A Critical Evaluation of Higher Education Policy in Ireland: The Global Financial Crisis and Beyond

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education (EdD)

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May 2021

Abstract

Ireland is one of the most globalised countries in the world (World Economic Forum, 2015). The Global Financial Crisis of 2008 impacted the Irish economy and society in particularly challenging and adverse ways, culminating in an EU/IMF economic bailout in 2010 and a prolonged period of austerity for the Irish people. In the midst of this crisis, the Irish government published its national recovery plan *Building Ireland's Smart Economy: A Framework for Sustainable Economic Renewal* in 2008. A key objective of this blueprint included a prioritisation on the restructuring of Ireland's higher education system repositioning it as an instrument to facilitate Ireland's economic recovery and future growth. This dissertation charts and interrogates the circumstances leading to the current policy position in Irish higher education. Through the instrument of critical policy analysis (CPA), which for the purposes of this study is grounded in the sociological theories of Pierre Bourdieu and Neo-Institutional theory, this research examines the transformation of Irish higher education in the decade following the Global Financial Crisis. I explore whether the specific policy direction now evidenced in Irish higher education was an inevitable response to the dire economic situation Ireland found itself in following the crash of the 'Celtic Tiger', or if the Global Financial Crisis simply acted as a catalyst for a new trajectory. Furthermore, this investigation explores the current tensions between government and Irish higher education providers as central control over the sector tightens, while the lack of sufficient funding continues to be a topic of intense debate amongst all stakeholders. Such pressures are bolstered by the hegemonic discourse on knowledge economy imperatives, investment in human capital, and the widely held belief that higher education is the conduit to drive it all. Underpinning this research are the concepts of habitus, field, capital and power which constitute the key tenets of Bourdieu's 'thinking tools'. These are supplemented by the conceptual instruments of isomorphism and legitimacy which, along with field, represent core assumptions within Neo-Institutional theory. I ask if it is time, faced with further periods of instability arising from Brexit and Covid-19, to redress some of the more contentious issues which arose following the publication of Ireland's *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* in 2011. Crucially, the question of whether there are other viable approaches for a more balanced Irish higher education into the future will be posed.

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Acknowledgements

This dissertation could not have been written without the help and support of a great many people. First, I am eternally grateful to my supervisor, Professor Penny Enslin for her endless patience and encouragement. But most especially for her belief in me right from the beginning of my journey on the Doctorate. Penny has inspired me to question, to probe and to think beyond limits I had never even considered. This work would simply not have come to fruition without her guidance and support.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to Professor Nicki Hedge for her invaluable support and advise, particularly in the early years of the Doctorate.

Thank you also my fellow students on the Ed.D programme for their encouragement, but most especially for their friendship through the years.

My sincere thanks to my colleagues in the Centre of Distance Learning in University College Dublin who have supported me from the beginning to the end of my Ed.D journey.

To my husband Rory, whose endless support in the ups and downs of completing this dissertation made a world of difference. I cannot thank you enough and could not have done this without you.

Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

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Abbreviations

CHER (Commission on Higher Education Report)

CPA (Critical Policy Analysis)

CPD (Continuous Professional Development)

ECJ (European Court of Justice)

Ed.D (Doctorate in Education)

EEC (European Economic Community)

ESF (European Social Fund)

EU (European Union)

DARE (Disability Access Route to Education)

DoES (Department of Education and Skills)

FDI (Foreign Direct Investment)

GDP (Gross Domestic Product)

GFC (Global financial Crisis 2008)

HCT (Human Capital Theory)

HE (Higher Education)

HEA (Higher Education Authority)

HEAR (Higher Education Access Route)

HEIs (Higher Education Institutions)

HSIS (Humanities Serving Irish Society)

IEGC (Irish Educated Globally Connected: An International Education Strategy for Ireland 2016-2020)

IGR (Investing in Global Relationships: Ireland's International Education Strategy 2010-15)

IIE (Investment in Education 1965)

IMF (International Monetary Fund)

IRC (Irish Research Council)

IRCHSS (Irish Research Council for Humanities and Social Sciences)

IRCSET (Irish Research Council for Science, Engineering and Technology)

IoTs (Institutes of Technology)

IUA (Irish Universities Association)

MNC (Multinational Corporation)

NIHEs (National Institutes of Higher Education)

NSHE (National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030)

NT (Neo-Institutional Theory)

NUI (National University of Ireland)

NUIG (National University of Ireland Galway)

OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development)

PAC (Public Accounts Committee)

RTCs (Regional Technical Colleges)

SFI (Science Foundation Ireland)

STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics)

STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics)

TCD (Trinity College Dublin)

UCC (University College Cork)

UCD (University College Dublin)

WP (White Paper on Education 1995)

WTO (World Trade Organisation)

Preamble

In 2005, I completed my master's degree and re-entered the workforce in an Ireland which was reaching the apex of an unprecedented economic boom, widely referred to as the 'Celtic Tiger'. I was in a part-time role in a university department while completing my degree, quickly moving on to a full-time position following graduation. Many of my classmates went on to find positions in the private sector and financial services, but I decided to stay for a short while in my university job, while I reached a decision about my future career path while at the same time paying off my student debt. When the loud roar of the Celtic Tiger was silenced by what we now know as the Global Financial Crisis of 2008 (GFC), I found myself still in the university, having been promoted and granted permanency in the short intervening years. It was not that I was married to the idea of a career in higher education – I had still anticipated a move to the private sector, where financial gains were high, and the career ladder seemed a straightforward and swift climb in most professions at that time. But in the aftermath of the GFC, I was fortunate to have a job at all. So, from a professional practice perspective my own career in a professional capacity within Irish higher education began quite unwittingly and unintentionally fifteen years ago. In this time, I have witnessed first-hand the cutbacks and recruitment freezes which, as a public sector worker in a country which was hit extremely hard by the GFC, were commonplace. Many departments within the university in which I work saw their staff numbers being cut substantially with the implementation of early retirement packages, and positions which, once vacated, went unfilled. Subject areas that drew fewer students were cut in the interests of efficiency, with less staff left to teach and provide support for students.

