

FINANCING ASPECTS OF THE WHITE PAPER ON EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A.C. BARLOW*

University College, Cork

The White Paper begins with a Ministerial Foreword where it is stated that the expenditure on education is equivalent to £9 per week per head of the working population. If teachers' salaries move in line with the level of National Income, and if third-level education expands, then the level of real spending and probably its share in National Income will rise in the future. That is unless significant changes are made in its method of finance. In fact, the recent salary rise awarded to teachers is likely to mean a significant increase in real expenditure in 1981. It is clearly important that such substantial resources should be used carefully.

The White Paper covers much ground, *mostly* to annotate and explain the changes which have taken place over the past decade or so. Little space is devoted to the problems of financing education in the future. To examine the full issues of the financing of education would require examination beyond the scope of this paper.¹ As a consequence, this paper will focus on two areas of importance where changes which are likely to affect the future level of financing are indicated or discussed in the White Paper.

The first area involving change is the policy to remove large classes. The stated reasoning behind this development is included in paragraph 5.8 that:

. . . it is the conviction of the Government that the relationship between teacher and pupil is a most important element in the educational process and that alternative learning modes and supportive strategies cannot be substituted for the professionally trained teacher. A high priority has, therefore, been given in recent years to the elimination of large classes in the national schools.

The paragraph raises a number of issues. As far as economists are concerned an important question is how marginal financial resources should best be spent. Should it be that more resources are devoted to in-service training, to improved technological equipment within schools, or should it be to reduce class size? The last alternative receives support from the last sentence of the above paragraph. This is somewhat surprising, in view of an earlier statement in paragraph 4.28.

Most of the studies carried out here and in other countries do not support the general belief that class size is a major factor in pupil performance.

However, the ensuing sentences of the same paragraph provide a justification.

What is *asserted*, however, by teachers and others is that an improved pupil-teacher ratio would ensure that children got more individual attention. This, they argue, would be particularly beneficial to children with learning disabilities (*emphasis added*).

*I am especially grateful to Desmond Hourihane for valuable assistance in the preparation of this paper. Nevertheless, I take full responsibility for the views expressed herein.

1. A fuller examination for third-level is contained in Barlow (1981).

The first sentence would seem a straightforward corollary of increased teacher-pupil ratios. However, it might be hoped that raising teacher-pupil ratios would have more benefits than "increased attention". The second sentence suggests such. However, if the assertion in this sentence is correct, then such pupils should perform better, and, if they do perform better, then it might be expected that class size was a significant factor in pupil performance.

However, the existing studies of the effects of class size upon attainment have provided "conflicting, inconsistent and disappointingly meagre results" (Burstall, 1979). "This lack of clarity is in sharp contrast with the deeply held conviction of teachers and parents that smaller classes must inevitably bring about an improvement in the quality of life in the classroom" (ibid).

Notwithstanding the negative conclusions of existing studies of the effects of class size upon attainment, it seems reasonable to suggest that smaller class sizes do have benefits. These may include reduced stress on teachers, less bullying, and happier pupils, all of which are very important. In this light it is hardly surprising that teachers and parents desire lower class sizes, since reductions in class size are provided at a zero price (except in so far as they both contribute to the higher taxes required to pay for them). However, it is interesting to note that little evidence is available about the preferences of pupils. Maybe they are not as convinced as teachers as to the merits of closer supervision! Whatever, the crucial questions are the extent of any benefits, and whether such benefits are worth the costs.

The existing research evidence on the effects of class size is extensive but inadequate in a number of ways. The range of class size over which the studies are performed is often limited, and it may be that the numbers at which class size makes a difference are beyond the ranges studied but are still, perhaps, within the ranges still existing in Ireland. Further, most of the studies are about what happens when class size is reduced. However, this may not give evidence as to what *can* happen (Sharpson, Wright, Eason and Fitzgerald, 1980). That is, it may be that teachers' knowledge of different teaching techniques may be important for changes in class size to be effective. Such a view receives support from the finding that most teachers do not change their teaching style when class size is reduced (Burstall, 1979).

It appears then, that our understanding of the effectiveness of reducing class size, of itself, is poor. Yet, further reductions in class size will require substantial resources. In September 1979, there were 980 classes of over 40 pupils. If the average size of such classes was 45 pupils, then in order to reduce all of these to 40 pupils, without reorganisation of other classes, would involve costs of somewhere between one and ten million pounds per annum.² Reorganisation of other classes is likely to reduce such costs, but a figure of four or five million would not seem unreasonable as an estimate.

