Ideological governing forms in education and teacher education: a comparative study between highly secular Sweden and highly non-secular Republic of Ireland

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There is an abundance of cross-national quantitative studies of ‘what works’ in education and teacher education in the international literature. However, there is a paucity of cross-national studies in relation to ideological governing forms in education and teacher education, what is perceived as worthwhile and desirable. This study seeks to address this gap in the literature through a comparative socio-historical meta-analysis of ideological governing forms in education and teacher education, in Sweden and the Republic of Ireland, from the mid-19th century to contemporary times. The study uses categories of governance, ideology, emancipation and democracy as linkage points to examine similarities and differences in contextual, moral and cultural politics. Despite significant differences between a highly secular education system in Sweden and a highly non-secular system of education in the Republic of Ireland, findings show remarkable similarities in the shaping of ideological governing forms over this long historical timeline, signalling a contemporary governance turn towards scientific rationalism and moral conservatism more typically associated with the 1960s.

Keywords: education; teacher education; ideological governing forms; emancipation; democracy; moral and political; secular; non-secular; comparative study; Sweden; Ireland

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ince the introduction of public schooling in the mid-19th century, there has always been an ideological struggle for the knowledge and values needed for the creation of a good (moral) person as a contributing member of society and for economic competitiveness. Biesta (2010) captures the purposes of education within an understanding that schooling is concerned with socialisation and subjectification into a moral and political social order and qualification viewed as knowledge and skills for a competitive economy. McLaren (2015), and others from the field of Critical Theory focus on the dialectical struggle needed for a dynamic political order overcoming ideological clashes between reproduction of a dominant hegemony and the revolutionary polity needed for justice, equity and emancipation for those who are marginalised, oppressed and excluded. In this article, we ‘problematise’ ideological governing forms in education and teacher education (TE) using a socio-historical meta-analysis into the ideology, emancipation and democracy forms that shaped governance movements in Sweden and the Republic of Ireland (Ireland). We were motivated in conducting a cross-national comparative study because both countries define themselves as liberal democratic states in the European Union and, at the same time, approach education in radically different ways, one as a highly secular education system (Sweden) and the other as a highly non-secular education system (Ireland). We selected a long cultural and historical timeline, from the mid-19th century to contemporary times, for a deep contextual overview of the major ideological governing trends, based on the categories ‘governing forms’, ‘ideology’, ‘emancipation’ and ‘democracy’, while, at the same time, ensuring trustworthiness in the findings (Simola, 2005).

Thus, while ideology is an unavoidable ingredient to any social formation (e.g. Apple, 1990; Foucault, Lotringer, & Hochroth, 1997; Pace & Hemmings, 2007; Popkewitz, 1994), there is an increasing schism between positivistic research claiming the need to approach education neutrally and critically grounded research arguing the need to interrogate ideology production in education. Ideology in education refers to the beliefs, customs, culture and values that give direction to education in areas of the curriculum, such as economics, politics, moral and religious, knowledge and truth, the aesthetic and artistic (Fiala, 2007). In this article, we argue for interrogation of ideological struggles within the field of education using a cultural historical inquiry, since the past can help to understand the present in a more nuanced and sophisticated manner (Pinar, 2012).

In the study, we asked the following questions: (1) What are the major ideological governing forms in
education and TE, from 1841 in Sweden and from 1831 in Ireland to contemporary times? (2) In what ways are emancipatory and democratic ideals expressed in the ideological governing forms in Sweden and Ireland and (3) Are there any differences and/or similarities between the two countries? This is the first study of this type to be conducted comparing Sweden and Ireland and we argue that this comparison can provide a rich understanding of both the ideological governing forms shaping curriculum as well as the conditions for democracy and emancipation. The word curriculum directs attention not merely to political documents but also to the ways in which historical and present ideological trends influence these documents. Within the field of curriculum theory, the focus is directed to explore how ideological trends in various cultures have influenced the aim, content and methods in education (Lundgren, 1989, p. 20–21) and the consequences of these perceptions for peoples’ life conditions (Englund, 1986).

In this paper, we first outline our understanding of ideological governing forms in education and TE and their contested nature. Second, we present the research methodology as a comparative socio-historical meta-analysis of ideological governing forms and emancipation based on existing policy reports, published and unpublished theses and books, and peer-reviewed journal articles. Third, we present the ideological governing forms identified in each country. Fourth, we present and discuss the comparative analysis in relation to ideological governing forms based on ‘governing forms’, ‘ideology’, ‘emancipation’ and ‘democracy’. Finally, the results are placed in relation to previous research in the field and especially in relation to emancipatory and democratic ideals within education.