I was acutely aware of these larger changes which were taking place in the wider university. Streamlining of bulk processes and cutting back on the 'man' hours needed to perform existing tasks were the order of the day. The international office, once a small hub with a handful of people moved to new premises and expanded exponentially. Programmes which were delivered online were being piloted and there were whispers that not enough was being done to ensure inclusiveness and participation. Generating reports and statistics for the Higher Education Authority – Ireland's regulatory body on matters pertaining to higher education – began to emerge as a matter of significant importance. At the time I had little awareness that these seemingly new activities emerged due to the establishment of Ireland's first national cohesive policy for higher education which materialised in 2011 – the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030*. From my own perspective, in the years immediately following the GFC, unprecedented sovereign debt, mass unemployment, recession,

emigration, austerity, and a blanket moratorium on public jobs made any prospect of further promotion within the university unfeasible. While positions were plentiful and advancement as a professional staff member was relatively straightforward for those who worked toward this goal prior to 2008, career stagnation became the new reality for those whose career and working life lay in Irish higher education. Indeed, this held true for both professional and academic staff, with initial staff cuts in the higher education sector amounting to 6% by 2010 (Times Higher Education 2010). For me, what has emerged from the mayhem of the GFC has been a continued and sustained role in higher education in a rapidly fluctuating environment. I have been an intermittently reluctant, sometimes resistant, professional in higher education. The energy of working in a higher education institution and the interaction with academic and professional staff, and of course, with students has made for a gratifying career. In hindsight, I am sure this is at least partially why I did not leap into a career in the private sector when the opportunity was there for the taking in the boom years of the Celtic Tiger. This is particularly the case with my current position which is concerned with operations on overseas campuses in Asia. In my role as a Senior Programme Manager, I am responsible for the administrative oversight of university programmes which are situated in Singapore. These programmes are somewhat distinct in that students remain in Singapore for most of their programme, although they do have the opportunity to attend classes on the local campus in Ireland for a few weeks in the summer or for a full term. Although I am involved in curriculum reviews and the implementation and structure of any new curricula is also part my responsibilities, I am not engaged in the academic overseeing of the programmes, per se. Delivery of an orientation programme in situ (and online since Covid-19) prior to students embarking on their academic programmes and the student fora which I hold throughout the year, are aspects of my role which I very much enjoy. And it is also here that I find the most unique insights into why students choose to enrol to an Irish university programme. One of the reasons most often given are links not necessarily to Ireland, but links to Europe, and this is high on students' preferences. These programmes predate the GFC by a decade and were somewhat nascent in their international outwardness when they commenced operating in the mid-1990s. But it was my role here which initiated a profound interest in how higher education works within and outside of Ireland. Up to this point, my understanding of how higher education actually operates on the whole was myopic at best. As I noted earlier, I was aware of the changes which were happening within the institution where I was working in the aftermath of the GFC, but I was oblivious to what was happening in the sector beyond that. That was until I began working in the small unit where I am still

located, which started my thinking of higher education not from a national frame of mind, but from a more international perspective.

I am a first-generation university graduate, and most of my siblings also hold a tertiary level qualification. This is not an unusual scenario in present day Ireland, but I do find it a curiosity now that neither I, nor my peers, thought to question why few of our parents had gone beyond secondary school and yet it seemed natural – expected even – that we would go on to higher level education. Perhaps we supposed this was a generational phenomenon without real consideration of how large this education gap really was. I have come to discern that in actuality, there has been a complete shift over one single generation from viewing higher education as an elite pursuit to being a common, if not a majority choice, for school leavers. This altered higher education landscape is one which has undoubtedly contributed to societal changes which has seen Ireland quickly transform from its conservative past to a country which is generally very tolerant and liberal. I have come to view this as an incredible accomplishment for such a small island nation on the periphery of Europe and one which appears, geographically at least, isolated from its neighbours. But such a view of Ireland can quickly be dismissed, as over the course of this dissertation what will become only too clear is that the Irish State is perhaps one on the world's least isolated in terms of interaction with other countries.

Hence, my interest in the study of higher education comes from a number of directions. From a professional perspective, I was working in higher education before and during the period which is covered in the core analysis in this dissertation, and I continue to work in the sector. It was simply impossible not to be affected by the changes which were initiated following the GFC. My primary degree is a joint major in history and economics, and perhaps this has influenced my interest in the history of Irish higher education to some extent. Nevertheless, on enrolling to the doctorate in education in the University of Glasgow in 2015, my interest in the area has intensified and has ultimately culminated in this dissertation. From a professional perspective, I believe it would be remiss not to state that my position in an international unit of a prominent higher education institution has brought with it many personal contradictions and conflict in terms of how this dissertation would be presented. On the one hand, I am employed happily in a unit which subscribes to a vision of Ireland as a global nation, whose higher education sector increasingly places more importance on internationalisation strategies. On the other hand, I am also a graduate in history and have retained an avid preoccupation for the study of the social sciences. Consequently, this study is conducted from what I view as a balanced panorama, emanating

from the meanings and connotations which higher education has had at different periods throughout my scholarly and professional life.

Chapter 1: Introduction

In 2015, the World Economic Forum published a list of countries that, according to the Swiss Economic Institute (also known as the KOF), were the most globalised. The KOF Globalisation Index is calculated using three core indicators – economic, social, and political – with countries being ranked based on the most recent data with respect to economic flows, economic restrictions, information flows, personal contact, and cultural proximity. Ireland's position that year was at the top of the list. Indeed, over the past two decades, Ireland has been consistently high in the rankings of various globalisation indices. Elsewhere, for example, and as noted by Kirby (2004), *Foreign Policy's* globalisation index put Ireland in pole position for three consecutive years in 2002, 2003 and 2004. Ireland's current position remains within the top 20 most globalised countries, ranking 17th in 2019 (Statista 2020). This salient fact forms the point of departure for this study and shapes the backdrop for this dissertation.

This chapter proceeds by outlining the central aim of this dissertation and the methodology which will be used. I follow this by giving a preliminary statement on the two theoretical frameworks which underpin the analysis of Irish higher education (HE) policy in this study. Next, I give a succinct account of how Ireland came to be one of the most globalised countries in the world. I will then proceed by outlining the relationship between globalisation, the knowledge economy, and human capital theory. The development of Irish HE policy cannot be fully understood without due consideration given to the importance of this trio with respect to policy formation. This will become evident over the course of this dissertation. I will continue with a brief description of the GFC's impact on Ireland. Born out of this crisis, Ireland's recovery plan *Building Ireland's Smart Economy: A Framework for Sustainable Economic Renewal* was published in 2008. This document is, in many ways, the precursor to Ireland's first national plan vis-à-vis higher education policy. Finally, I will present an overview of how this dissertation will proceed, briefly outlining the content of each chapter.

Aims of this Study

Under the auspices of the global economic emergency, government reform of the higher education (HE) sector, which places it as an instrument of economic growth and stability, has been particularly rapid and assured. The aims of this dissertation are to interrogate the restructuring of Ireland's HE system following the GFC and to assess the resultant higher education landscape – both the tangible and intangible changes. Furthermore, I propose recommendations to shape a more balanced Irish HE system into the future. These

recommendations will be informed by a number of factors, including Brexit and Covid-19.

