEA B in a relatively powerful institutional position as compared with their counterparts in LEA A – the remainder of the milieu.

By contrast to these complexities there is no equivalent in Ireland, either in general or in the case location. The strategy of the VECs and the diocesan boards – only one of each in the case location - is one of mutual cooperation with the DOE in operating a ‘light touch’ oversight of all schools. Whether the decision, through the Education Act of 1998, *inter alia*, to establish a more rigorous inspectoral capacity will challenge the historical accord remains to be seen.

In the American case location there is an institutional strategy that is very clear, vigorously executed and focussed on the market-related model promoted by the DOE of Massachusetts through the 1993 Education Reform Act. In neither the Irish nor the English case is there such an *engagement* with the policy of open enrolment. In the former it is in effect ignored, and in the latter, contained. In the USA, the power of individual school districts is such that distinctive action of some kind in reaction to State policy is likely to occur. In this case it takes the form of proactive support and a strategy of promoting competition, diversification and choice. This is just as much a mediation of policy as is passive acceptance or neutral containment.

At the institutional level of the individual high schools researched in this study there were many detailed strategies identified that had been developed to react to – and therefore to mediate – market related policies of open enrolment. These have been reported in chapters 5, 6 and 7 and need be only briefly summarised here. The most significant is probably the promotion of management strategies derived from the

business world in the upgrading of second level school administration. Devolvement of funds and powers of decision-making to individual schools in the English and Irish cases has encouraged, indeed necessitated, the involvement of professionals as members of management boards that are now carrying much greater responsibilities than before.

The nature and style of management boards contrast sharply as between the British and Irish cases on the one hand and the USA case on the other. In the two former examples the boards operate at the institutional level of the school. That is to say, while regional level agencies may be represented, such as the LEA, the VEC or the diocese – depending on the type of school, they do not necessarily represent a majority vote. This leaves power very much in local hands, especially in Ireland where it accords with the community orientation of most schools. In England there are significant exceptions in the case of voluntary aided and foundation schools where, as with the Roman Catholic school in the case location the ‘Foundation Governors’ outnumber the others and can safeguard the interests of the Church. As all such schools govern their own admissions policy, their management boards can decide on the criteria for admissions to the school – a clear and direct mediation of policy. Although on a national basis the majority of public secondary schools are not in this category, the minority is significant, and especially so when clustered. For example, a recent case in a different location in England, Wellingborough, led to around 20 students being denied admission to any of the three secondary schools in the town because they governed their own admissions and declared themselves full.

Even where schools do not have foundation governors, and where the LEA controls admissions, this research has shown a modern sub-committee structure to be operating within management boards with high levels of professional expertise

represented on each. It is mainly through these sub-committees that specialist skills are enabled to operate, with their chairs being significant stakeholders in school policy. While in most cases this did not directly affect admissions as such, it was seen to affect other decisions related to the marketing of the school such as the sanctioning and supporting of promotional literature of high quality and the entering into both public and private development strategies such as aiming for Technology College status, mutually beneficial deals with companies and income generating use of physical assets such as sports facilities. While such initiatives may not be related directly to attracting new students from other local schools they are intended to maintain market share, which is a form of mediation.

In the USA, while such promotional activity does take place under the initiative of high school principals and staff, it has to be closely related to district strategy because real power lies with the district-wide management board. Site-based management teams do not have the same status or power as the management boards of Irish or, especially, English schools. The management board in the US case location in effect places all the secondary schools in direct competition with each other through a totally open enrolment policy by opting into the 1993 regulations and actively encouraging the establishment of charter schools. At school level it would appear that one response is to give selected staff time and resources to create promotional material and engage in highly professional marketing activities. This strategy has prompted a magnet-type focus on certain areas of the curriculum, such as commerce in one case, vocational education in another and science/technology in a third. In this way the high schools are mediating the policy in a positive way in enhancing the possibilities of choice already increased by charter schools (who do have real management boards).

Summary

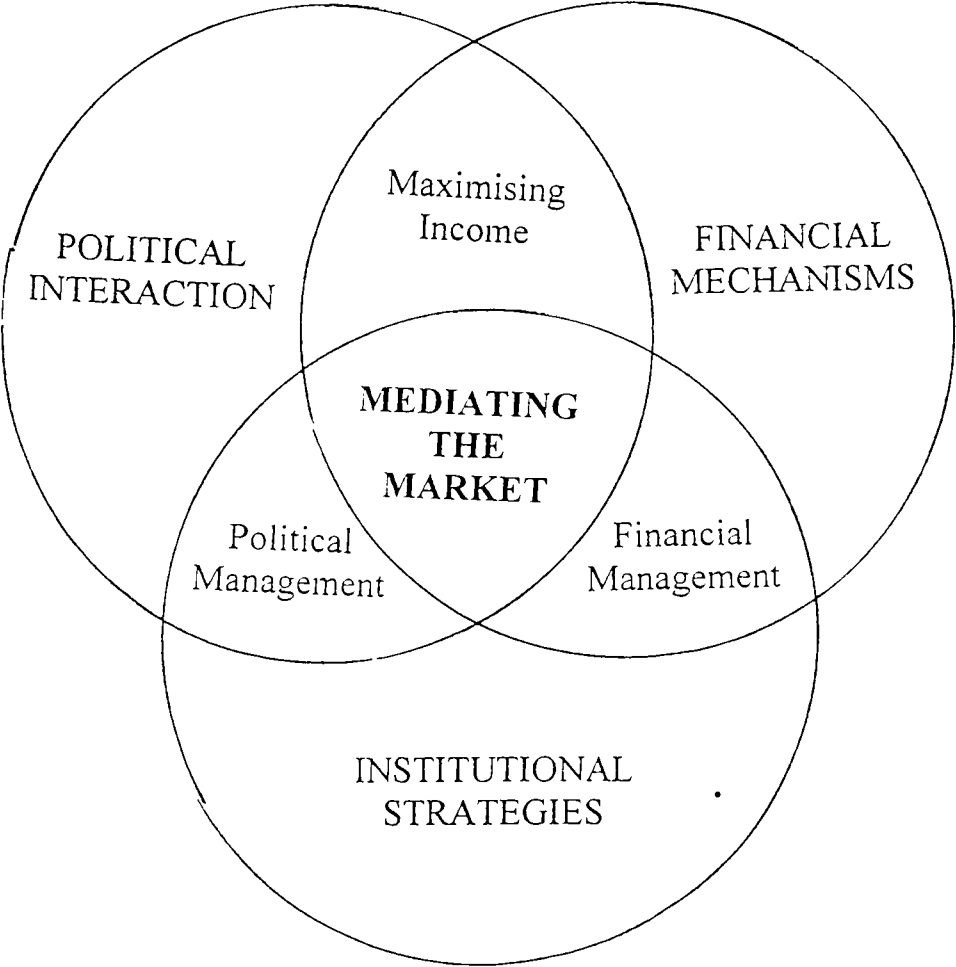
We may summarise mediation and the operational paradigm in the form of a Venn diagram (see Figure 19) where there are interactions between each of the three components of the paradigm. Political interaction integrates with institutional strategies to produce *political management* at local level; and with financial mechanisms to produce the *maximising of income*, while institutional management and financial mechanisms require enhanced *financial management*. Together, the three play a leading role in 'mediating the market' within the context of the locale.