Theoretical starting points

In contemporary times, education discourses may be understood as complex webs of superstructures and networks that flow in non-linear ways between official policy narratives, hierarchical and vertical official policy narratives from transnational (e.g. OECD, World Bank, corporations) and national policy actors (e.g. Ministries of Education, Inspectorates) and horizontal policy narratives between policy actors, such as teacher educators and teachers. In the 1960s and 1970s, the frame factor theory, concerning politically defined educational aims, order of subjects and time needed for students to learn, was developed by Urban Dahllöf and Ulf P. Lundgren, Swedish researchers, who questioned the superiority of behavioural science in education. At that time, education was regarded as a neutral field for knowledge acquisition and behavioural modification. Their research convincingly showed that teachers’ possibilities are conditioned by certain frames that need to be included in order to improve education. In contemporary times, the new dominance of global discourses and their interplay with national, regional and local discourses need interrogation Ball (2003). Sellar and Lingard (2013) show how the OECD has nowadays gained epistemic dominance through sculpting new ‘soft’ modes of peer pressure and review and secured policy borrowing between states as a market-led and data-driven discourse of control in preference to an explanatory discourse.

These policy constructs have all been categorised into four overlapping governing forms, namely legal, economical, ideological and governing through control (Lindensjö & Lundgren, 2000; Lundgren, 1989). All governing forms are power expressions that set the frame for education in various ways (Apple, 2004). Ideological governing forms encapsulate the direction of norms, values, beliefs and behaviours that should permeate society at a certain point in time and decide what should be defined as desirable and undesirable in education. This way of reasoning is intimately connected to curriculum theory (läroplansteori), where it becomes important to be aware of how the meaning of curriculum is expressed at various times and the consequences for education.

The focus is on ideological governing forms that highlight how the fabric of a society and hence education should be constructed based on a particular worldview that includes a set of moral and ethical values, political beliefs and customs. In this article, we interrogate ideological governing forms based on four categories: ‘governing forms’, ‘ideology’, ‘emancipation’ and ‘democracy’. Ideological governing forms are never fixed in time but undergo change hand-in-hand with the way a society shifts and alters and also in relation to specific socio-historical contexts (Lindensjö & Lundgren, 2000). Alexander (2005) argues that certain moral (or ethical) ideologies support the concept of human agency, free will, moral intelligence and fallibility suited to open rather than closed societies, where ‘education in open societies requires a “pedagogy of difference” according to which learning to respect the distinctiveness of others requires acquiring an appreciation of one’s own uniqueness as a member of such a community’ (Alexander, 2005, p. 1).

Drawing on curriculum theory (läroplansteori), where it becomes important to be aware of how the meaning of curriculum is expressed at various times, and the consequences for education, we use an extended historical timeline to show how ideological governing forms came into expression from an interrogation of secondary research about the Swedish and Irish education, and in what ways these ideologies set the frame for education in the two countries. Thus, the following points of reference were taken into account, namely (1) the content of ideology was regarded as fluid and dependent on time and context, (2) it defined what was seen as a desirable way of being in the world that comes with consequences for action (how the desirable is legitimated) and (3) it
involved a power dimension that works in an excluding/including fashion.

**Methodology**

The study reported in this article is the first part in what is a larger overall cross-national comparative study of TE policy documents in Sweden and Ireland. To conduct this comparative study, both linkages and differences needed to be taken into account. **Linkages** are created by posing similar questions to the material analysed and **differences** imply awareness that all comparisons always contain cultural and contextual differences and contestations that need to be addressed (e.g. Núvoa & Yariv-Mashal, 2003). As regards linkages, Kazamias (2001) points to the need to use theoretical concepts as lenses to make more coherent comparisons (p. 446). Similarly, following Adamson and Morris (2007): ‘[s]ince curricula may be amorphous and spread over various aspects of planned and unplanned experiences, for the purposes of obtaining a research focus it is necessary to identify distinct elements or aspects for comparison’ (p. 274). In this paper, drawing on curriculum theory, we conducted a meta-analysis of literature using the categories **ideology**, **governing forms**, **democracy** and **emancipation** in education and TE as linkage points in order to compare differences and similarities between ideological governing forms with a particular focus on **emancipation** and **democracy** in Swedish and Irish education and TE. Whereas the Irish literature was found in SCOPUS and textbook publications, the Swedish literature was located in the LIBRIS database. The comparative contextual analysis draws primarily on secondary literature, such as books, dissertations, peer-reviewed journal articles and political documents, in a way to strengthen arguments already made elsewhere (Adamson & Morris, 2007, p. 274). The differences concerning the culture and context are highlighted in the discussion and placed in relation to previous knowledge in the field of ideology in curriculum.

Cross-national studies are particularly useful in illuminating problems that are often not readily detectable if the study had taken place in only one nation state (Beach & Bagley, 2012). The study was limited in that it was only ever able to sketch an outline of a policy background and comparative context, and the findings can only ever be described as first steps, exploratory and tentative. However, this was the *raison d’être* for this particular socio-historical contextual study and one that could yield useful findings in relation to ideological governing forms in education and TE.