The 2004 OECD *Review of National policies for Education: Review of Higher Education in Ireland, Examiners' Report* recognised for Ireland 'more strongly than in almost any other country in Europe, that tertiary education is a key driver for the economy' (OECD 2004, p. 60). It is particularly noteworthy that the report also highlighted the lack of any national cohesive policy with respect to HE in Ireland, a status quo which continued until the publication of the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* in 2011 by the Department of Education and Skills (DoES). While this overarching policy on HE in Ireland will be central to my analysis, other policy documents which emerged over the decade since the GFC, especially those which concern international policy, will also be considered. A central concern of the national strategy is the establishment of an 'innovative knowledge-based economy that will provide sustainable employment opportunities and good standards of living for all our citizens' (DoES 2011, p. 9). Higher education is outlined as the medium to ensure this objective is met in the long term, and in the context of economic crisis can be viewed as a justifiable goal. However, what will become apparent throughout this dissertation is that the path which was taken by the government to reform Ireland's HE system was a well-worn one, with similar objectives to those in higher education systems elsewhere. This has ultimately manifested in narrow objectives which are primarily concerned with boosting economic activity, a situation which has garnered critique particularly from within the Irish HE sector itself.

The aim of this research, therefore, is three-fold. First, it is necessary to understand why the particular policy direction was taken. Second, the impact of this reorganisation will be interrogated in the aftermath of implementation. Finally, given the findings from the first two aims, an alternative future approach for Irish HE will be explored.

To address these objectives then, the following questions are posed by this research:

- To what extent was Irish higher education policy which was implemented in the aftermath of the Global Financial Crisis shaped by global forces?
- How has policy which was introduced in the aftermath of Global Financial Crisis changed Ireland's higher education landscape?
- The emergence of Covid-19 will continue to have significant implications globally, not least in our HE systems. At this critical juncture, what are the considerations for Irish HE with respect to how it is shaped in the future?

To fully address these questions, it is necessary to unpick the endogenous and exogenous influences which lay behind the transformation of Irish HE policy, notwithstanding the GFC. To do this, I will use critical policy analysis, underpinned by two sociological frameworks which I contend have the power and potential to interrogate the complexities of change in HE in Ireland during the period under scrutiny. The next section provides an overview of the research approach in this study and theoretical frameworks used.

Methodology and Approach

The emergence of a robust critical approach to education policy was spearheaded from the 1980s by scholars such as Apple (1982), Ball (1991, 1993), Dale (1989) and Ozga (1999) who represented the first generation of critical policy researchers (Levinson et al. 2009). Critical policy analysis, grounded in social theory, is the principal research approach applied in this dissertation. Diem et al. (2019) note that using a critical frame to study education policy permits a more nuanced apprehension of the complexities association with education policy. Such an approach questions the very nature of policy from its creation to implementation, its impact to its evaluation. Therefore, consideration to the overarching power dynamics in society is central to this approach. Critical policy analysis (CPA) also focuses on exposing inconsistencies between what policy outlines on the one hand, and what it elicits on the other. The most appealing aspect of CPA in my view, however, is the applicability of altogether differing theoretical perspectives that are accessible to researchers who wish to engage in this mode of analysis. Outcomes will be influenced by whatever framework the researcher has employed while doing CPA. Codd (1988) for example, views policy analysis as a multidisciplinary field which employs 'whatever theoretical or methodological approach is most relevant to the issue or problem under investigation (p. 235). Similarly, some 30 years later, Young and Diem (2018) recognise critical policy analysis as a 'number of different perspectives and developments that aim to critique and offer alternative strategies for examining educational policy issues' (p. 79). In short, CPA is the study of education policy through differing frameworks and approaches which serves to generate new perspectives and enlightenment on the complex issues associated with this growing area of research.

In their study of the intellectual landscape of CPA, Diem et al. (2014) list traditional and non-traditional theoretical frameworks, drawn from a wide array of disciplines, which have been used to underpin CPA. Among these are critical policy sociology, feminist perspectives, rational choice, and a framework which is used in the current study: Neo-

Institutional theory. The possibilities for developing differing approaches when conducting research which is scaffolded by CPA, therefore, are clearly abundant when one considers the wealth of social theories which exist, along with the possible combinations of these which can be utilised in CPA studies. Consequently, while CPA is given the neat definition by Young and Diem (2018) above, this acts as a broad statement only. In reality, the eclectic manner in which CPA is carried out and the principle that 'no one size fits all', ensures there is no straightforward means of defining it. Nonetheless, what is clear is that there has been a growing interest in CPA in recent years, and with good reason. As highlighted by Apple (2018), there is more need than ever to focus attention on utilising CPA in education as 'austerity, audit cultures, performance pay, competition, privatization, attacks on teachers…raising standards while reducing support for public schools' (p. 277) and related issues are becoming endemic in our education systems. It is Apple's (2018) view that such research is imperative to expose these issues, and that authors engaged in CPA are ethically obliged to publicise the impact of the policies under examination so as to challenge their core values. Doing so, Apple (2018) asserts, may establish a defence of education which should be based on human flourishing above all else. But while is it the goal of the researcher to investigate such phenomena, it is ultimately the responsibility of the policymaker or politician to make decisions based on this evidence (Wiseman et al. 2014). At the very least, therefore, CPA acts to encourage discussion on policy enactment. Shining the light of CPA on Irish HE policy particularly over the past decade, will in my view, illuminate how and why policy has gone in the direction it has over this period, but it will also illustrate the side effects of policy change.

As outlined by Young and Diem (2018), research in education using CPA will usually incorporate attention to at least one, but usually more, of the following:

(i) an interrogation of the roots and development of educational policy
(ii) differences between policy rhetoric and practiced reality
(iii) examination of the distribution of power, resources, and knowledge and the creation of 'winners' and 'losers'
(iv) scrutiny of the complex systems and environments in which policy is made and implemented
(v) exploration of social stratification and the impact of policy on relationships of privilege and inequality
(vi) the nature of resistance to or engagement in policy by members of historically underrepresented groups

The present research includes the majority of these objectives, albeit with differing degrees of importance. This is to be expected as outcomes are contingent and dependent on the theoretical frameworks used and the particular features of the policy context being analysed. Had I employed other theoretical frameworks in this dissertation, I would expect to find an alternative emphasis of importance on the objectives outlined above – such is the value of CPA. In keeping with the different methodological approaches which are possible in CPA, and in order to fully appreciate the intricacies at the core of such a complex issue as the transformation of Irish HE, this inquiry is scaffolded by a dual theoretical framework: Bourdieu's 'thinking tools' and Neo-Institutional theory have been chosen for the current study. A brief overview of both will follow here, but the core constructs of each framework are laid out in detail in chapters 3 and 4.

Theoretical Perspectives in this Dissertation: A Brief Overview

Bourdieu's 'Thinking Tools'

Bourdieu's ideas on field, habitus, and capital, which together form his theory of practice, can be used fruitfully to examine the changes in Irish HE which have been implemented over the past decade. The current research views Irish HE as positioned within the global field of higher education. In a move away from applying Bourdieu's habitus in the usual manner, which is most often associated with concerns of the individual in the context of a field structure, I argue in chapter 3 that viewing Irish HE through the lens of habitus leads to an innovative method of analysis. From this perspective, and by invoking Bourdieu's field of power, a comprehensive understanding on the policy trajectory of Irish HE since the GFC can be formed. It is no coincidence that while global HE systems are differentiated in some respects, many exhibit core similarities. I aim to draw meaningful conclusions on how globalisation has affected the field of Irish HE policy through the use of Bourdieu's 'thinking tools'.