8.5 Testing the Hypothesis

At the end of the second stage of the comparative analysis a hypothesis was generated, and in respect of the outcome of the simultaneous comparison that followed, drawing also on information presented in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, it would appear that the hypothesis could be upheld.

On the basis of the primary evidence derived from both empirical and documentary sources, secondary evidence from the review of both contextual and research literature, and cross-national comparative analysis it may be confidently asserted that:

Figure 19: Mediating the Market



- a) all factors identified in Chapter 1 did make a contribution to the mediation of market related policies of public second level school provision in all three cases: England, Ireland and the USA/Massachusetts;

- b) the factors operated differentially according to:
 - (i) different *levels of analysis* from international to local;
 - (ii) different *locales* and *milieu*;
 - (iii) different *powers* and *interests* of parallel *stakeholders*.

- c) the identification and assessment of the mediating effects of the factors and stakeholders was enhanced by engaging in cross-national comparison

It remains now to come to the identification of the most important themes emerging from the research, the main conclusions to be drawn from it and recommendations that might be made for further research in this area.

CHAPTER 9 CONCLUSION

9.1 Introduction

In this final chapter, three objectives remain

- Completion of the comparison within the identification of key issues that encapsulate the outcome;
- Revisiting of the research questions to conclude whether or not they have been satisfied;
- An evaluation of the research, its potential achievements and limitations, with recommendations for further study.

9.2 Key Issues

First, this chapter will link back to the previous chapter (8). In order to engage in the simultaneous comparisons and test the hypothesis, the factors - paired on the basis of their compatibility in terms of the mediation of market-related policies - were pitched against each other. The factors were analysed in sequence and the three paradigms of political interaction, financial mechanisms and institutional strategies were used to synthesise the outcomes. These interactions were recognised as the key components of the operational response to the implementation of policy. Collectively, and in mutual interaction, they have been described as 'mediating the market', as illustrated in *Figure 19* above.

It is clear from the contextual, literary, documentary and empirical research that these three elements did mediate the market. It is contended, through the claim of 'hypothesis proven' at the conclusion of Chapter 8, that the range of factors and stakeholders identified did in fact play a role in the mediation of school enrolment policy. This was also true of all three countries and locations. The synopsis that is encapsulated in *Figure 19* is necessarily integrative and summarised. It does not reveal, for instance, the different way in which the mediation of this policy was found to be operating in all three cases. In order to discuss and illustrate this, a further matrix has been constructed which places the six permutations of paired factors against the three national cases and case locations (see *Figure 20*).

The matrix will first be addressed by working each complex in turn across each country, remembering that the identification of a key issue in respect of any one country does not mean that it is absent in the others, merely that it appears to be less influential. Each complex will be given an abbreviated title for convenience. For example, A: historical-political; B: cultural-demographic; C: social-geographic; D: religious-economic; E: historical-economic; F: politico-geographic. This matrix is intended to highlight the balance in terms of effecting mediation.

9.2.1 Complex A: Historico-Political

Here the evidence, both in the literature and from the field indicates that recognised traditions or styles of public provision of schooling continue to have a residual effect on the mediation of policy.

Figure 20: Key Attributes Informing the Mediation of Market-Related Policies for Public Secondary Provision in England, Ireland and the USA.

FOURS CASES	ENGLAND	IRELAND	U.S.A.
Historical / Cultural / Political / Religious	Selective Legacy	Inclusive Co operation	Meritocratic Diversity
Historical / Cultural / Geographic / Demographic	Micro-Cultures	Communities	Mobility
Geographic / Demographic / Social / Economic	School Location	Social Class	Minority Cultures
Political / Religious / Social / Economic	Funding Mechanisms	School Ethos	Secularisation of Public Schools
Historical / Cultural / Social / Economic	Localised Attitudes	Partnership	Business Influence
Political / Religious / Geographic / Demographic	Regulated Space	School Location	Discrete Networks

From comparison of primary findings, and referring back to secondary sources informing chapter 2, for example, Stephens (1998), Drudy and Lynch, (1993), Tyack and Cuban, (1995), it would appear that the selective legacy in England, the inclusive culture in Ireland and the competitive ethic in the USA have mediated similar market-related policies which differ in detail in the three countries. In the American case location, this takes the form of what might be termed 'positive mediation' in the sense that at the local level, the implementing agency (school district) is positively active in creating a genuine market by encouraging the foundation of charter schools. This simultaneously creates diversity and widens choice while enlarging capacity within the public system. It resolves the problem, evident in the Irish case, of almost total full subscription due partly to social inclusivity of locations. In the English case, there is temporary space due to demographic downturn but this will soon disappear due to the requirement placed on LEAs by the DfEE to remove excess capacity by rationalisation and closure. Nonetheless, in the English case, there is a dramatic change in the balance of powers as between the different levels of institutional/local (schools), regional (LEAs) and national (DfEE). Almost all the budget for a public school flows via the LEA to the school. This gives the principal and school board a massive increase of power but, in order to receive the funding, they have to present a budget to the LEA and negotiate it. As the LEA still retains overall responsibility for public schools, plus the financial management expertise, this gives them more influence than may appear on the surface. Even though school boards now recruit members with such expertise, they are not involved in the efforts of the LEA to gain maximum benefit for the overall local authority budget. Indeed, there was evidence from the interviews that most were not sufficiently knowledgeable or skilled to cope with the complexities of the new powers they possessed. Consequently, in practice,

power has been with the principal and the chair of the school board. Far from making the provision of secondary school more democratic and transparent, the only elected representatives (city or county councillors) now have much less influence.