**Ideological governing forms in secular Sweden**

Since the 11th century, Swedish education was intimately connected with the Christian churches: first, the Catholic Church and after the 16th century, the Lutheran Church. Based on a hierarchical worldview, educational systems were established for the more privileged in society in ways that excluded the majority of society from knowledge and power. The democratisation process which started during the 19th century proceeded hand-in-hand with separation of the state from the church. The year 1842 saw the first step to create an educational system under the governance of the state. From 1842, when the folk school (*folkskola*) was first established until the present time, education has been governed by various political ideologies that have been in tension with one another (Ekman & Todosijevic, 2003; Englund, 1986). Seeing that TE and education are inextricably linked, ideological changes in education have also influenced TE (Hallsén, 2013; Krantz, 2009). This has led to changing patterns of ideological governing forms of education and TE.

**Folkskolan 1842 to 1890: focus on the nation-state and religious content (beginning of democracy and emancipation)**

In 1842, the state established a folk school system (*folkskola*) making public schooling obligatory for all. This reform is perceived as the beginning of democracy in education and was viewed as a way for the state to create citizens and as a means for emancipation (e.g. Lundgren, 1972). However, the ideology behind a folk school was highly controversial at the time and neither the content of education nor the task of teachers was based on democratic ideals. On the contrary, the important mission was to create Swedish patriots and loyal servants of the Lutheran Church. As such, education was regarded as an important state and church mechanism to foster people into obedience (Sundberg, 2005). Seeing that teacher educators’ work was (1842) and is closely interlinked with the ideological governing forms of education in general (Lundgren, 2015), the importance to foster Lutheran citizens also permeated TE training, organised by the chapter house (*domkapitlet*) in every cathedral town. Teachers had to master the content of the catechesis in order for all pupils’ to learn it by rote. Neither the teacher educator nor the folk school teacher were supposed to be critical or question the governing order but were to be trained in humility and subordination. Their profession was of a technical character, that is, transferring facts and models of learning. The model that dominated was that of Mutual Instruction (*växelundervisning*), implying that a small number of pupils were selected to teach the other pupils. The model was motivated by financial reasons, a way to save money (Linné, 2010). The mid-19th century was a turbulent time with substantive changes all happening at the same time: industrialisation, growth in science, urban towns and an awareness of human rights in the aftermath of the French and Industrial revolutions (Lundgren, 1972).
1918/1919 to 1950: democratic citizenship and patriarchy

At the end of the 19th century, the method of Mutual Instruction was contested for being solely focused on pupils’ exterior behaviour while neglecting pupils’ inner life. At the time, the concept of the ideal family became important to cherish and subsequently, the middle class family came to be placed in the foreground in ideological governing forms of education during this period (Linné, 2010). The desire for fostering citizens in the service of peace, democracy and emancipation from oppressive structures was enhanced after World War I which Englund (1986, 2005) refers to as the beginning of a citizenship code in discussions about education. From 1942, various curricula referred to as normal plan were created for schools. The ideology was strongly influenced by the progressive movement and involved, amongst other things, removal of the catechesis which implied a step further from church influence (Englund, 2005; Lundgren, 2015). In 1930, the vicar’s automatic right to act as the chairperson of the school board was suspended and later in 1958, the Bishop’s right to conduct formal inspections of schools ended. Parallel with these changes, religious education became a school subject rather than an overarching dimension permeating the entire school and including the symbolism of denominational education (Ekman & Todosijevic, 2003). Time scheduled for teaching pupils Christianity was reduced in favour of subjects strengthening citizenship. Social changes, such as the end of World War I, compulsory military service and universal suffrage placed new demands on education, which according to Englund (2005) led to new curriculum patterns referred to as the citizenship code grasped as an overarching ideology that consists of various sub-ideologies in tension with one another. Between 1918/1919 and 1950, the citizenship code was influenced by a patriarchal ideology stressing fellowship (communitarianism) and a strong work ethic (moral code) (Englund, 2005).

1950s to 1960s: the emergence of scientific rationalism

At the end of the World War II, the educational system changed through a desire to establish a democratic and just society to replace a hierarchical worldview. The elementary school was officially introduced in 1962, implying that all students independent of their background should be educated together in a school for all, giving a more equal school system (Ekman & Todosijevic, 2003). Democracy has since held a strong core position in the Swedish educational system, even though the meaning of democracy and education’s task to endorse it has changed many times. Interpretations of democracy, in the 1950s and 1960s, were more about fostering an efficient workforce for the economy rather than fostering democratic citizens (Englund, 1986). This was a period of intense economic growth, a desire to overcome (social class) differences and an increased trust in science and scientific educational planning grounded in rationalism and empiricism (Englund, 2005). Democracy was viewed as something given and there was a strong conviction that social problems could be overcome by adopting scientific rationalism as an ideological governance form.