While this research will show the effectiveness of Bourdieu's work in framing change in Irish HE, there is broad consensus that Bourdieu's notion of field autonomy requires further development (Deer 2003; Naidoo 2004; Maton 2005; Marginson 2008; Bathmaker 2015). Marginson (2008) suggests that the field of higher education is much less autonomous than proposed by Bourdieu but makes the point that much of Bourdieu's work was carried out before contemporary globalisation. Indeed, globalisation has become much more embedded within the rhetoric of HE policy, ensuring it has become more permeable and susceptible to influences outside the field of education in which it is located. Economic and political forces – autonomous fields themselves – are impacting on the field of education far more than they

were at the time of Bourdieu's death in 2002, and arguably, Bourdieu would have had far more to say on this topic had he been alive today.

It is my contention that Bourdieu's work can be used to great effect in the study of HE policy formation and development. However, the issue of field autonomy cannot be ignored, and while Bourdieu did develop a view on field refraction (for exploration in chapter 3), my own view concurs with Marginson (2008) with respect to reduced autonomy in the global HE field. Some researchers suggest further development of Bourdieu's field theory to better explain the effect of global processes with respect to HE policy development. I will give these developments further attention in chapter 3, but I suggest a more productive way in analysing Irish HE policy development over the past decade is to supplement Bourdieu's work with an additional theoretical framework.

In the next section, I will briefly outline the value of Neo-Institutional theory in critical policy analysis and how using this approach in conjunction with Bourdieu's thinking tools adds rigour to the interrogation of Irish HE policy in the present study.

Neo-Institutional Theory

Since the publication of Meyer and Rowan's *Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony* (1977), Institutional theory, which later developed into the framework now known as Neo-Institutional theory, began to take hold as a credible framework to explain how organisations behave in their institutional environment. Over the past number of decades, global influences have impacted on all aspects of society, not least in the arena of HE. Neo-Institutional theory (NT) asserts that organisations are influenced by their environment and by external pressures, and therefore have a propensity to transform in an attempt to meet these pressures. Crucially for this study, NT, like Bourdieu, uses 'field' as a core construct within its framework.

Central to the approach of NT is the concept of isomorphism – that is, the tendency of organisations to become increasingly homogenous over time. This idea was first developed by Meyer and Rowan (1977) and expanded by DiMaggio and Powell (1983) who subcategorised isomorphism into three processes: coercive, mimetic, and normative. These three elements of isomorphism can scaffold an understanding of the policy changes in Irish higher education at the global level. Legitimacy, a further key feature of NT, asserts that organisations cannot function without social validation and public confidence. Organisations and institutions must adopt taken for granted norms – practices, rules, regulations for example – within the institutional environment. In so doing, they become legitimate.

‘Rational myth’ is a term used frequently within NT and alludes to the action of organisations seeking legitimacy under the formation of conditions or rules they believe they should adhere to, and to what the norms are within the institution. I aim to show that in terms of Irish HE and globalisation, what could be taken for granted, or considered a ‘rational myth’, is the growth and sustainment of the knowledge society.

Much public confidence in Irish higher education institutions (HEIs) was lost following the GFC as stories of mismanagement and overspending appeared in the media. Such behaviour undermines legitimacy regarding the way in which HEIs operate, with in turn strengthens the case for accountability. I will revisit this point in chapter 5. In addition to using NT to interrogate the impact of globalisation on HE, I contend that it can usefully be employed at a local level to interrogate this dynamic. Hence, viewing Irish HE through the lens of NT is expected to add to the literature in examining the impact of globalisation on the Irish HE sector. Furthermore, NT very adequately fills a theoretical gap and addresses the problematic idea of autonomy within Bourdieu’s work because under NT, change emanates from within the field, but such change can, and is, driven by external influences. Notwithstanding the possibilities of developing and advancing Bourdieu’s theory of ‘field’ to counter declining autonomy within the field of HE, I assert that using NT and Bourdieu together will give a richer analysis of Irish HE. This research makes the assumption that Irish HE can be viewed as an institution within the global field of education, an idea which I will elaborate in chapter 4.

In terms of theoretical weaknesses, some commentators, as will be outlined in chapter 4, have suggested that NT is lacking when causation or drivers of change within the institutional environment need to be addressed. NT asserts that the primary force of change within the context of the institution is via entrepreneurship**,** whereby change is initiated, and other organisations follow this lead via isomorphic processes. Where I suggested earlier that NT can address the problem of autonomy in Bourdieu’s work, likewise I propose here that Bourdieu’s field of power can tackle the issue of agency and how change is enacted in NT.

As observed earlier in this chapter, differing theoretical approaches and perspectives used in critical policy analysis are largely contingent on the research question and what the researcher specifically wants to find out. The frameworks used in this research were carefully chosen as both, in my view, very ably address the impact of global forces on local concerns. In addition, where one perspective falls short in its explanatory reach, the other capably fills this gap. At the beginning of this chapter, I highlighted Ireland’s position as one of the world’s most globalised countries. In the next section, to establish a context for the

dissertation, I provide a succinct account of how Ireland transformed from being a closed economy up to the 1950s to becoming one of the most open by the time of the Global Financial Crisis in 2008.

Ireland's Position on the World Stage: The Road to Globalisation

Ireland's global position will come as no surprise to those interested or involved in Irish economic and foreign policy over the past number of decades. Since the 1960s, successive Irish governments have been engaged in making Ireland an open, globally engaged economy. Attracting and retaining foreign direct investment (FDI) through the development of robust infrastructure, an educated workforce, and a controversially low corporate tax rate, currently at 12.5% (Revenue 2021) have successfully resulted in drawing large multinational corporations to Irish shores. Over 1000 international companies have bases in Ireland, including Google, Apple, eBay, Microsoft, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Pfizer, and PayPal (IGR 2010; Beard 2018). As noted in the OECD Observer (2016), these companies contribute enormous levels of income to the Irish economy. Over the four years between 2009 to 2013 – a time of severe recession, banking crises and austerity – a staggering €125 billion, amounting to 61% of the country's GDP, of foreign direct investment flowed into Ireland. For many of these multinationals, Ireland's geographic position on the periphery of Europe, its links with the EU, its tax incentives, and the fact that the country is English speaking, makes it an easy choice in selecting it as a location to base their operations.