The Irish situation is similar. Funds are devolved but are much less complicated since teacher salaries are paid directly by the state. However, power still resides in practice with the principal, and with the church representatives where applicable. The key influence on mediation to emerge from this comparison seems to be *more political interaction* at the local level.

9.2.2 Complex B: Cultural-Demographic

The second complex throws up more discrepancies than the first between the secondary literature and the primary findings. While, for example, in the English case there was clear evidence of the micro-cultures in respect of attitudes to schooling identified by Robson (1971) in Sunderland being a strong feature of the locality, some parents were clearly prepared to exercise choice when the opportunity presented itself. It became available due to the demographic downturn being combined with a massive local media campaign against the city having one of the worst performance tables in the country.

In Ireland again, the compact nature of community still allows for the integral role of secondary schools in it (Walshe, 1999). The American case-location had managed to accommodate almost entirely within itself a combination of the solidarity of the community at the city level with a degree of mobility within it. This negated the neighbourhood principle of the entire colonial town (Daniels, 1979). This effect was enhanced by the highly accessible central locations of most of the high schools, and

the generous provision of bussing. The key influence on mediation to emerge from the second complex could be seen to be *demographic change*.

9.2.3 Complex C: Social-Geographical

The third complex, like the first, shows good accord between the secondary literature and the primary analysis. In Ireland, for example, social class appears to be a strong, if residual, mediating influence (Drudy and Lynch, 1993) in that the social cohesion of communities often corresponds with class and with catchments in the urban context. Respondents would mostly deny social class as being a factor in parental choice, supposing the questions to be to do with class conflict rather than class solidarity. In England, the relative lack of connection between the school and community is reflected by, and possibly related to, the much greater variety of origins and types of secondary school and to a commitment to reorganisation of this sector (Brock, 1992). Consequently, the location of schools becomes an important mediating factor, reinforced by the primacy of 'nearest secondary school' in the guidelines for school admissions delivered to LEAs by the DfEE (1999). This is, of course, reinforced by the Rotherham Judgement, which was behind the type of prescriptive 'health warnings' issued to parents by both LEAs in the case-location and quoted.

In the USA case study location, as mentioned in the previous section, the easy accessibility of public high schools in a central location and mass bussing negates the neighbourhood principle, but this goes against the general picture of continued *de facto* social segregation in many other, especially larger, cities (Cohen and Reese, 1992; Thomas and Moran, 1992; Passow, 1963). Consequently, whereas the 'minority' issue does not restrict choice or opportunity in Winnieville, this is a

function of the nature of regulated space within a conurbation, which is discussed further below. The key influence on mediation to emerge from the third complex would seem to be *urban social segregation* but for different reasons in each case.

9.2.4 Complex D: Religious-Economic

Within this complex there is greater disparity than in those previously described. In the USA, the secularisation of public schooling with the concomitant provision of a parallel parochial sector does not mean that there is no economic implication for either. With respect to the mediation of a policy, that makes a direct connection between enrolment and funding; the manner and degree to which the former affects the latter could be significant. This leaves aside the contentious issue of vouchers (Witte, 2000) since the legalisation of the use of vouchers in parochial schools (Fuller, 2000a) is rare and does not apply in the case location. Nonetheless, the falling rolls evident in parochial schools in the conurbation in question is directly due to the vigorous uptake of the Massachusetts open enrolment reform by the Superintendent and the equally vigorous response to the challenge by the public high schools and charter schools in the city.

In the English case, there is also a connection between the religious and economic factors in that:

- a) Church schools derive additional, *albeit* modest, funds from their diocesan boards.
- b) They control their own intake and therefore their per capita fee income.

They have greater leeway in realising the real estate potential of their land because they have the total freehold ownership. This is significant for the Catholic schools in general and in particular, in the case-location as described above, it gives them a high level of attraction for parents while retaining the right to select by denomination (see *Figure 14*).

The Irish situation has some parallels with the English in respect of ownership of the majority of public secondary schools by the church, and the modest additional income derived from the dioceses. However, the issue of additional powers of selection of pupils does not apply and church schools in particular see themselves as a focal point within a compact community rather than a dispersed network as in England. The key influence to emerge from the fourth complex would seem to be *differential funding mechanisms*.

9.2.5 Complex E: Socio-economic

In this, the fifth complex, the balance of import lies with the two direct factors, though they derive considerable residual influence from the historical and cultural legacies. Here, there is a significant accord between the secondary literature and the primary data derived from the field.

Most striking is probably the American case location where the traditionally strong business interest in public schooling (Cuban, 2000) is very evident. Its influence on mediation in various ways, through the REBA organisation described above, may be indirect but it is clearly relevant. School districts that join the Regional Education and Business Alliance (REBA) network gain considerable expertise in the fields of management efficiency and those individual schools likewise. This is

especially true of marketing techniques that are invaluable in the competition for junior high school graduates as evidenced in the field research. Schools make differential use of REBA in this regard. This substantially mediates operation of the open enrolment policy.

While modest business connections were observed in the school boards in the Irish and English cases, they are, by comparison with the USA, insignificant. In Ireland, however, the operation of a consensual approach to public school provision includes the business sector in the contentious issue of partnerships (Lynch, 1999; Walshe, 1999; and Hogan, 1985). Along with a range of other interested parties, it does not appear that the issue of partnership with business in educational policy development or implementation affects open enrolment in any substantial way. Despite the government's clear direction not to engage in 'selection by ability' (see *Appendix B*), it is clear that O'Sullivan (1999) sees the market paradigm as a possibility in the future, in which case the current operative and inclusive approach would be challenged. The English case is much simpler in this regard, there being a strong relationship between social class and occupational structure in the make-up of local communities and their micro-cultures. In respect of enrolment and the mediation of policy, the localised attitude reported in the field seems to concur with the near-compulsory choice of nearest school through the Rotherham Judgement (although few will have heard of it) and LEA prescription. The key influence on mediation to emerge from the fifth complex would seem to be *differential attitudes to public education*.