In the School Commission Report (1946), there is a chapter pointing to the role of TE as an essential mechanism to democratise schools (SOU, 1948:27). In 1950, the state established TE vocational institutions (lärarutbildningsanstalter) for various specialisations, such as subject teachers and middle school class teachers. This was the first step to link TE to higher education and the need to educate teachers about psychological methods and the use of standardised testing (Linné, 2010).

1960 to 2009: education and TE as democratic, decentralised and professionalised

At the end of the 1960s, the scientific rationalism approach of handling (democratic) schooling and citizenship was criticised for being unable to grapple with complex challenges that could not be captured within this narrow chain of logic. The criticism came mainly from marginalised groups and critical theorists who argued that the desire to keep education neutral and detached from values concealed power relations and injustices taking place in the shadow of neutrality. Successively, ideological governance forms altered in ways that made it crucial to pay attention to democratic values and conditions in everyday life (e.g. Ekman & Todosijevic, 2003; Englund, 2005). TE was exposed to one reform after the other (1977, 1985, 2001 and 2010). A communitarian worldview stressing the collective was replaced by a democratic neoliberal one, where the individual’s possibility for free choice was cherished (e.g. Ekman & Todosijevic, 2003).

In 1991, the school system was decentralised, implying a new set of ideological governance forms in ways that influenced teachers’ practices, not least within TE. In this wave of reforms, school privatisations surged and a free-choice system gained a strong foothold, allowing parents and children to freely choose the school they found most appealing rather than been allotted a place by the state (Dovemark, 2004). The state delegated responsibilities to municipalities and individual private actors who were guided by government policies. The reform was motivated by a desire to increase teacher professionalism, democratisation and, at the same time, market-led efficiency (Jedemark, 2006, p. 13). During the 1980s and 1990s, the debate was closely linked to international research enabling teachers and teacher educators’ to orient and make judgements in a dynamic and ever-changing practice. This standpoint was aligned with a progressive
The necessity for education to enact democratic values can be noticed in 1991, Lgr-11 (Sjöberg, 2009; SOU, 1999:63). In 1994, the concept Democratic Value Foundation was introduced and enforced in the government’s democratic project in 2000. The idea was to strengthen a broad democratic approach in education that incorporates not just individual rights and behaviour but also social patterns and conditions for people depending on ideology and action. Deliberative democracy came to be emphasised as one important route to strengthen citizenship competences based on cognitive plurality (Englund, 2000). Parallel with these trends, the knowledge assignment became essential to strengthen too which paradoxically leads to the weakening of both democratic engagement in education and the students’ knowledge levels (Forsberg & Wallin, 2006; Morawski, 2010). On 1 January 2000, the Swedish church was officially separated from the state, thereby underpinning the secular status of the nation and education (Ekman & Todosić, 2003).

Similar to democracy, the meaning of teacher (educators’) professionalism has been contested in TE policies. Two main stances have fought for attention in TE, a structural professional standpoint based on de-contextualised and universal criteria stemming from scientific rationalism in the 1950s/1960s, and a practically oriented professionalism arguing for the need to give teachers a (professional) language and critical awareness (reflective capacities) by which they can make judgements and act in a constantly fluctuating reality of practice (Fransson, 2012; Frelin, 2010). These tensions have been variously described as craftsmanship or professionalism (Ahlström, 1993), the educator acting as a technician and functionary of the system or acting as an intellectual and moral educator within a complex and ever-changing practice.

In the autumn of 2001, TE was once again reformed. General Education (Allmänna Utbildnings Område) brought different teacher professions and specialisations under one overarching superstructure (Jedemark, 2006; SOU, 1999:63). The aim was to delegate the power of influence to TE and teacher educators, by establishing a new superstructure (Prop., 1999/2000:135; SOU, 1999:63). The changes that took place were later subjected to criticism from the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education, who found it difficult to oversee and evaluate this superstructure. The new freedom of student choice that featured in TE (Högskoleverket, 2008, 2012:10) was also regarded as problematic since it made progression at TE more or less impossible (Prop., 2009/ 2010:89, p. 11).

From 2009 to date – back towards a scientific rational ideological governance?

During the 2000s, there were a number of criticisms, accompanied by several international events that contributed to a deep-seated change in TE in 2010. For example, results from OECD PISA indicated that Swedish pupils’ knowledge levels had decreased drastically and were used by government as an opportunity to reform education. The notion of teacher professionalism was changed from a democratic emancipatory construct to a new managerial market-led professionalism (Sjöberg, 2009, 2010). The changes were accompanied by an upsurge in top-down external modes of teacher inspections in schools and TE by the government (e.g. Forsberg & Wallin, 2006). In addition, the media’s negative commentary created an image of education in crisis (Edling, 2014; Wiklund, 2006) making it increasingly difficult to recruit well-qualified TE students (Calander, 2003). Parallel to these changes, ideas entrenched in NQM thinking, came to dominate the discussions, not least through evidence-based research, described as an effective tool for learning (Levinsson, 2013).