The costs involved in such reductions in class size, and, more particularly, further reductions, can only be justified if the foregone opportunities, more in-service training for teachers, more equipment for schools, increased old age pensions, greater aid to farmers or whatever, are valued less highly than the benefits of reduced class size. It would seem worthwhile to attempt to gather fuller and firmer evidence on such advantages before spending millions of pounds to attain targets that, at present, have little research basis. The cost of additional research is very small relative to the expenditure involved in operating such policies. The benefits could be substantial.

2. This assumes all large classes are reduced to 40 in size and the additional pupils are spread out in classes of 1 to 40, requiring 125 additional classes and slightly more teachers (since there are slightly more teachers than classes). If each class involves an expenditure of £10,000 (average 1979) this means £1,250,000. If every class over 40 was split in two, 980 more classes and around £10 million per annum would be involved.

The second notable area of change has been at third level and it is in this area that most developments are likely to take place over the next decade. The White Paper touches three issues of special concern to third level. First, it intimates increased emphasis upon courses to alleviate the reported "serious shortages of highly qualified and skilled craft, technician, engineering and computing manpower" (paragraphs 10.18 and 10.26). Secondly, and related, it comments upon, and alters, some of the requirements to qualify for a higher education grant; thirdly, it relates comments from the Higher Education Authority with respect to the future funding of third-level education.

The increased emphasis upon the labour market with regard to future expansion of third level is welcome (paragraph 1.32). Nevertheless, it is well to consider how durable the present conditions of the labour market will be. At present, the planning, building and length of degree courses mean that it requires anything up to a decade to react to labour market changes. One possibility which could be given greater consideration is the fuller use of existing facilities, with additional night degrees and vacation courses. Changes of these types could provide increased output of qualified personnel in a period equal to the training period. In addition, such a suggestion is substantially cheaper and need involve less commitment of buildings, capital equipment and permanent staff.

The second area upon which the White Paper touches is the issue of the qualifications necessary for student support. These consist of three types. First, there are academic requirements; secondly, there are income requirements; thirdly, there are administrative requirements.

The academic requirements, prior to the White Paper, consisted of a minimum of 4 Cs in higher grade or common level papers at the Leaving Certificate Examinations, or 3 Cs where one of the subjects was Mathematics or Irish. In order to encourage schools to follow courses in certain subjects at Leaving Certificate level, and also bearing in mind the need for additional output from scientific and technological courses of third-level institutions, the existing grants scheme is amended to require only two Cs on higher or common level papers in two of a list of relatively technological and scientific subjects. In fact, this concession is likely to make little difference since, in all university faculties except Arts (and Science in Maynooth), the entry requirements in 1980 effectively exceeded those required for a grant.³ Also, most Arts students are unlikely to have the requisite subjects. The continuation of the requirement of 4 Cs for a grant as against 2 Cs or less for entry to many of the institutions does imply lesser opportunities for those entrants with 2 Cs or 3 Cs who would need grant assistance to enrol.

The second requirement for a grant depends upon income, and the income limits for a non-farming family are shown in Table 1. These figures show that for a non-farming family of four children, the grant falls by £120 for each rise of £210 or £215 in parental income (equivalent to a marginal tax rate of over 50 per cent). If the parent is also paying taxes on income then the total effective marginal tax rate could be punitive. The effect of any means-tested benefit scheme on the effective marginal tax rate can be serious as this example indicates. The cumulation of several means-tested benefit schemes, particularly if they overlap, could affect effort and/or, perhaps more seriously, attitudes to work. It would seem vital that government departments assess and co-ordinate the economic criteria of such schemes.

The income limits of the grant scheme were not always so progressive. In fact, when the scheme was introduced the difference between minimum and maximum awards was, in 1980 price terms, more than double the 1978/79 difference. The full figures over the

3. More specifically, the entry requirements for most faculties other than these require leaving certificate scores that are above the level of 4 Cs, although these scores could be obtained on a larger number of papers at lower grades.