9.2.6 Complex F: Politico-Geographic

The sixth complex carries a much clearer picture across the board since, as Bereday (1964) recognised, political geography is a prime factor in comparative educational studies especially regarding public education. Granted that this sector of provision necessarily works within regulated spaces, the nature and scale of these spaces is different as between the three cases and is capable of change. This difference is especially marked in England, including the case location.

Frequent reorganisation of local government areas and the deregulation of catchments and LEA borders in respect of enrolment have created 'market space'. In the case location this has been taken up, through both demographic downturn and creation of capacity. This would not be possible if the conurbation were in a single LEA, because it would be subject to rationalisation by the DfEE. Since it is shared, one LEA can lose numbers and the other gain. From the field studies, it looks possible that this arises from their having been in a single, unified authority from 1974 to 1996, although this is speculation.

In Ireland, because there is, in effect, no local authority, the location of schools within organic communities creates 'natural catchments' that tend to be respected by schools in a spiral of collaboration and mutual support – informal political geographies.

The 1993 Education Reform Act in Massachusetts had, as one of its prime objectives, the prising open of the discrete educational worlds of hundreds of historic school districts, some of them minute. The opportunity to opt out enabled many to do just that. But even in respect of the majority, their identities have remained discrete and secure. This has been enhanced in the case-location by the advocacy of

diversification and choice by the superintendent. In any case, the location of most of the high schools negates neighbourhood catchments leaving each with its own discrete networks of catchment.

The key influences on mediation to emerge from the sixth complex would seem to be *regulated space*. Such regulation is informed in the Irish case, manipulated in the English case and district-wide in the USA case.

9.3 Key Mediating Influences

The six key influences then, on the mediation of second level public secondary schooling across the multiple cross-national cases, though differently weighted in each, are:

- *Increased political interaction* at the local level.
- The significance of *demographic change* on the rolls of high schools.
- The occurrence of *de facto social segregation*.
- *Differential funding mechanisms* relating to enrolment.
- *Different attitudes* to public education on the part of interest groups in each location.
- *Differential provision* according to regulated space.

All these influences can be seen both from the literature and from the case-location fieldwork to influence the implementation of policies ostensibly offering or enhancing open enrolment in public schools through different forms of mediation. This is a clear

outcome of the application of the sequencing of the stages of Bereday's comparative methodology to the issue of mediation of this policy.

9.3.1 Increased Political Interaction

This is evident in all three countries as new opportunities are perceived by some and concerns by others. In England it is strongly evident that there is creative tension between LEAs and the DfEE, and between LEAs and high schools. This is due to LEAs being weakened but still having power over most enrolments and the bargaining process for budgets of schools. In Ireland, this is less acute but there is still potential interaction between the DOE and, where applicable, with the religious or the VEC. As pressures increase on the capacity of schools to respond to urbanisation, customary modes of collaboration and cooperation can become strained. In the USA case-location, this is more acute due to the creation of charter schools. There is also very active interaction between the District and the DOE (Massachusetts) either to *embrace* the reform (creating capacity) for local benefit, as in this location, or *to contain it*, or *to oppose it* as in adjacent school districts.

9.3.1 Demographic Change

This has proved to be a very important mediating influence, and is often overlooked because it is not part of the reform *per se*, but is contextual and not direct. In England, the demographic downturn and out-migration creates capacity and encourages the exercise of choice even in working-class inner city areas where strong residual attitudes of localisation have prevailed for generations. By contrast, in Ireland

prosperity encourages population increase and in-migration, both of which increase demand which is met by expansion of existing schools and the building of new ones. 'White Flight' is a common phenomenon in the USA encouraged by the cross border enrolment aspect of the reform, though the resulting 'majority minority' in the case district does not fragment or form 'ghetto' schools due to totally open enrolment being available.

9.3.2 De Facto Social Segregation

This is the tendency for human groups, including social classes to cluster together territorially. In the English case, the reform enables the middle classes especially to distance themselves from the working classes, and the increase disparity between schools due to 'competition' in the market atmosphere enhances social segregation. This is not so contentious in Ireland due to the community ideal, but most communities are class based and maintain this through choosing their local school and keeping it that way. In the USA, it is the small scale of the school district that, in the context of cross-border enrolment, can create inter district segregation. The higher level of home-to-school mobility available enhances this possibility through extensive bussing facilities.

9.3.3 Differential Funding Mechanisms

All three cases operate some kind of per capita formula funding but the detailed mechanism involved certainly mediate the open enrolment policy significantly. For example, in England full formula funding through to schools (despite LEA bargaining

powers) enhances their ability to compete in the market if they so choose. The age-weighted pupil unit further tendencies especially relating to where 16-19 year old students tend to enrol and what schools and colleges do to attract them. Unlike in England, Ireland's public schools do not have control over the bulk of their budget and therefore this is a less influential factor though not insignificant. The situation works towards remaining 'cosy' with the local community that populates the school and, where applicable, with the religious (for additional funding at the margin). The greater variety of funding sources in the USA (State, District and Federal) have a mediating effect on the reform, and this relates to the power of the district (Superintendent) to juggle these funds, and remain on top of the public schools.

9.3.4 Differential Attitudes To Schooling

In England, research has shown there to be micro cultures within cities that contain different attitudes to education that are inbred and resistant and have a mediating effect on parental/student choice of school. Some ethnic minorities are using the reform to create their 'own' schools, though not in the case location. Similarly, in Ireland the strong community ideal is another type of micro culture but on a slightly larger scale and tends to enhance the *status quo*, working against the exercise of choice for market mobility. The USA is more similar to England but enhanced by much greater incidence of multiculturalism. The case location has, however, acted *both* against ethnic separation by abolishing catchments of high schools, *and* for it by encouraging charter schools, which is something of a paradox.

9.3.5 Regulated Space

This really means 'political geography' of education, and that schools and communities close to boundaries between regulated spaces are more likely to get involved and mediate the reform whether positively as in the English case location or negatively as indicated recently in some London Boroughs (see the *Times Educational Supplement* (TES), 6th July, 2001). Frequent changes of LEA boundaries have mediated the policy, as has the abolition of LEA boundaries enabling cross border enrolment. LEAs tend to create new unofficial catchments, and the Rotherham Judgement - by favouring the nearest school principle - enhances this. In Ireland, the only influential regulated spaces are the national border (because it is a centralised unitary system) and the Parish (because of the residual influence of the Church). Counties also exist within VEC responsibilities, but are not significant in relation to enrolment in high school as the local community (unregulated) is still an important feature of society. Finally, in the USA, the very strong survival of the School District dominates the regulated space and is enhanced by the opt out possibility. Where they opt in then the regulated space changes but only at the margins.