This chain of reactions, between 2001 and 2010, resulted in a new TE reform published on 31 December 2010. The reform entailed a clear division between pre-school, elementary, subject and vocational teachers regarding subject content and examination. To secure unity a Scientific Core was established, containing courses in learning and development, curriculum theory, social relations, handling conflicts and leadership that all students independent of specialisation are obliged to read. The importance of developing competent teachers who were able to enact change was emphasised (Högskoleverket, 2012:10; Prop., 2009/2010:89).

In Sweden today, the moral and political (democratic) mission in education and TE has, on the one hand, never been stronger. New laws intensify teachers’ work to secure everyone’s equal value and opportunity through mandates to counteract discrimination and violation. Hence, teachers have, besides the knowledge assignment, been allocated the responsibility to alter occurrences of bullying and violence at their workplaces as well as fostering children and young people to pay regard to democratic (ethical) values in their everyday lives. This requires intelligent and morally responsible teachers and teacher educators, capable of critically interpreting, deconstructing, re-construing, challenging and valuing the flow of relationships, norms and events around them, and not merely technically competent teachers (e.g. Edling, 2012a, 2012b; Skolverket, 2009a, 2009b, 2012).

On the other hand, parallel with these acts stressing a broad democracy, those who advocate for a narrow and reductionist view based on a scientific rational ideology are increasing in the aftermath of the epistemic dominance of OECD PISA ‘shocks’ shaping education and
TE (e.g. Dahlstedt & Olson, 2013; Englund & Solbø, 2011; Levinsson, 2013).

**Ideological governing forms in Ireland**

The ideological governing forms in education and TE in Ireland, from 1831 to contemporary times, display a complex interplay between religious and moral discourses, power and cultural politics and have at all times resisted a secular conception of church–state separation, and any suggestion that education policy emanates from a touchstone of democracy and pluralism (ÔBuachalla, 1988; O’Sullivan, 2005). Instead, the Catholic Church has retained a dominant positioning in schooling, with 92% of primary schools under the management of the Catholic Church, expressed as a theocratic discourse of Catholic (Christian) communitarianism that seeks justice and the common good based on a touchstone of Catholic social teaching. O’Sullivan (2005, p. 333) asserts that Christian communitarianism seeks ‘a third way and middle way’ between what is regarded as ideological extremes of ‘free market or statist/socialist positions’ and perceives its capacity to ‘accommodate a wide variety of understandings about the appropriate role of the state in combating inequality, a diversity of moral justifications for involvement/engagement/intervention, differences in the focus of intervention and shadings in human responsibility and agency’. While there are a small number of public schools in Ireland, a smaller number of multi-denominational schools and an even smaller number of people from multi-cultural, ethnic and religious diversity backgrounds, they are all in the minority, and the Irish education system and conservative culture has traditionally not shown itself to be particularly responsive to minority views in relation to education (Ryan, 2014).

**1831 to 1921: from a British colony to a nation state**

In 1831, the British introduced a public system of inter-denominational primary education in Ireland, the Stanley Scheme (Faas, Darmody, & Sokolowska, 2015, p. 6; ÔBuachalla, 1988, p. 9). This was at a time when Irish people had achieved Catholic emancipation (1829) from centuries of oppression by penal laws which prevented the practice of Catholicism and use of the Irish language (Mc Donagh, 2003). What followed was an increase in Catholic schooling and within 20 years there was a decidedly denominational system of primary education established in practice. Catholic religious orders were dedicated to education, mostly in single sex denominational schools and along the lines of social class. For example, the Mercy Order of Catholic Nuns was dedicated to the education of poor girls for a life of service, mostly within the domestic sphere, the Irish Christian Brothers were committed to education of lower middle class boys who for the most part formed the adminis-

trative tier in public life, and the Benedictine and Jesuit orders were committed to education of the upper class boy for life in the highest echelons of public life.

By the turn of the 20th century, a new spirit of irrepressible national pride had developed. In 1916, the year of the Easter Rising and forerunner of Irish independence in 1921, there was a strongly felt cultural script that the soul of education needed to be reclaimed from a British and Protestant schooling machinery, perceived as diminishing all things distinctly Irish, especially Catholicism and the Irish language. Nowhere is this better articulated than in *The Murder Machine and other essays* written in 1916 by the national hero, Padraic H. Pearse (1976). The ideology played out was seeking emancipation from oppression from British colonisation and this was identified as a struggle for the practice of Catholic faith and the speaking of the Gaelic language in the public forum of the classroom and school.