Table 1: *Benefits Payable in 1980 for Students Living Away from Home^a
for a Non-Farm Family of Four Children*

<i>Income of parent per annum</i>	<i>Width of band</i>	<i>Grant per annum</i>
£	£	
5461 – 5675	214	Lecture fee only ^b
5251 – 5460	209	Lecture fee + £240
5036 – 5250	214	Lecture fee + £360
4826 – 5035	209	Lecture fee + £480
Up to 4825	4825	Lecture fee + £600

a. for definition see text.

b. Up to £448 except for medical, dental and veterinary faculties of NUI and TCD.

years are set out in Table 2. The figures in Columns 3 and 4 set out the limits for a non-farming family of four children and show that, due to inflation, the parental income limits have fallen in real terms since the scheme was introduced. The extent of the fall of the lower limit is 31 per cent and the upper limit is 39 per cent. Even more relevant is the fall relative to incomes which is shown in Columns 5 and 6 of the table. In these columns, the income limits are measured relative to the average annual earnings of workers in the transportable goods industries and here the fall can be seen to be substantial. Whereas, in 1968 the lower limit was over twice the average level of industrial earnings, in 1979 it was only 8 per cent greater. It should be noted that the eligibility position of those from farming families is different and is based upon land valuation levels. These did not change

Table 2: *Income Limits for Non-Farming Family with Four Children in Current Prices, in Constant (1980) Prices and Relative to Annual Average Industrial Earnings*

	<i>Current Prices</i>		<i>Constant (1980) prices^a</i>		<i>Income limits divided by average yearly earnings in industry^b</i>	
	<i>Lower Limit</i>	<i>Upper Limit</i>	<i>Lower Limit</i>	<i>Upper Limit</i>	<i>Lower Limit</i>	<i>Upper Limit</i>
1968-69	1,500	2,000	7,005	9,342	2.25	3.00
1969-70	1,500	2,000	6,528	8,705	2.03	2.71
1970-71	1,500	2,000	5,931	7,908	1.82	2.43
1971-72	1,500	2,000	5,448	7,266	1.56	2.07
1972-73	2,005	2,000	6,736	9,004	1.80	2.41
1973-74	2,005	2,680	5,985	8,001	1.56	2.09
1974-75	2,005	2,680	4,977	6,653	1.30	1.73
1975-76	2,005	2,680	4,267	5,702	1.07	1.43
1976-77	2,005	2,680	3,537	4,727	0.83	1.10
1977-78	3,150	3,850	5,015	6,128	1.09	1.33
1978-79	3,825	4,675	5,861	6,895	1.14	1.39
1979-80	4,825	5,675	6,357	7,476	1.23	1.44
1980-81	4,825	5,675	4,825	5,675	1.08	1.27

a. Deflated using the consumer price index (November) each year.

b. Average weekly earnings in manufacturing industries annualised. Since income for assessment is income in previous years, earnings are taken accordingly.

until 1977/78 when they were made more restrictive and again in 1979/80. Thus, it appears that eligibility for the grant has been reduced for all persons.

The administration of the grant scheme is not referred to in the White Paper but is worthy of reference. The grant scheme does not permit students to defer third-level study for more than two years after completing the Leaving Certificate Examination. Those who intend to do so must apply on completing their Leaving Certificate; if not, they are treated as late applicants, whence they lose the first year's award (though this loss may be redressed at the discretion of the local authority). Inability to apply through absence from the country or illness are treated as extenuating circumstances. In Williams and Gordon's (1977) survey of British sixth formers (who do not face such a condition) over 70 per cent of those continuing to higher education felt that the opportunity to take up such education later was a factor of importance. In Ireland that opportunity may not be there if the student requires state aid to avail of it.

It would seem fair to conclude that the grant system has neither maintained opportunities for potential students since its conception, nor has the White Paper assisted in any material way.

Finally, the White Paper mentions that the question of loans has been under consideration by the Higher Education Authority in the light of information on the operation of such schemes in other countries.

The Authority has indicated (paragraph 10.30):

- (a) that in Ireland, also, introduction of a loans scheme would entail an immediate increase in the amount of public funds devoted to third-level education;
- (b) that this increase would accumulate over the period of six or seven years before repayment of loans would operate to stabilise public expenditure on such education.

It is difficult to interpret these two comments without knowledge of the assumptions made for such a loans scheme. Does this assume that the grants scheme is to be superseded? Is the same level of grants to be in operation? Are all students eligible for such a loan? Presumably, the Authority has made explicit assumptions. However, the publishing of conclusions without assumptions renders informed debate virtually impossible.

The Authority has indicated further:

- (c) that consideration of the matter of student support should be kept separate from that of the financing of the overall development of the higher education institutions.