Another key aspect for these companies in choosing to maintain a base in Ireland, is the country's highly educated workforce. The Irish education system comprises primary schooling (for children of ages 5 to 12), followed by secondary schooling which lasts five to six years. Following three years of attending secondary school (usually at the ages of 15 or 16), students take the Junior Certificate (a national exam) typically in 8 or 9 subjects. For the final two years, students prepare for their Leaving Certificate examination, normally in 7 or 8 subject areas. Following this, students might choose to move on to tertiary education or enter directly into the workforce. Until the 1960s, only primary education in Ireland was free, while secondary schools and third level institutions charged fees. This system perpetrated the grim reality that one third of Ireland's citizens possessed no schooling beyond the ages of 12 or 13, or after primary level (Fleming and Harford 2014). This changed in 1966 when the then Minister for Education, Donogh O'Malley, announced the abolishment of secondary level school fees. This is a landmark in the history of Irish education, and it paved the way to increase enrolments not only in secondary level, but also

in tertiary education.

The abolishment of secondary school fees was quickly followed by the establishment of Regional Technical Colleges (later known as Institutes of Technology) alongside the country's universities, to create a binary HE system. Both of these actions by government ensured that students stayed in secondary school longer, and also had access to further education other than that provided for in a university. By 1996, third level fees were abolished. It is important to note here that while Irish governments have been committed to establishing Ireland as a place to do international business since the 1960s and a key emphasis has been placed on the population's high level of educational attainment, a cohesive national strategy for higher education had never been established until 2011. While the Regional Technical Colleges operated under government led directive, Ireland's universities largely managed themselves and kept their own counsel, loosely in accord with central governance through policy such as the Universities Act (Houses of the Oireachtas 1997). I will discuss the path of Irish higher education and its place in Irish society in more detail in chapter 2.

In the pages that follow, it will become clear that globalisation, the knowledge economy and human capital theory are prominent features of Irish HE policy post-GFC. The next section provides a brief account of each of these concepts.

Globalisation, Human Capital Theory, and the Knowledge Economy

As noted by Pieterse (2012), globalisation can be viewed as 'growing connectivity over time' (p. 4). Pieterse (2012) identifies the origins of globalisation as rooted in the Bronze Age (3000 BC) with the spread of agricultural techniques and early urbanisation. Dissemination of knowledge has expanded as channels for its diffusion have increased throughout time, facilitated particularly by the opening up of new global trade routes. Aided by advances in communications and technology, the 21st century has witnessed the most rapid growth in global connectivity and information flows, a condition which continues to intensify more precipitously and with greater impact than ever before. Marginson (1999a) refers to globalisation as the formation of world systems, which he distinguishes from internationalisation, which presupposes states or countries as a unit. But as Wiseman and Chase-Mayoral (2013) note, globalisation is difficult to quantify due to its multidimensional nature. The world is more connected, economies more integrated, and industry more dispersed. Production of goods can begin with an idea in Ireland, the goods manufactured in Asia, marketed by an American company, and distributed by a global logistics company located in any continent. Elsewhere, Deem (2001) notes that globalisation can also be

defined as 'the global spread of business and services as well as key economic, social and cultural practices to a world' (p. 7). An individual can fly to a location on the other side of the world in a day, and in ways we never thought likely in the face of new technology and medicine, the emergence of a new virus can become a pandemic in a matter of weeks. Covid-19 has reminded us all of how vulnerable and exposed we really are in this global era.

With respect to education policy, Verger et al. (2012) posit that globalisation is the new 'context of contexts' (p. 7). For Ireland, given its position as one of the world's most globalised nations, this point is particularly acute. Knowledge is seen as a valuable commodity in the development and sustainability of economies within the global environment, and the conduit for this knowledge – education – plays a vital role in its production. With this focus on globalisation and what many nations see as the requirement to nurture growth in the 'knowledge economy', it is a timely juncture to ask what (or whose) knowledge? Knowledge based economies as defined by the OECD are 'economies which are directly based on the production, distribution and use of knowledge and information' (OECD 1996, p. 7). The knowledge which forms part of the 'knowledge economy' is outlined by Lingard and Rizvi (2009) (interpreting OECD policy) as a 'requirement of the global economy, in which knowledge is assumed to be a key ingredient' (p. 441). Spring (2008) points out that 'the global influence of Western thought is not a result of it being right but of political and economic power' (p. 335). Similarly, Mignolo (2003) contends that Western knowledge should be viewed as one kind of knowledge rather than a universal concept, equal to, not superior to other types of knowledge. Yet it continues to be the knowledge as derived from the need for global economic competitiveness that remains to be prioritised in tertiary education under the auspices of globalisation. Consequently, it is no surprise that HE systems are seen by government and policy makers as crucial actors in the growth of the knowledge economy as they strive to gain an economic advantage within the globalised world.

It follows that an educated workforce is required to sustain the knowledge economy. Investment in human capital has long been understood as the most efficient way to achieve this. Human Capital Theory (HCT) first came to prominence in the work of Theodore Schultz whose article *Investment in Human Capital* was published in 1961. Schultz (1961) presented the idea that 'investment in human capital accounts for most of the impressive rise in the real earnings per worker' (p. 1). Since the publication of Schultz's work, HCT has remained one of the principal theoretical frameworks used in economic and education policy. At its core, HCT asserts that investing in education and training drives economic growth. As

Rizvi and Lingard (2009) point out, the development of human capital is considered by supranational organisations, such as the OECD, as being 'key to economic growth and competitiveness' (p. 443). In a similar vein, Becker (2002) views human capital as 'by far the most important form of capital in modern economies' (p. 3) and advocates for investment in human capital at the national and individual level. It is increasingly the case that secondary schooling is no longer adequate to obtain a position which demands a high skill set. Moreover, professionals are required to undertake continuous professional development (CPD) to ensure they are in tune with the latest advances in their professional field so that their own skillset remains current and relevant. Yet, for all the attention it receives as the primary driving force behind a well-defined knowledge economy, HCT ideology has not been impervious to critique. In terms of productivity, there are varying opinions on the extent to which HCT is correlated to economic growth (e.g. Barro 1991; Mankiw et al. 1992; Krueger 1995). But elsewhere, the narrowness in viewing humanity in terms of economic productivity, conjures up images of civic control and dominance. As noted by Little (2003), HCT makes no attempt to 'embrace the social, the cultural and the political aspirations of people' (p. 451), while Brown (1999) remarks that 'human capital theory has either ignored the importance of interpersonal, team-work and creative skills, or defined them in 'technicist' terms' (p. 236). Furthermore, as with the case of most forms of capital, Brown and Lauder (2012) note 'that "human capital" is increasingly subject to the laws of diminishing returns as more people gain access to tertiary education' (p. 138). In a similar rationale, Livingstone (2012) makes a case for debunking the knowledge economy suggesting that there is a 'growing general gap between peoples' increasing learning efforts and knowledge bases … and the diminishing numbers of commensurate jobs' (p. 108) available to them. Marginson (2019) suggests that the relationship between work and education is far more complex than HCT can account for, and recognising its limitations suggests its augmentation with other analytical systems or models to frame a more accurate view of this relationship.