9.4 Revisiting the Research Questions

It is clear from the formulation and application of the conceptual framework to the issue under investigation that it has been appropriate to adopt an approach concerned with factors, stakeholders and the local level at which markets, whether quasi or otherwise, necessarily operate. To each of the first two questions the caveat 'if at all' was added. The first comment is that the investigation indicated that both the factors

and stakeholders identified do affect the mediation of market-related policies for the provision of public secondary schooling.

The six key influences to emerge from the analysis of both secondary and primary information suggest that all the factors had significant relevance to the enquiry and, since the stakeholders relate to these factors, the qualitative research at the local level has made a significant contribution to the outcome.

Bearing in mind that this study has been concerned with an issue relating to educational policy- its mediation – and has been aiming to provide an analysis, the researcher will seek to set it against Sander's (2000) typology for illustrating 'alternative approaches to comparative methodology' (p.201; *see Figure 21*) which he had constructed as a framework for considering both affirmative and critical approaches. While it is conceded that some elements of the affirmative approach have contributed to this thesis, it can be shown with reference to Sander's typology that this study is essentially in the 'critical approach' category. The fact that Sander's table is appended to a discussion on researching teacher education is not an oversight since, as maintained throughout; this thesis has been focusing on the *mediation* of policy. The policy of interest was simply that of open enrolment.

It is not the function of this study to seek to evaluate the operation or effectiveness of that policy. Issues such as whether equity is sidelined, or whether inequalities between schools tend to be widened by a market-oriented policy, while important in their own right, are not relevant here. This is essentially a comparative study and therefore, it is valid to set it against Sander's checklist, which is illustrated here as *Figure 21*. He posits five criteria to be met and these will now be discussed in the light of this research.

Figure 21: Alternative Approaches in Comparative Methodology

	Affirmative approaches	Critical approaches
Definition of the subject to be studied	Education systems as reflecting the diversity of cultures (and education policy as having the task to maintain it)	Education and education policy as particular but universal forms of mediation and social control – and of generating opposition to mechanisms of control
Selection of sources of information on the subject	Preference given to the normative legal basis and the normative administrative and political definitions of the tasks and functions of education systems and education policy by governments	Emphasis on the complex and contradictory reality of social and political processes in the field of education and education policy
Methodological options in producing research results	Reading and quoting from texts (simple text reproduction and summary, not even hermeneutical interpretation)	Analysing social processes, including all stakeholders, their actions, attitudes and ideologies, their specific interests, strategies and power relations
Strategies of interpreting research results	Tendency of producing self-fulfilling prophecies confirming the myths of 'diversity' and 'difference'	Focus on understanding fundamental problems in the historical development of social systems through analysing the education sector education and education policy
Basic objectives/ functions of research	Production of affirmative ideologies (Cold War ideologies, European dimension ideologies, nationalist ideologies, regionalist ideologies, etc.)	Radical critique of social systems (the history and impact of class system in education and education policy)

Source: Sander, T. (2000) 'The Politics of Comparing Teacher Education Systems and Teacher Education Policy' in Alexander, R., Osborn, M. and Phillips, D. (Eds.) (2000) *Learning From Comparing: New Directions in Comparative Educational Research. Vol. 2. Policy, Professionals and Development*. Wallingford, Oxford: Symposium Books (p.201).

The critical approach, Sander suggests, will examine 'education and education policy as particular but universal forms of mediation and social control – and of generating opposition to mechanisms of control'. This requires viewing education from an ecological standpoint, affected by a wide range of interrelated factors which is what this research has attempted to do. It is also why a comparative approach is helpful, since the relative influence of particular factors in relation to a similar reform in comparable though different situations, can be observed.

Sander's first criterion for judging a critical approach is especially appropriate in that it highlights the central role of public education systems in development, survival and operations of the nation state as was observed in chapter 2 in respect of the three cases (Lee, 1995). It connects with the work of Ozga (1990) and Bowe *et al.* (1992) in cautioning against the acceptance of policies at their face value, as well as against accepting a linear view of the policy process: formulation, enactment, implementation and operation. In reality, it is not as simple as that (*see* Taylor, *et al.*, 1997; Nisbet and Nisbet, 1985). This is partly due to various forms of mediation some of which have been described above.

The second of Sander's criteria is that the researcher should include a wide selection of sources of information on the subject in question. By this, he means that a critical approach requires 'emphasis on the complex and contradictory reality of social and political processes in relation to education. It is precisely for this reason that the researcher has decided to undertake research on mediation of educational policy at the *local level*, thus answering the call of previous researchers and writers in this field in all three countries (for example, the Stuart Foundation 1999, in the USA; Levacic *et al.*, 1998, in the UK, and Smyth, 1999 in Ireland), as well as others where

similar market related reforms of public education have taken place (e.g. Australia, Taylor *et al.*, 1997 and New Zealand, Fiske and Ladd, 2000).

The third criterion relates to the selection of methodological options for prosecuting the research where the critical approach requires analysing social processes, stakeholders and power relations. As has been outlined above, one of the key areas of mediation in relation to the policy under consideration is that of increased political interaction, including the distinctly differential interfaces observed in the three case locations. In the case of the USA, the superintendent operates frequently and pro-actively with the Massachusetts Department of Education and has pulled the high schools sharply in line by requiring that they work directly to him and not to one of the deputies as previously. In the English case, high school principals are also experiencing more frequent and significant interactions with LEAs and now from a position of greater relative strength. In addition they have freedom, through the school board, to engage in business-like enterprises up to a certain level.

The fourth criterion is that critical strategies must be adopted for the interpreting of research results. This requires an understanding of the historical development of education systems (see chapter 2). Finally, care must be taken at the outset to be clear about the basic objections to the research, meaning that this must include a radical critique and not just a descriptive analysis or documentary survey. This researcher established her objectives, developed her methodology and executed much of the fieldwork well before the publication of the checklist by Sander, but it has been pertinent to use it here to illustrate the convergence of approach with a maximum of the critical and a modicum of the affirmative.