This would seem to imply that the financing of the institution should not be related to the fees paid by students. This is almost equivalent to saying that fees should not be related to costs. Third-level education is not free, the taxpayer pays and, on average, taxpayers pay to assist most students to become better off than they are themselves.

Such a statement requires strong justification and this is not provided. Most goods or services we consume are priced. Why should third-level education be different? One justification for free first- and second-level education is that all receive most of this education compulsorily. This does not apply to third level. This and other issues in the area are dealt with more fully in a further paper (Barlow, 1981).

I would like to conclude by praising the introduction of the White Paper where the expenditure on the provision of education is emphasised. Unfortunately, as far as the crucial issues pertaining to the financing of this expenditure are concerned the White Paper was more blank than White. The fact that education is expensive is not a reason for operating existing policies using highly restrictive criteria; rather it should imply thorough and extensive research and planning to ensure that basic policies are carefully and wisely chosen.

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DISCUSSION

D.G. Mulcahy: There is much in Mr. Power's paper with which I agree. At a time of increased pressures from different sources, including industry, it is somewhat reassuring to hear him say that the curriculum "should reflect the need to cater for the young person as an individual, as a citizen, and as a worker" (p. 88). Too often in recent years those who emphasise the importance of establishing a strong link between the world of school and the world of work appear to be of the view that preparing pupils for the workplace ought to be almost the sole aim of schooling and that all of its energies should be directed towards that end. But, however important special forms of education as, for example, vocational education may be, the purpose of post-primary education, I would argue, must remain one of general education.

This is not to say, however, that general education ought not to include a substantial element of preparation for work. And for this reason my agreement with Mr. Power's position goes beyond agreement on the need to educate the young person as an individual and as a citizen. I agree also with his stressing the relationship between the world of school and the world of work, and, more specifically, the need for the curriculum of the post-primary school to anticipate in important ways the demands of the workplace. Thus, for example, I agree strongly that at the Leaving Certificate or senior level of the post-primary school, programmes ought to be designed which contain a different vocational orientation. I agree, furthermore, that there ought to be, for example, increased provision for the study of the oral and communication aspects of modern European languages. Unlike Mr. Power, however, I would not see the fact of whether they contributed to vocational education or not as the only or major basis for deciding whether a subject (e.g., Art) should be included in the curriculum. And if I were to find myself in strong disagreement with what Mr. Power has to say, I think it would be on the emphasis in his paper whereby the "vocational" criterion is seen as almost the sole measure by which the various positions of the White Paper which he considers are adjudged.

There are, however, other issues pertaining to the curriculum of second-level education to which the White Paper devotes attention, issues to which Mr. Power has not made direct reference in some cases, and by way of response to Mr. Power's paper I wish to advert to some of these. In particular, I wish to suggest that while the White Paper includes many instances of the Government thinking out loud, there are few instances of definite major proposals.

The first of these issues has to do with the question of the overall aims and direction of post-primary schooling in this country. It was not unusual during the 'sixties and early 'seventies, when second-level education in this country was going through a period of unprecedented expansion and reorganisation, that complaints were heard to the effect that it was difficult to detect an overall direction of post-primary development or receive an

exact indication of the changing concept and values of post-primary education. It was not unusual for ministerial pronouncements, for example, to claim that secondary education in the past had been too academic. But if we were expected to move away from academic forms of secondary education, what the future was to bring was less clear, though it did seem to be associated in some way with the notion of technical and technological education. This absence of a sense of direction for post-primary education became all the more glaring with the appearance in 1971 of the new primary school curriculum, a curriculum which was supported by both a guiding philosophy and a hefty two-volume *Teachers Handbook*.

I, for one, came to this *White Paper on Educational Development* in the hope, if not quite the expectation, that after more than fifteen years of considerable change in Irish post-primary education at least some elements of a guiding philosophy and sense of direction for the future of post-primary education in this country might be contained in it. On the whole, however, I have been disappointed. The White Paper is keenly sensitive to the fact that change is all about us, and that the curriculum ought to respond to such change. In a number of cases, as Mr. Power has indicated already, there have been changes in some areas of the curriculum and other changes are proposed in areas such as modern languages, computer studies, physics, religious education and pre-employment programmes. But while there is an appreciation of the need for the curriculum to respond to change there is a *distinct hesitancy* in the White Paper to take a firm stand on what the broad direction of this response ought to be. The White Paper is at its most committal when it reads as follows, in connection with its proposal to introduce career-oriented courses in senior cycle on a pilot basis: "A wholly utilitarian approach, however, could only prove counter productive. The general education of the future worker is at least as important as the specialised training he receives" (p. 49). But we also have statements which are not quite so committal. Thus, we read:

The objectives of this level [second-level] of education are manifold, but among them is the expectation of society that it should provide young people with the opportunity to prepare for the jobs which are available in the economy, as well as the opportunity for entry to third-level education or more specialized training, that it should equip the young adolescent to enter society as a full adult member and that it should provide the economy itself with the skills and knowledge necessary to sustain and advance it (p. 46).

While this excerpt may create the impression that the White Paper favours a much greater element of preparation for employment in second-level education, it does not, in fact, contain any specific commitment or statement of intent that such is to be Government policy in the future.

The White Paper is even less willing to take a position on another issue affecting the future direction of curriculum development in Irish post-primary education as will be seen from the following quotation:

With the growing complexity of modern living, people now entering adulthood need a whole new range of functional skills and knowledge. Accordingly, the schools are pressed to provide social and political education, health education, consumer education, education for leisure, media education, personal development education – the list keeps growing. If some educationists believe that such matters are not really the concern of the school, a more commonly held view is that young people today need an enlarged educational experience and that the school must offer its specialist support to the formative efforts of the home and of the community at large (p. 45).

What we have here is the juxtaposition of two contrasting viewpoints. But what is the position of the White Paper? As with the previous quotation, the impression is created that the White Paper has taken a position when, in fact, it has not. As a result, we are not much better off than before as regards Government policy on such issues as whether the curriculum of post-primary education in Ireland ought to include a substantial vocational element or not and whether, for example, the curriculum of post-primary education in Ireland ought to devote greater attention to forms of education such as social and political education, health education, etc. A glance at the summary of proposals at the end of the chapter from which I am quoting will confirm what I say. And so, it appears to me, in the White Paper there is no attempt made to spell out Government policy in regard to the major purposes of post-primary education and what weighting ought to be given to the traditional form of secondary education *vis-à-vis* education for work, education for living (such as health education, consumer education, media education) and education for recreation and leisure.

If it is difficult to detect a definite philosophy of curriculum for post-primary education in the White Paper it is also true that the need for new approaches and methodologies in the area of second-level curriculum is not fully recognised. Thus, after a decade or more of dissatisfaction with the lack of co-ordination of the curriculum of the primary school and the post-primary school, and the failure to respond to new and varied needs of substantially increased numbers of pupils at the junior level of the post-primary school over the past fifteen years or so, all that we are told is that the committee set up to investigate the problem of transfer from primary to post-primary education is still in session and that there will be some greater diversification of curriculum provision at the junior cycle. There is also the welcome suggestion — first mooted, I believe, in an important document of 1967 — that the introduction of shorter curriculum modules ought to be considered. The lack of more definite proposals in this area is particularly disappointing after more than ten years of curriculum experimentation in Irish post-primary education. And nowhere is it more disappointing, again after ten years of research and some experimentation, than in the area of the public examinations.

One can argue forever, I believe, about aims, about whether there should be a vocational orientation in the curriculum of the post-primary school, and about different ways of teaching at the second-level of education. But as long as nothing is done to alter significantly the present system of public examinations little will change. And since the White Paper has nothing to offer by way of proposals in respect of the public examinations, it is hardly surprising then that it has little to offer either in regard to the problem of transfer from second-level to third-level education and the influence of the third-level sector, in general, on second level education. Thus, we read, and I do quote "*it is to be hoped* (emphasis added) that expansion in other third-level institutions and increased participation in other types of courses at school will help to moderate the pressure of university requirements on students" (p. 50). Can we do no more than hope in regard to this most vexed of issues? Are the universities the only third-level institutions which bring pressure on the second-level student? And, can we really expect that there are going to be enough places for all those who seek a place in third-level education over the next decade and beyond?

I wish to turn now to another issue to which Mr. Power has made reference in his paper, namely the question of the proposed Curriculum Council and its relationship with the Curriculum Unit already established in the Department of Education. The purpose of the Curriculum Council is stated as being one of advising the Minister on second-level curricula and syllabi. The membership of the Council will be drawn from educational, cultural, agricultural and commercial interests. Accordingly, a particular responsibility of the Council will be to ensure that important links will be made with the wider com-

munity in coming to decisions regarding what goes on in school. Seemingly, also, the Council would have an important role to play as an "external consultative or advisory structure to view the totality of the curriculum, or to advise the Minister on questions of overall curriculum balance" (p. 47).