**1921 to 1950s: a Catholic/Gaelic identity and theocratic discourse**

From the foundation of the state in 1921, until the late 1950s, there was a marked struggle within education for the achievement of ideological governing forms that generated a national identity with a focus on (re)building the Irish language and what it meant to be Gaelic, Catholic and free (ÔBuachalla, 1988). Minority religions, such as the Protestant religion, were not publicly alienated but were passively dismissed as a new ideological governance form based on a theocratic discourse of Catholicism, and Gaelic education was set in motion (Raftery & Fisher, 2014). The Irish constitution of the Free State in 1937 symbolised the closeness between the Irish state and Catholic Church and stopped short of making the Catholic Church the established church of the state (Mc Donagh, 2003, p. 44). The denominational nature of education became a distinctive feature, described as a publicly aided ‘free-education’ system (Coolahan, 2001). Teacher training colleges were established along denominational lines and higher education institutes (HEIs) retained strong links between the churches and education departments (Hartford, 2010; Hyland, 2012). Unlike Sweden, where the emphasis was on democracy and pluralism, the ideological governing form in education in Ireland was seeking emancipation for the common good where the emphasis was decidedly on consensus and inclusion rather than democracy, dissensus and minority opinions (Ryan, 2014).

**1960s to 1980s: emergence of a mercantile discourse**

In the 1960s, schools and their trustees increasingly bowed to pressure for upward social mobility and teaching to the test became the dominant cultural historical script. After the first OECD background report *Investment in Education* in 1969, there was a new drive to pursue
schooling using a human capital argument for an emerging mercantile discourse (Murphy, 2008). This argument was supported by an ideological governing form of scientific rationalism, supported by a national scientific policy planning unit and quantitative research studies. At the time, the established theocratic discourse continued in parallel with this new mercantile discourse using a non-adversarial social ‘partnership’ approach. At this time, emancipation was viewed within tensions between the broad and balanced needs of a holistic education, the common good of society, and the narrower needs of a competitive labour market.

**1990s: securing the ethos and characteristic spirit of all schools**

The 1990s represented a period of discussion and preparation for what was to become a significant change in the governance of Irish education. In 1993, all policy actors were invited to a national convention in Dublin that was influential in shaping a *White Paper in Education* (1995) and the establishment of the Irish education system on a statutory footing for the first time in the history of the state. The Education Act (1998), while claiming to ‘respect the diversity of values, beliefs, languages and traditions in Irish society’ (p. 5), moved to protect the ethos and ‘characteristic spirit’ of all schools and thereby legally support the practice of religious discrimination in Irish education. This anomaly in Irish education, between a democratic state and a highly non-secular system of schooling, has been critically examined by Ryan (2014) in relation to the primary education system. A statutory framework for teachers, the Teaching Council was enacted (Teaching Council Act, 2001) as a new superstructure of policy actors and power brokers, for the regulation of the teaching profession under the control of the Minister for Education and Skills, who had the power to dismiss the Council if he/she was not in agreement with their actions. A national report positioned teaching as a relational practice but concerns were expressed that a technocratic view was emerging (DES, 2002). By the end of the millennium, ideological struggles for emancipation and governance forms were often hidden inside new superstructures and networks, where a largely privately managed and state-funded education system was positioned within a conservative culture focused on protecting the status quo.

**1998 to 2008: new modes of policy enforcement**

At the turn of the century, private for-profit schooling was introduced, and one for-profit higher education provider of TE gained a new market in the education system. All schools were increasingly set free to compete with one another, while parental choice, a long-held neoliberal principle, became a predominant market-led education discourse. Statistics showed that middle-class young people achieved high completion rates in secondary schools and increasing access to higher education, while young people who were vulnerable or disadvantaged consistently underperformed (HEA, 2012). Until relatively recently, the education system continues as a mostly centralised publicly aided system, with a strong historical social partnership between church, industry and state and, a track record of attracting teachers with high academic standards (Sahlberg, 2012). However, from 2000 to date, ‘crises’ in education were generated using the new epistemetic dominance of OECD PISA and supported through the media’s publication of listings of high-performing schools based on students’ entry to higher education.