Despite these criticisms, HCT and its role in the continuity of the knowledge economy persists as a dominant ideology within international and national education policy setting. As outlined by Green (1997) 'in the advanced states now… education is seen primarily as a means of individual and collective economic advancement' (p. 5). Although written over two decades ago, this observation still endures as its underpinnings can be observed in more recent policy documents relating to Irish HE. Here, I make the point that while all levels of education are of considerable importance within the context of the knowledge economy, it is higher education which is assumed to have the most value. Consequently, Olssen and Peters (2005) suggest that in the push for economic sustainability and growth, universities

have become the 'star ship in the policy fleet for governments around the world…' (p. 313) and are therefore being utilised as a key component in driving the knowledge economy. In his analysis on the economic impact of education, Hermannsson (2016) puts forward the notion that whether it is a goal of policy makers or not, the pecuniary benefits of education to the economy will dominate policy formation. This suggests that little consideration is given over to the wider benefits of higher education – civic responsibility, social consciousness, or appreciation of arts, humanities, and culture for example. This latter observation is a prevailing theme in this dissertation as will be discerned in the pages that follow.

Ireland as the Celtic Tiger: From Boom to Calamity

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, Ireland is one of the world's most globalised countries. The entire economy, including its financial markets, operates within a global context. And while this has enabled Ireland to prosper economically in the long run, this position makes it particularly susceptible to economic downturns which occur on a worldwide spectrum. The 2008 Global Financial Crisis was a shock which impacted Ireland in acutely adverse ways, making it clear that Ireland's permeability to economic global disruption cannot be understated. This dissertation is not a reading of Ireland's economic evolution, successes, and failures. But to understand the development of Irish higher education in recent years, it is necessary to understand the context under which Irish society has advanced, particularly over the course of the past few decades. With a view to this, I briefly sketch here the impact of the financial crisis which hit Ireland in 2008 in order to add context to the public sector changes which were implemented by government directly afterwards.

Power et al. (2012) identify the period between 1994 to 2008 as the 'Celtic Tiger' years which saw unprecedented economic growth. The rise in employment and prosperity 'caused many to reflect that 'traditional' Ireland had become completely modernized and capitalist in outlook' (p. 8). By the early 2000s, the Celtic Tiger economy saw full employment, high growth rates and rising standards of living (Kirby 2004). Ireland's economy had grown so rapidly that O'Hearn (2000) notes a turnaround 'from economic laggard to tiger in just a few years by integrating itself maximally into the global division of labor' (p. 73). In an interview with Robert McCrum in the Observer in 2002, the Irish writer John McGahern summed up very neatly just how rapid Ireland's evolution from antiquated to modern really was:

> Ireland is a peculiar society in the sense that it was a nineteenth century society

> up to about 1970 and then it almost bypassed the twentieth century. (McCrum 6th Jan 2002)

From a state of poor economic activity in the 1950s, Ireland had become the second richest country in the EU after Luxembourg by 2008 (Irish Times 2008). But Ireland's impressive economic fortune very quickly unravelled into economic calamity. The year 2008 was, as Kirby (2010) notes, 'a year of rude awakening for the citizens of Ireland' (p. 1). Irish banks had €342 billion on their loan books in 2007, but only €166 billion lay in deposit within those same banks (Allen and O'Boyle 2013). When the financial crisis began to unravel in the United States, the Irish banking sector found itself in serious difficulty. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to go into the minutia of the economic catastrophe that ensued, but in brief, rather than 'burn the bondholders' (an oft cited statement in Ireland during the GFC), the Irish government guaranteed the bonds in Irish banks in September 2008. This guarantee effectively ensured that banking debt was now nationalised and firmly laid to rest at the door of every single Irish citizen. The logic by government was that Ireland needed a functioning banking system to operate globally and regain economic stability, but as the Celtic Tiger collapsed and the nation was bankrupted, an IMF bailout to the tune of €85 billion was signed in December 2010 (Breen 2012). Mass unemployment, emigration and austerity measures followed in one of the worst economic crises the country had ever witnessed. By way of adding perspective, Kirby (2010) notes that Ireland's economy contracted some 14 percent from 2008 to 2010. According to Power et al. (2012), 250,000 jobs were lost, and 90,000 people emigrated to the UK, Canada, New Zealand and elsewhere.

It is difficult to quantify the real impact of the crisis to the Irish people on a human level. According to the Irish Independent (2018), the cost of the banking bailout has been estimated at €8,639 for every Irish citizen. Aside from the staggering job losses, homes were repossessed, and many found themselves in private debt they could never repay. The anxiety of a bankrupted nation was reflected in the lives of the people, as poverty was exacerbated by crisis and homelessness rose sharply. Tragically, in their study of the impact of recession to mental health, Corcoran et al. (2015) note that the male suicide rate in Ireland was 57% higher by the end of 2012 than the pre-recession trend. As highlighted by Lynch et al. (2017), in Ireland 'the effects of austerity were not only economic; they were embodied, lived out in physical and mental distress' (p. 252). This spectacular fall from boom to calamity materialised in just two years. Scandal after scandal broke in the media of individual and collective excesses during the 'boom years', but as noted by Sugrue (2017), most of those who 'partied during the Celtic Tiger' (p. 167), were not the ordinary

Irish citizen. Rather, the 'party' was generally had by a few in the upper echelons of the banking and property sectors and the bill passed on to the ordinary citizen. Coulter (2015) notes, however, that despite commentary about inept politicians and irresponsible government which led to the collapse of the Celtic Tiger economy, it is Ireland's position 'within the generalities of an economic system whose imperatives and actors are truly global' (p. 28) which was the real cause of collapse. Under these dire economic conditions, the Irish government published its economic recovery plan *Building Ireland's Smart Economy: A Framework for Sustainable Economic Renewal* (Department of An Taoiseach 2008) the aim of which was to see Ireland through the crisis and back to economic recovery. One of the key focuses of the plan was for a restructuring of the Irish HE system. It is this restructuring, the shape of the reform itself and its aftermath which is at the heart of this study.

Following some difficult years, Ireland has seen its way through recession. According to the World Economic Forum (2019), Ireland's economy has recovered such that, by 2019, it was outperforming most of the other countries in the Eurozone, due in large part to the continued presence of multinational corporations which are based in Ireland. Changes in the fortunes of national economies will lead to both positive and negative impacts on public resource allocation. While state funding continues to be a contentious issue in higher education – a point I will return to later in this dissertation – there have been many other significant developments in Irish higher education since the GFC, including a structural overhaul of the system which will also be examined in this dissertation.