That some such arrangement is desirable I will not question. But what is to be the relationship between the Council and the Curriculum Unit, the purpose of which is to set up a conceptual framework for curriculum, establish norms of attainment, and evaluate curriculum? These too are very admirable objectives. But is there any reason why the work of both the Curriculum Council and the Curriculum Unit might not be combined? There is much to be said for the functions of the Council and those of the Curriculum Unit being performed by the one body. And, indeed, I believe it would be desirable to include in the functions of this body responsibility for the co-ordination of all the various sectors of education in Ireland.

One of the difficulties of having two separate bodies to consider questions of curriculum in the way indicated in the White Paper is that it keeps separate the functions of deciding upon questions of the content of various subjects and upon questions of evaluation and curriculum review. This, I would argue, is to create an unreal and harmful distinction between these two areas. Sadly, it is a distinction which seems built into the deliberations of the White Paper since in the words of the White Paper in the chapter where it treats of the curriculum of second-level education we read: "... curriculum will be taken to mean simply the range of subjects, with their individual syllabi, that are approved for study at a particular level" (p. 43). Interestingly, the idea of the Curriculum Unit, which does not appear to be bound by such a narrow definition of curriculum, is dealt with in a different chapter.

One final comment. The White Paper in its discussions of the curriculum has touched on many points and has raised many important questions. But it has answered few. Thus, like others, I too have difficulty with the colour of this White Paper. More importantly, perhaps, such are the issues facing the curriculum of post-primary education in this country that I do not think that there has been sufficient groundwork done to deal adequately with them in a White Paper at this time. What is needed at the present time is a major review of the curriculum of post-primary education. The work of the Curriculum Unit seems to be moving in this direction. It should be given every encouragement to undertake a wide-ranging and thorough review. And in this there might be something to learn from our neighbours in the UK over the past five years.

M.F. Kelleher: Mr Barlow has shown clearly that the Higher Education Grants Scheme, introduced in 1968, has regressed considerably in regard to eligibility; there has been a corresponding disimprovement in the value of the grant itself. Neither the income limits nor the amounts of the grants themselves have been increased in the current session, 1980/81 (except in so far as increased fees are covered by the Scheme). Neither is there any indication in the 1981 Estimates that this situation is likely to change. Estimated expenditure on the Scheme for 1981 is £3.6m (compared with £3.34m in the previous year). There is hardly much scope here even to maintain the present value of the benefits much less significantly to improve it.

Under the present Higher Education Grants Scheme (and assuming that it will continue to be implemented as in the past), the question of the level of student fees does not impinge on the holders of the grants as the minimum grant is equivalent to the amount of fees payable. For the 75 per cent of students who do not receive grants, however, there is no indication whatever in the White Paper as to what the Government's policy on fee levels is. Fee income in universities today represents some 13 per cent of income compared with a contribution of approximately 23 per cent a decade ago. It is not necessary

here to explain how this reduction in contribution evolved over the ten-year period. However, as early as 1974, the Higher Education Authority* expressed the view that “fee rates should be adjusted progressively until fee income should account for 20-25 per cent of the total recurrent income of the university colleges.” The Authority did not, however, pursue this policy in subsequent years.

Another White Paper on “Programme for National Development 1978/81” contained a reference to the doubling of university fees. In 1979, following the advice of the Minister for Education, university fees were increased on a two-tier basis – a 25 per cent increase for first-year courses and 16 per cent for other courses. In 1980 a flat fee increase was applied across the board but the higher level of fees applicable to first-year courses was carried over into second-year courses.

Fee policy, therefore, is not at all very clear. It should not be too much to ask that a definitive fees policy should be worked out between the Government and the universities to ensure that students embarking on a university course can have some estimate of the fees that will be applied over the full term of the degree course in question. From the point of view of the universities, such a fees policy should be an essential component in their planning process.

Mr Barlow has referred to the comment in the White Paper to the effect that the Higher Education Authority felt that “consideration of the matter of student’s support should be kept separate from that of the financing of the overall development of the higher education institutions.” Mr Barlow felt that this statement seemed to imply that the financing of the institutions is not related to the fees paid for by students. I am not too sure that this is what the Authority meant. It could also be interpreted as meaning that the present practice of financing universities by substantial state support and with a minor element of fee income should continue and that the question of helping the student to pay fees is a separate matter. It must be remembered that the Higher Education Authority comment was made in the context of a possible loan scheme.