**From 2008 to date: policy reform compact in curriculum and TE**

After the Great Recession of 2008, Ireland’s economic system collapsed overnight and required an international financial bailout from the *International Monetary Fund* (IMF), *European Central Bank* (ECB) and the *European Union* (EU). A policy of economic austerity was adopted whereby the role of the state in the provision of all public services was diminished. A reform compact in curriculum and TE in ‘Austerity Ireland’ was rapidly enacted by the *Teaching Council* and *Department of Education and Skills* (DES), using networks, superstructures and social partnerships that re-positioned teaching as a clinical professional practice, within a new governance view of self-steering, entrepreneurial, autonomous schools, teachers and students (DES, 2012, 2014, 2015; Teaching Council, 2011, 2016a, 2016b). Discursive modes of inspection were mostly scrapped in favour of *New Quality Management* (NQM) and new modes of hierarchical accountability and policy enforcement (Lynch, Grummell, & Devine, 2012; Mooney Simmie, 2012, 2014, 2015). Teachers’ professionalism became tied to continuing registration and relays of hard evidence of lifelong learning (Quinn, 2013; Teaching Council, 2011, 2016a, 2016b). Curriculum reforms were sculpted on the basis of the needs of a competitive market-led education discourse (Kirwan & Hall, 2016). Nowadays, a new reform compact in education and TE is proceeding apace with no great notice taken of it except for the introduction of a reform in lower secondary education (*junior cycle*) (DES, 2014), which has resulted in a prolonged industrial dispute that continues to date with one of the largest of the secondary teachers unions, the *Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland* (ASTI, 2016). The recently appointed Minister for Education and Skills, Richard Bruton has indicated that his Department will implement a pay freeze on ASTI teachers who reject working additional hours in the autumn (The Irish Times, 2016a).

A debate in the media has recently started in relation to religious pluralism and cultural diversity and the changing needs of students and parents in a multicultural Ireland (Faas et al., 2015). *The Forum on*
Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector examined this issue of diversity of patronage in schools, from a religious and Irish language perspective (Coolahan, Hussey, & Kilfeather, 2012). Recommendations for the report made a case for the human right of children not to receive religious instruction in school. Irwin (2013, p. 178), writing about the ethos of primary schools, reported that trustees of Catholic primary schools and the Irish Bishops historically adopted a paternalistic understanding of education using a managerial and a non-critical cultural script in Irish schools, which stopped short of post-Vatican II Christian hermeneutics, perceived as ‘compatible with democratic values and the values of reason and autonomy’ (Irwin, 2013, p. 180). Of the 3,200 primary schools, 77 schools fall under the patronage of ‘Educate Together’, a multi-denominational model of schooling established in 1978, and 11 new Community National Schools, started in 2008 under the patronage of the regional Education & Training Boards. The Educate Together schools advocate for an integrated model of morality-based education while the new Community National Schools advocate for a segregated model of religious instruction supplemented with a digitally accessed multi-denominational resource. Minister Bruton has indicated plans to have about 400 multi-denominational primary schools in the next 15 years and appears to favour the Community National School model (The Irish Times, 2016b).

In summary, ideological governing forms in education and TE in Ireland, similar to Sweden, have resulted in an intensification of teachers’ work practices with moral and political responsibility for the development of responsible citizens, countering bullying in schools, dealing with special educational needs and inclusion, all within substantially diminished resources. Ideological governing forms have over this long historical timeline been shaped by a church–state–industry alliance working alongside social partnerships, which have until the recent past secured teacher unions as major players in education and a competitive intake to TE. They have continued to assure the dominant hegemony of a highly non-secular schooling system operating within a democratic state. Moreover, OECD PISA ‘shocks’ and market-led discourses have reconfigured education and TE within new ideological governance forms of scientific rationalism and moral conservatism. Nowadays, increasing politicisation and economisation of education continues cultural historical forms of ‘consensualism’ (Mooney Simmie & Moles, 2011), with few affordances for intellectual debate and contestation in educational matters. In the last 5 years, a new reform compact in curriculum and TE has been enacted in ‘Austerity Ireland’ within a cultural context of increasing child poverty, homelessness, economic cuts to public services, alongside the increasing super wealth of a small elite, all challenging any view of Irish education as a social responsibility concerned with the public-interest values of a fair and just education system for human emancipation, even if not a democratic education system.

Comparative analysis

In this study, we interrogated ideological governing forms in education and TE, in Sweden and Ireland, from the mid-19th century to contemporary times. We were particularly interested in the way emancipatory and democratic ideals were expressed. The findings show important linkage points, similarities and significant differences which we have expressed using the categories, ‘governance forms’, ‘ideology’, ‘emancipation’ and ‘democracy’ (see Table 2): expressed in Sweden as a highly secular education system underpinned by a touchstone of democracy and citizenship code and expressed in Ireland as a highly non-secular Christian (Catholic) system of schooling. From the mid-19th century in Sweden, there was a movement away from what was perceived as hierarchical and paternalistic dominance of the churches to a secular view of public education by the 20th century, based on a moral and political ideology of democracy and pluralism. In this way, Sweden achieved a highly secular public education system and some private schools. In the case of Ireland, there is evidence of an anomaly between the ideals of a democratic state and a largely denominational system of privately managed publicly aided schooling, where the ethos and ‘characteristic spirit’ of schools is supported by legislation (Education Act, 1998) that allows religious discrimination in education and has only recently started a debate in the media in relation to responsiveness to minority views. However, the comparative analysis also showed a striking ideological similarity between the dominance of scientific rationalism and ideological governing forms that pertained in the 1960s (Table 1). During the 1960s, the western world feared it might lose advantage in the space race between the US and Russia, and responded with a new trust in scientific rationalism in education, such as scientific policy planning, international testing and OECD framing of schooling within a narrow reductionist argument as economic investment for a future labour force. In the last 5 years in Sweden and Ireland,