9.5 A Brief Evaluation of the Thesis: Its Achievements and Limitations

As indicated in the previous section, the researcher feels that the first two research questions have been satisfied – the third will be addressed below – and that by undertaking a genuinely original study, the researcher has contributed to the literature in this field in a way that previous works have called for. An attempt has been made to meet a substantial challenge and to reach an ambitious goal. It is possible that more might have been achieved in respect of detail with fewer countries and case locations, but the researcher considers the wider range to have been beneficial, especially in the inclusion of the Irish case. As compared with the other two, there was little established work on which to draw, but the long-term existence of an open enrolment market at second level is significant in itself, especially as it did not arise out of the kinds of ideological radicalism that accompanied the English and American cases. Much could be learnt in both directions here, although, as comparative educators are aware, borrowing from one system into another is a dangerous game (Phillips, 1989). This does not mean that particular insights cannot be gained from any one of the three cases examined here that would be beneficial to the others with careful adaptations to the local culture of education.

The research has also shown that, in general, the three case-locations, which proved to be comparable, exhibited the broad educational traits and values of their respective countries. The cases also yielded idiosyncratic variants based on their particular educational histories and current circumstances. So, in that cross-national multiple case study research is rare, the comparative methodology adopted here – an adaptation of Bereday's method, strengthened by the continuous comparative method

for detailed analysis – has the potential to contribute to theory in this field. That was the third main question and objective.

In respect of limitations, constraints arising from underestimating the tight timescales inevitably led to some frustrating of the ideal project in mind at the outset. On a more intellectual note, more might have been made of the way in which policies may mediate themselves if one takes a less linear view of the way they tend to progress. So, the contextual approach illustrated by Bowe, Ball and Gold (1992) involving a three-way interactive relationship between context of influence, context of policy text production and context of policy practice might have added further insights. Likewise, the fourfold model of Rhoten (2000) comprising the analysis of: policy origins and intentions; policy context; policy interpretations and policy actions, would have enriched this study.

Nonetheless, this was always a research exercise focused on the *mediation* of policy, which inevitably takes it into a wider realm than policy analysis, and the researcher is satisfied that she has remained true to her conceptual framework and that it has yielded an outcome of some worth to the field of comparative educational study within which it resides. On this closing note, it is worth bearing in mind Russell's comment that '[William] James, in elucidation, says that the function of philosophy is to find out what difference it makes to you or me if this or that world-formula is true. In this way, theories become instruments, not answers to enigmas' (Russell, 1967, p.771).

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Appendix A: ENGsite Enrolment Related Documents

School/LEA admissions policies and Parental Preference

School/LEA admissions policies

5.13 Each school has its own Admissions Policy. Community schools are schools that are more directly managed by LEAs, for example, LEAs are responsible for admissions and staffing; voluntary schools are usually denominational schools, with varying degrees of LEA involvement; foundation schools are responsible for their own admissions and staffing and have greater independence from LEAs than community schools. This system has been introduced under the New Framework for Schools (September 1999).

5.14 A 'reserved area' (catchment area) will exist for each school. Schools have to consult with each other to have a system that is fair for all. The new Admissions Act (1 September 1999) provides for a school adjudicator to oversee this ([Reference E3](#)).

5.15 Where more parents have expressed a preference for a particular school in a particular year than it has places in that year, the admission authority must apply the oversubscription criteria in its published admission policy in deciding which parents' preferences it should meet ([Reference E3](#)).

5.16 Commonly used and acceptable criteria include sibling links, distance from school, ease of access by public transport, medical or social grounds, reserved areas and transfer from named feeder primary schools, as well as parents' ranking of preference. Admission authorities should make clear the order of priority in which the criteria will be applied, and how any tie-break decisions will be made. Admission authorities should not give priority to parents based on the date order in which applications were received before the deadline ([Reference E3](#)).

The Greenwich Judgement

5.17 Often parents live in one LEA but find they are close to schools in a neighbouring authority. Parents in inner cities, particularly London, have long chosen schools across borough boundaries, not least under the former Inner London Education Authority (ILEA). The 1989 Greenwich judgement established that LEA-maintained schools may not give priority to children simply because of the fact that they live in the authority's administrative area. Applications for the authority's schools by parents living outside the LEA area must be considered equally ([Reference E3](#)).

The Rotherham Judgement

5.18 However, the Rotherham judgement confirmed that there is nothing unlawful in the principle of admission authorities operating catchment areas as part of the oversubscription criteria and thereby giving priority to some local children ([Reference E3](#)).

ENGsite Enrolment Related Documents

Partial Selection

5.19 Whereas grammar schools are wholly selective by academic ability, partially selective schools select just a proportion of their pupil intake on that basis. The 1998 Teaching and Higher Education Act significantly reduces the scope for partial selection. Local parents or a local admission authority may make an objection to partially selective admission arrangements. The Adjudicator will need to consider whether the arrangements act in the best interests of local children, including those with special educational needs, and parents, or work against those interests; whether they disrupt the sensible and efficient provision of education locally; and whether they have a detrimental effect on parental choice.

5.20 Local pupils, who could otherwise expect to be admitted to a school, find it harder to gain admission to schools with partial selection. Other schools in the area have often seen changes in their pupil profile as a result of the partially selective school 'creaming off' high ability pupils. Relatively high numbers of children have to travel an unreasonable distance to school because of the pressure on school places in their local area caused by partial selection.

Parental Preference

5.21 League tables were introduced for secondary schools in 1992 and are compiled by the DfEE. For primary schools, they were introduced in 1996 and are the responsibility of the LEA's. Articles in the Times Educational Supplement ([Reference E11](#)) seem to suggest that League Tables are not a major determinant when choosing schools. For example, one article states, 'it certainly seems rare for the average parent to allow league table performance to override other criteria, such as distance from home, a friendly atmosphere, and a congenial peer group. In fact research showed that the social background and race of other pupils are crucial factors in choosing a school especially among inner-city parents'. However, it should be noted that there has been no specific research into the importance of league tables on school choice.

5.22 Some parents are prepared to move house in order to be near to the school of their choice in a bid to improve their child's chances, asking local estate agents for family homes within walking distance or, at the most, a short bus journey from the school. In some cases, where the schools operate 'reserved' areas to give priority to local children, a move may be seen as a necessity. ([Reference E3](#)).