Indeed, if the first interpretation were valid, it would be in direct contradiction to a statement published by the Authority* in 1974 viz., “. . . it seems proper that some part of the financial burden of supporting higher education should be shifted from the general body of tax-payers to those who benefit directly from it subject always to the proviso that no student of high attainment who has secured admission to an institution of higher education is prevented by lack of means from attendance thereat.”

Looking at the various educational sectors from the point of view of the third-level sector, the following quotations from the White Paper are relevant:

10.2 – Third-level education, a major area of educational expenditure, has a very important function in meeting both the demands of the student and that of society for the student. The contribution made by third-level institutions in recent years towards meeting the highly qualified manpower required by an expanding economy is readily recognised.

10.11– Development of third-level education and the financial provision therefor must necessarily be considered in the light of *priority commitment to other levels*. (Emphasis added)

10.26– To meet the problem of serious shortages of certain highly-qualified technical manpower being experienced in industry account must also be taken of possible shortages of teaching staff in second and third level courses in Science

*“Progress Report 1974”: The Higher Education Authority. November 1974; paragraph 49.2.

*“Progress Report 1974”: The Higher Education Authority. November 1974; paragraph 46.

and Technology subjects. The rapid growth in demand for technically qualified personnel by industry could take from the supply of suitable teachers to service the proposed computer science and technology courses envisaged for the future.

The Government envisages a 6.9 per cent increase in the number of primary school pupils over the next decade. In the same time span, secondary school pupils are expected to increase in number by 12.8 per cent. This would seem to indicate a projected increased participation rate at second level. Also at second level, community and comprehensive colleges are expected to expand in pupil numbers by 13.5 per cent. University numbers are expected to increase by 13.9 per cent, thus projecting the maintenance of the present participation rate in universities. The projections also include more than a doubling of numbers in the National Institutes for Higher Education.

At present, the university student numbers represent about 59 per cent of total third-level students and it is expected that this percentage will reduce slightly to approximately 55 per cent over the next decade consequent on the expansion, primarily, of the National Institutes.

It will seem reasonable to prognosticate, therefore, if the objectives of the White Paper are to be achieved and if this integrated expansion of all educational sectors is to take place, that this should be reflected in Government policy in regard to the funding of the various educational sectors. Regrettably, however, in a Government publication, published within weeks of the White Paper, i.e., the "Estimates for Public Service 1981", a wholly different picture emerges. The amount voted for primary education for 1981 as against the total voted for 1980 represents an increase of 28.6 per cent. Secondary education does even better, the increase being 32.7 per cent. Vocational education does not do quite so well at 18.5 per cent and coming up the rear is higher education (primarily the universities and the National Institutes for Higher Education) with an increase of a mere 11.1 per cent. To develop some sectors at the expense of other sectors is, in my view, short-sighted and potentially disastrous policy.

In regard to technology and the humanities the White Paper places "further emphasis" on technology with particular regard to engineering, manufacturing technology, electronics and computer science. No one will argue against the need to develop and expand educational facilities in technology. However, it is usual nowadays to hear many spokesmen, some even from within the educational system itself, suggesting that this expansion should take place at the expense of the educational facilities for the humanities. Universities, in particular, are selected for the pressures in this regard. It has already been shown that the Government envisages a significant expansion in first- and second-level pupil numbers. The White Paper goes on to say, in paragraph 10.11, that "it would be appreciated that expansion of first and second level has repercussions at third level, particularly in the area of teacher education." The university system in its link with the teacher training colleges, is now involved in the training of all primary teachers. The university system itself still produces the vast majority of teachers at second level and universities must, of course, produce a substantial proportion of the teachers that they themselves and other third-level institutions require.

Dealing with first- and second-level teacher requirements alone, the role of the humanities is central. We have not reached the stage, and I hope that we never will, when the bulk of teaching at first- and second-level will be technologically based. Teachers at these levels will continue to be trained with an emphasis on the humanities and, as already stated, the university system as a whole produces practically all the teachers in this area. Yet this factor is not reflected in the White Paper publication. Apart from the special reference to the Irish Language, there is no reference whatsoever to the development of any subject in the humanities area.