| Table 1. Secondary sources used for comparative analysis of ideological governing forms |
|-----------------------------------|---------|---------|
| **Secondary sources**            | **Sweden** | **Ireland** |
| Thesis                            | 10      | 1       |
| Peer-reviewed journal articles    | 7       | 10      |
| Policy documents                  | 10      | 9       |
| Books                             | 3       | 6       |
| Policy reports                    | 2       | 5       |
within a global era of turbulence, ideological governing forms have turned once again towards a scientific rationalistic turn in education and TE, underpinned by the epistemic dominance of OECD data flows, such as PISA test scores, using policy technologies of NQM and new modes of policy enforcement.

With regard to ideology, linkages and differences, TE in Ireland appears to have had a more distinguished
reputation to date, attracting student teachers of high academic calibre to the profession than TE in Sweden, which has experienced a radical decrease in popularity and intake of qualified students. Moreover, TE in Ireland has held in check a mercantile discourse alongside a theocratic discourse of Catholic social teaching, emphasising social commitments, social justice, holistic education, coherence, inclusivity and positive relations. Education in Sweden more evidently has emphasised democracy, plurality, justice, equality and equity as a moral and political touchstone for schooling.

In this contextual analysis, we can discern the strong influence at various timelines of the Church and OECD in both education systems, albeit in the highly secular system of education in Sweden the influence of the Church has receded into the background, and the corporate influence of global capital is nowadays overplayed using the epistemic dominance of OECD PISA ‘shocks’. In Ireland’s highly non-secular education system, there is a complex interplay of relations and equilibrium at national level between the state, Catholic Church and OECD, found in the epistemic dominance of OECD PISA in the policy reform compact in TE, and at the same time, the determined position of the Catholic Church not to yield space in the state education sector to minority viewpoints (The Irish Independent, 2016). However, this delicate equilibrium is nowadays under increasing pressure within a new reform compact for schools and teachers, new public service agreements and stringent registration requirements for all teachers within a technocratic view of teaching as a clinical professional practice.

Conclusion

In both Sweden and Ireland, questions concerning emancipation and treasuring of everyone’s equal and unique value, understood within Sweden using a highly secular touchstone of the state and within Ireland using a highly theocratic touchstone of Catholic social teaching, have historically been deemed important in education and TE (Coolahan, 2001; Hällsén, 2013; Helldin, 1998; Hyland, 2012). However, despite differences in the way that emancipation is grasped within each nation state the policy approaches appear to have rapidly altered in recent times. In this article, the socio-historical meta-analysis of literature indicates a strongly patterned sequence of ideological governance forms in education and TE in Sweden and Ireland from mid-19th century to recent times. The study provides a comparative overview for the contradictory and complex ways that ideological governing forms are grasped and will provide the underpinning historical context for a deeper study between these two nation states. The findings, while inconclusive and partial, indicate an increasing politicisation and economisation of education and TE in both countries, reflected in changed understandings in relation to the ideological framing of education for emancipation and public-interest values. Since 2008, we find evidence of a renewed reliance on scientific rationalism and new modes of symbolic control on teachers’ practices.

While in the recent past educators, in both Sweden and Ireland, are given full (moral and political) responsibility for ensuring inclusive practices for all, the way this is comprehended and grasped appears to have radically changed. The change suggests a subordination of the moral and political discourses of education and TE for public-interest values and civic virtues in favour of a new scientific rationalism and moral conservatism that speaks to hard evidence and prescriptive dispositions for a market-led discourse concerned with the labour needs of a global workforce. The critical question emerging from this cross-national comparative study is how ideological governance forms nowadays influence education as a social responsibility, a moral and political shaper of change at societal level, creating democratic and equitable societies in turbulent times. The findings have wider implications, beyond that of nation state and continent, for the changing shape of how teacher educators’ democratic (moral and political) identity is grasped. This comparative study clearly shows the prominent ideological governance forms assumed by supranational and national policy actors, in this case, the OECD and church separately and together, over a long historical timeline, in (re)shaping the field of education and TE. Similarities suggest a need for revival of discussion in relation to ideological governing forms in the literature. We find this an interesting, timely and worthwhile hypothesis, which needs further and deeper consideration and research.

References