Dissertation Overview

This dissertation proceeds with a further six chapters. Chapter 2 charts the history and development of Irish HE from its naissance right up to the beginning of the GFC in 2008. This will add context when looking at the degree of change in the system in the period following the GFC but will also act to form a starting point for interrogating the development of current higher education policy in Ireland. This falls into CPA objective (i) which looks at the roots and development of policy. Chapter 3 outlines the main ideas of Bourdieu's work, his 'thinking tools', and their relevance and utility in the analysis of contemporary HE policy. Chapter 4 moves on to the second theoretical framework used in this dissertation and provides an overview of the main constructs of Neo-Institutional theory. I also outline how NT can be used to supplement Bourdieu's thinking tools in analysis of HE. These three chapters lay the foundations for chapter 5 which interrogates, through the lenses of Bourdieu and NT, how Irish HE policy has come to be shaped in its

current guise. From the perspective of CPA, this chapter meets objective (iii) which is an examination of distribution of power, resources, and knowledge. It also incorporates objective (iv) which scrutinises the complex systems and environments in which policy is made and implemented. Following the analysis in chapter 5, chapter 6 will review the current position of Irish HE and the impact of policy implementation. More specifically, this chapter examines the tangible adjustments which can be seen in Irish HE since the publication of the *National Strategy for Higher Educations to 2030* (DoES 2011) and related policy documents. But of equal importance, it will look at the less visible changes in Irish HE such as the embedding of neoliberalism and new managerialism within Irish HE and their associated repercussions. In terms of CPA, this chapter encompasses objective (ii) which accounts for the differences between policy rhetoric and practiced reality, but it also incorporates objective (vi), representing the nature and resistance to or engagement in policy (in this case from all stakeholders) and to a lesser degree, objective (v), being the exploration of social stratification and the impact of policy on relationships of privilege and inequality. Chapter 7 reflects on the use of CPA for Irish HE policy as utilised in this study and puts forward some recommendations for its further development. Following this, chapter 7 looks to the future. Given the findings in chapters 5 and 6 and taking into account Brexit and in particular Covid-19, it explores an alternative vision for HE in Ireland beyond Brexit and the Covid-19 crisis.

While much of the literature on current Irish HE alludes to the GFC as a starting point of major change in government policy, my own study in this area has not encountered a critical policy analysis using as its framework Bourdieu and NT to underpin the analysis of Irish HE since the GFC. While Bourdieu has been referenced (e.g. Grenville 2014) in previous studies on Irish HE, I have not met with research which uses Bourdieu's work specifically on the development of Irish HE policy. Moreover, while there is a vast quantity of research which uses Bourdieu and NT in isolation as a theoretical framework for analysis, I have not found any scholarship which uses both of these powerful instruments synchronously, in the manner that I do here. This study therefore aims to incorporate a new perspective on both CPA and on Irish HE policy development into the existing literature.

Conclusion

On 23 June 2016, the UK held a referendum on whether or not to exit the EU. That referendum – on Brexit – as we now know it, resulted in the affirmative. The vote itself took place almost two years after I began my journey on the EdD in the University of Glasgow, and at that time it seemed this landmark in the UK's history would be the critical global issue

which would most feature in this dissertation. But the world is now a very small place indeed, and the impact and rapidity that Covid-19 has had in shaping our world since the beginning of 2020 has been astounding. Undoubtedly, both of these global events will have a major impact on Irish HE policy and how government situates the sector. Deeg (2005) identified the emergence within the institutional setting of more than one path of trajectory as 'critical junctures' (p. 170). The GFC can be recognised as one such critical juncture. The impact of Brexit and Covid-19 is placing Ireland HE at another. I consider this an opportunity to assess and take stock of the changes made in Irish HE policy over the past decade and to review the real impact that globalisation has had on the sector. In so many ways, Covid-19 has made us stop to think about life and about what is important. It has affected every aspect of our lives in ways we could not have imagined at the end of 2019. Covid-19 has altered the way Irish HEIs, and indeed HEIs worldwide, deliver their programmes. Moreover, there are other, far reaching consequences for Irish HE, which has become so reliant on income streams generated from international students. This study will take account of this new reality.

Chapter 2: Evolution of Irish Higher Education – From Nation State to Crisis

Introduction

The course of higher education from the birth of the Irish nation state in 1922 recounts a long history of religious, political, economic, and social tensions. Irish HE has transformed from being an elite system dominated by middle class enrolments and Church influence, to becoming a system of mass participation. Most recently, the changing direction of HE policy in Ireland since 2008 has caused tension among Ireland's HE stakeholders, with many commentators asking the question 'What is higher education really for and whom does it serve?'. Following an in-depth analysis of Ireland's HE system in Chapter 5, and current shape of HE in chapter 6, I shall return to this question in chapter 7. In order to make such an appraisal, it is necessary to consider the history of higher education and policy setting since the formation of the Irish Free State in 1922.

This chapter will follow in four main sections, which have been broken down into specific periods to demarcate significant changes in policy development. As will become apparent, these stages in Irish HE policy repositioning coincide directly with Ireland's economic fortunes. Whether in times of recession or in times of prosperity, there can be no doubt that the provision of higher education in Ireland since the 1960s has been, and continues to be, intertwined to some degree with Irish economic performance. This chapter acts as a precursor to the examination of Irish HE that will follow in the current study, meeting objective (i) of CPA which considers the roots and development of policy.

The first section will look at HE in Ireland from the nineteenth century, its position in society and its development up to 1960s Ireland. This will be followed by an examination of developments in HE policy from the 1960s up to the mid-1990s. The policy reorientation with respect to HE during this time is hugely significant, and the legacy of changes made cannot be underestimated in their role in shaping the HE system that exists today. The next section examines the period from the mid-1990s to 2008 which initiated policy towards a renewed focus on equity, diversification and widening participation, while at the same time the requirements of the economy were given due consideration. The final section of this chapter aims to succinctly outline the circumstances which initiated the precipitous transformation of HE policy in the years following the GFC.

Irish Higher Education – Up to the 1960s

Higher education institutions in Ireland have historically enjoyed a remarkable degree of autonomy within the Irish state up until very recently, with little state interference. As

outlined by O'Brien (2001), Irish universities in particular have enjoyed the privilege of independence in return for the education and cultivation of the intellectual potential of its citizens. Perhaps it was because HE was not something which occupied the policy space of early governments from the formation of the Irish Free state in 1922, that Coolahan (2008) notes the university represented an almost invisible entity during the first generation of Irish independence, so removed was it from government political or economic agendas.

The higher education system in Ireland in 1922 comprised Trinity College Dublin (established by royal charter in 1592), and the three constituent universities which made up the National University of Ireland, established in 1908 (Walsh 2014a). Even with so few higher education institutions in Ireland, there existed a separatist HE system, underpinned by historic, religious, and social beliefs. Trinity College Dublin (TCD) primarily educated the protestant elite, and while it allowed Catholic students to be admitted from 1793 (Trinity College Dublin 2019), many dominant bishops within the Catholic Church in Ireland were against Irish Catholics entering a protestant university. Instead, the Catholic Church endorsed the constituent universities of the National University of Ireland (NUI): University College Cork (established in 1845), University College Galway (established in 1849) and University College Dublin (established in 1854 by John Henry Newman). Indeed, the Catholic Church not only discouraged Irish Catholics from attending TCD, but they actively forbade it. As noted by Lydon (1992), as late as 1956, the Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid, backed by many of his bishops, prohibited any Catholic student from attending TCD without the full permission of the Church. At a time when the Catholic Church was at the pinnacle of its power in Ireland, this amounted to unmitigated exclusion to TCD, whatever their social class, for the majority of people in Ireland. The episcopal ban on Catholics in attending TCD would not be lifted until 1970.