5.23 Two key pieces of research have explored the extent to which parental preferences are met in relation to secondary school choice. Morris (1993), found that there was little evidence that since 1989 the probability of parents obtaining a place at their first choice of school had either increased or decreased, particularly in the case of schools in rural local education authorities. However, in London and other metropolitan areas, there was evidence of a declining trend between 1989 and 1992 in the number of successful first preferences at transfer to secondary school ([Reference E10](#)). It should be noted that this research was not undertaken nationally and so is not necessarily a true representation.

ENGsite Enrolment Related Documents

5.24 The second piece of research by the Audit Commission (1996) commissioned a major study on the supply and allocation of school places. As part of this, a survey of 1,029 parents whose children had recently transferred to secondary school was undertaken. The parents lived in 5 areas – in inner London, in a large city, in a large but sparsely populated rural area, in a medium-sized industrial town and in a small city in a semi-rural part of England.

5.25 The survey found that around 10 per cent of parental preferences could not be met by the bodies with responsibility for admissions. Additionally, there were very marked geographical variations in terms of success in meeting preferences. The percentage of parents not getting their stated first preference ranged from 3% in the large city, to 32% in parts of inner London (Reference E10).

5.26 Research carried out by Bristol LEA showed that the academic record of a school was the most important reason for parents choosing a particular school. The school being located close to home came after many other reasons. These included: impression on visiting, child wanted to go there and siblings at same school.

Difficulty of finding local school places

5.27 There has been increasing evidence that where the education market is most developed, particularly in parts of London and the south east, parents are finding it difficult to find a place for their child at their local school. Parents from outside the area appear increasingly to be taking up places in these schools. It will be parents who are better informed and motivated and who can 'work the system' who will benefit (Reference E10).

Lack of parental understanding of admissions procedure

5.28 In a study carried out in London, with 70 parents who were in the process of choosing a secondary school (David et al, 1994; West et al, 1995) it was found that whilst over a half of those interviewed seemed to understand the *admissions procedure*, over a third did not seem to understand it, and just over one in ten thought that they did understand but in fact they did not appear to have grasped the relevant procedures. In addition, about half of the parents felt that they did not understand all the admissions criteria, whilst under a quarter understood some of them; however, around a sixth did not know what the criteria were. A significant proportion of parents do not, therefore appear to have the necessary information or knowledge to be able to exercise their power in relation to choosing schools. This may well mean that some parents are applying to schools at which their children have little or no chance of being offered a place (Reference E10).

5.29 It should be noted that whilst this research provides an interesting insight into the relationship between parents and the admissions procedure, the research was only based on a sample of 70.

5.30 *Individual admissions policies are a very important factor affecting whether a child can go to a particular school. Parents are able to, and therefore may choose to, send their children to schools that are not the most local to them.*

Appendix B: IREsite Enrolment Related Documents

AN POINN OIDEACHAIS,
BRANSE AN IARBHUNOIDEACHAIS,
TEACH I'ÁICÍN (3ú Urtár),
BÁILE ÁTHA CLIATH 2.



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION,
POST-PRIMARY BRANCH,
HAWKINS HOUSE (3rd Floor),
DUBLIN 2.

Freagra a sheoladh go dtí
Address reply to

An Runar

Fón (Telephone) 873 4700
Fax 677 7342
TAG (Ref) ..
DO THAG (Your Ref)

M.51/93

To the Authorities of Post-Primary Schools.

Selection Procedures for the Enrolment of Pupils in Second-Level Schools

The Minister for Education wishes to inform the authorities of post-primary schools that her Department has been involved in discussions with the post-primary school managerial associations in relation to the application of fair and objective entrance criteria for entry to second-level schools. A copy of an Agreed Memorandum of the discussions between the Department and the national representatives of the managerial associations is attached.

While school enrolment policy is a matter for the managerial authorities of each individual school, the Minister and the national representatives of school managerial associations are agreed that selection on the basis of academic ability must be discontinued. They also agree that it is important that each school should disclose its enrolment policy and the criteria used in selecting pupils for enrolment. Parents will thus be fully informed on the selection procedures and this will help to allay fears of discrimination against their children.

Copies of this Circular are also being distributed to the national managerial bodies representing primary schools, the National Parents' Council, teacher unions and the national and local media.

Don Thornhill,
Secretary.

2 December, 1993

IREsite Enrolment Related Documents

I ENTRANCES

POLICY:

When the number of candidates for places in First year exceeds the number of places available, the Principal shall allocate the places available.

PROCEDURES:

- (a) These involve the submission in the appropriate form, and by the advertised date, of an application for enrolment, and the attendance thereafter at such Interviews, Examinations and Tests as may be specified from time to time by the College Authorities.
- (b) Candidates and their Parents/Legal Guardians are given advance notice of all procedures.
- (c) Principals of the relevant Primary Schools are given full, advance information regarding all matters relating to Entrance.
- (d) Queries on matters arising are welcome.

II CODE OF CONDUCT

I agree that, by enrolment, my child undertakes to abide by the College's Code of Conduct which, I understand and accept, obliges her/him to do all in his/her power to help in the establishment and maintenance at the College of an ethos and environment conducive to the spiritual, moral, intellectual, social and physical welfare and development of each and every Pupil, individually and collectively.

III RULES AND REGULATIONS

I agree that, by enrolment, my child undertakes and is obliged to obey all Rules and Regulations, instructions and directions, whether written or oral, which may be issued from time to time by the College Authorities.

IV SANCTIONS

I agree that any instance or form of non-compliance with the College Code of Conduct, Rules, Regulations, Instructions and/or Directions, may render my child liable to any or all disciplinary measures normal at the College.

IREsite Enrolment Related Documents

TEL: _____

FAX: _____

APPLICATION FOR ENROLMENT

A. PARENTS(S)/GUARDIAN(S)

1. NAME: _____
ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

2. DISTANCE IN MILES FROM HOME TO .

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 7+

B. CANDIDATE

1. NAME: _____ DATE OF BIRTH: _____
PRESENT SCHOOL: _____ CLASS: _____

2. Brother(s)/Sister(s) (Present/Past Pupil(s) of

a. _____ b. _____
c. _____ d. _____

C. ADMINISTRATIVE

1. We agree to abide by the policy and procedures regarding Enrolment at _____
2. We agree to abide by the _____ Code of Conduct, Rules and Sanctions outlined over-leaf.
3. We know and agree that, unless informed in writing to the contrary, the College Authorities will deem the signature of one Parent/Guardian to be made for, on behalf, and with the consent, of both where there are two Parents/Guardians.

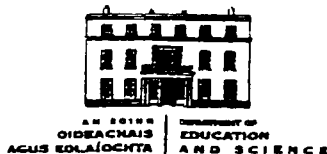
Signed: _____
Candidate Parent/Guardian Parent/Guardian

Dated: _____ P.T.O.

IREsite Enrolment Related Documents

An tAonad Cumarsáide
(Oifig Faisnéise)
An Roinn Oideachais agus Eolaíochta,
Sráid Maoilbhríde,
Baile Átha Cliath 1.

☎ (01) 873 4700 Ext: 2162, 3143
Direct Line: (01) 809 5005



Communications Unit
(Press Information Office)
Department of Education and Science,
Marlborough Street,
Dublin 1.

Fax (01) 878 6712/878 7932

Press Release

Embargo: 3.30pm

**Micheál Martin, TD,
Minister for Education & Science**

Appeal to be lodged Against Publication of Exam League Tables

2 November 1999

Education and Science Minister Micheál Martin has announced that he is to appeal against the release of school by school exam league tables. This follows a recent decision of the Information Commissioner under the Freedom of Information Act to allow the publication of the 1998 exam results for schools.

The Minister said that, while the legal details of the appeal were being finalised and would be lodged in the next two days, he wanted to make clear that he was very clearly stating his belief that such league tables could have a damaging impact on schools and pupils and undermine the possibility of helping schools be more responsive and accountable.

Explaining his decision, the Minister said, "The core objective of our education system must be to help every child realise their potential, whatever that may be. All children are not the same, all communities are not the same and, as a result, all schools are not the same. Of course parents need to be able to access information about the schools their children attend, but this information should be soundly based."

Seeking to compare schools solely on the basis of examination results and claiming that this empowers informed decision making is fundamentally flawed on a number of bases. At its most basic, it doesn't tell you about the achievements of schools, it doesn't compare like with like and it may actually seriously undermine real choice by discouraging schools from seeking to work with weaker children and communities.

A school which helps children who would normally drop out to get a Leaving Cert, or which brings up the performance of weak students may make a greater contribution to the future of our society than one which only takes the very brightest, but league tables won't recognise this. They'll just lead to unfair labels being attached to schools.

Appendix C: USAsite Enrolment Documents

About the Parent Information Center



The Parent Information Center first opened its doors in 1990 on the campus of S.T.C.C. The first three years the main

function of the Parent Information Center was to enroll new students into the Public Schools.

The Center has expanded in recent years to include the Director of the Parent Information Center, the Director of Student Information, a Supervisor for elementary placement, a Supervisor for middle and high school placement, an Evaluation Team Leader to help with assignment of students with special needs, Language Assessment Specialists who test incoming students for language dominance, a Transportation Specialist, 3 Parent Involvement Specialists, an Early Childhood Resource Teacher and paraprofessional, our team of Enrollment Specialist and an outstanding support staff. All these services are offered under one roof for the convenience of parents and students.

What information can I obtain from the P.I.C.?

Our office staff can help you with your registration questions, with information regarding school assignments, bussing information and information regarding citywide meetings for parents.

We also offer workshops and seminars on Parent Involvement and parenting skills to help families become involved in their child's life in meaningful ways. We are here to serve you, so please call us with your questions regarding the Public Schools!



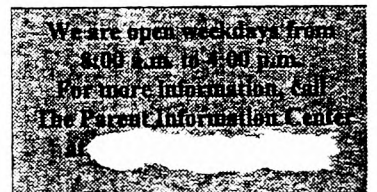
How to register your child for Public Schools:

Bring the following information into our office at the

School:

- * birth certificate
- * child's immunization record
- * child's social security number
- * proof of your address (a recent bill, rent receipt etc.)
- * Medicaid /MassHealth card
- * current school records if applicable
- * proof of legal custody if applicable

Your child does not need to accompany you for registration; however, if there are two languages spoken in the home, your child will need to make an appointment to meet with our Language Assessment Team.



USAsite Enrolment Documents



High Schools of Choice Application Form for 1999-2000

Please type or print the following information:

Student's Name: _____ Present School: _____ Grade: _____
Last First Initial

Address: _____ Social Security Number: _____
Number Street Zip Code

Telephone: (413) _____ Date of Birth: _____ 19__ Gender: ___ Male ___ Female
month day year

Racial Group: (This information is used for equal educational opportunity purposes.)
 ___ White ___ Black ___ Hispanic ___ Asian ___ Native American ___ Other

High School Selection: (In the box below please enter 1 for your first choice, 2 for your second choice, 3 for your third choice of program and high school. Return this completed form to the student's present school.)

Program Choice: (1, 2, 3 for first, second, third choice) <input type="checkbox"/> College Preparation/Advanced Studies/Pre IB <input type="checkbox"/> Health and Medicine <input type="checkbox"/> Finance and Business Administration <input type="checkbox"/> Law and Government <input type="checkbox"/> Vocational/Applied Technology <input type="checkbox"/> Vocational/College Preparatory <input type="checkbox"/> Humanities/College Preparation <input type="checkbox"/> Technology/College Preparation <input type="checkbox"/> Science and Mathematics <input type="checkbox"/> Technology <div style="text-align: right;">Date Received _____</div> Counselor's Signature: _____	High School Choice: (1, 2, 3 for first, second, third choice; make at least two choices) <input type="checkbox"/> High School of Commerce: <i>A School for Advanced Studies</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Vocational Technical High School <input type="checkbox"/> Central High School <input type="checkbox"/> High School of Science and Technology <i>I am applying for placement for the program and schools indicated.</i> Student's Signature: _____ Parent/Guardian's Signature: _____
---	---

Administrative Recommendation: (if there is a program conflict)
 Program: _____ High School: Commerce Central Science/Technology

 Director of Guidance

FOR SCHOOL DEPARTMENT USE ONLY	
High School Assignment: COMMERCE (Check the following:) • Regular: _____ • Special Education: _____ Program: _____ • TBE: _____ Program: _____	CENTRAL SCIENCE/TECHNOLOGY