If the Catholic establishment considered TCD to be out of bounds due to its protestant tradition, the universities of the NUI, non-denominational regarding both governance and curricula, and therefore outside of protestant influence, were deemed appropriate by the Church. The Catholic University of Dublin (now University College Dublin) was founded by Cardinal John Henry Newman, the celebrated educator, theologian, and poet. Newman set out his ethos for the university in his 1854 publication *The Idea of a University*. Despite Newman's rank within the Catholic Church, his philosophy on education did not centre specifically on religious concerns. Rather, Newman (1854) viewed the university as 'a place of *teaching* universal *knowledg*e' (p. ix, original emphasis). As French (2010) points out, with respect to the Irish university, this became representative of a more liberal,

academically positioned mode of learning. While policy decisions since the 1960s have gradually steered HE in a different direction, this position remained largely intact within the original NUI universities up to the 1990s. So what was observed in HE in Ireland following the founding of the NUI was essentially a dual, separatist, system whereby TCD enrolled predominantly protestant students, and the NUI Catholic ones. As Ó Ceallaigh and Ní Dhonnabháin (2015) note, following a ban on teaching the Irish language in primary schools in 1831 by the English government, it was reinstated in primary and secondary schools in 1878. At the same time, from the mid-1800s, the Irish nationalist movement gained significant traction and, pressurised by the Gaelic League[1], the NUI incorporated the Irish language as a compulsory element of matriculation within its constituent universities. The significance of this cannot be understated in the years leading up to the 1916 Easter Rising, largely understood to mark the starting point in the struggle for Irish Independence. NUI students increasingly tended towards nationalistic ideals, and it is hardly trivial that, as noted by White (2001), many of the leaders of the 1916 Rising and 1922 War of Independence were graduates of the NUI institutions.

Fleming and Harford (2014) observe that following the period of Irish independence in 1922, Irish society was a complex mix of nationalist and episcopal ideals, in which the return of an Irish national identity, deeply rooted in Catholicism, was one of utmost national importance. The romanticised nationalist ideals which drove the fight for independence endured for decades from the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922, with a strong reluctance by government to engage in outward facing policies which were not centred around Irish nationalism. As noted by Walsh (2018), a central political imperative of the Irish Free State government was the revival of the Irish language (Gaelicisation), which lay at the core of education policy, particularly within the NUI. The notion of Irish self-sufficiency was the dominant ideology throughout the early years of Irish independence, and particularly so when the Fianna Fáil elected government under De Valera[2] took office in 1932. This disposition endured until the late 1950s, when new ideals began to emerge which, according to Fleming and Harford (2014), invariably occurs when 'the generation who fought for Independence has departed the political arena' (p. 636). It should be noted here that, as outlined by Clare (2016), the Irish economy from the formation of the Free State in 1922 was performing broadly in line with other European states up to the 1950s, with

[1] The Gaelic League was founded in 1893 with the aim of reviving of the Irish language and Irish culture. For a most interesting and contemporary overview of the Gaelic League, see Prof. A Clery's '*The Gaelic League, 1893-1919'.*

[2] Eamon de Valera dominated the Irish political landscape from the 1916 Easter Rising to the late 1950s, after which he was elected President of Ireland, Ireland's official Head of State.

agriculture being the primary industry and gross domestic product (GDP) on a par with other European nations. But while early Irish governments persisted with an economic protectionist policy throughout the 1950s, developments in technology around the globe were beginning to emerge. While the Russians and Americans were sending shuttles to space, few opportunities in Ireland for employment, particularly among the working class, forced many to emigrate.

According to O'Connor (2014), and as outlined in chapter 1, for most of the Irish working class up to the late 1960s, an education up to secondary level schooling was barely something to aspire to, let alone advancing to tertiary level. Expenditure in education at all levels was practically non-existent and the link between a growing economy and increased investment in education was not realised in Ireland until the early 1960s. This is clearly evidenced in the first *Programme for Economic Expansion* (Houses of the Oireachtas 1958), which as noted by Barry (2014) was almost exclusively focused on Irish agriculture. Public discontent and distrust in an education system which was not fit for purpose was reported frequently in the newspapers in the 1950s, but successive governments continued with policies of maintaining a closed economy, leaving little funding for investment in the education sector. Instead, provision of primary and secondary education was left largely to the Catholic Church, a situation which acted to deepen its influence in Irish society.

As observed by Clancy (1989), detailed enrolment data for the universities in Ireland is sparse before 1964. However, the number of students enrolled to Irish universities prior to the 1960s was certainly modest. According to White (2001), UCD was by far the largest university in terms of undergraduate enrolments with 5000 students registered by 1959, which was twice the number of either TCD or UCC and four times that of UCG. Moreover, none of the universities in Ireland were prioritised in terms of government funding. Higher education up to the 1960s in Ireland was considered an elitist pursuit, in what was then a country whose primary economy was based in agriculture. Indeed, as highlighted by McManus (2016), early Free State politicians took the view that HE was not for the general populace, and as outlined by one Minister, what the country needed was 'mainly a population of farmers' (McManus 2016, p. 161). With little industrial development, HE was not considered of significant enough importance to have any kind of substantive role in the education of the general population, nor was it linked at that time to economic prosperity. The implication of this was that universities continued to manage themselves, and with the exception of some vocational degree programmes such as medicine and law, were largely dominated by the study of the arts and humanities.

The shape of HE, and education in general, in Ireland up to the 1960s was very much representative of the social, political and religious landscape of the country during the early years of Irish independence. It is important to understand the conservative and elitist grounding of HE in Ireland up to the 1960s in order to fully appreciate its immense transformation over the next five decades. Nor was this status quo unique to Ireland. The massification of HE in Europe only really began in earnest in the 1960s, with rapid growth rates into the 1970s and 1980s (Trow 2007) with continued growth to the present. Indeed, Trow's (2007) *Conceptions of Elite, Mass and Universal Higher Education* model indicates a progression towards universal (over 50% participation rate) participation for many western nations at present.

The next section will assess the period from the 1960s through to the mid-1990s. In this period, the focus on Ireland's education system in general became one of increased importance, and HE in particular was of growing consideration to government in the pursuit of developing a knowledge based society.

Irish Higher Education Policy – from the 1960s to the mid-1990s

In the previous section, I outlined how HE up to 1960s Ireland was primarily the domain of the elite middle classes, with few exceptions and HE participation at considerably low rates comparative to population size. This section will examine the period from the early 1960s up to the mid-1990s. The 1960s witnessed a major paradigmatic shift in the thinking behind education delivery and policy, which was more pronounced in post-primary levels of schooling. These developments would have a significant impact on HE participation in Ireland in the years following the 1960s. As noted by Callan (1995), the dominant form of education provision up to the 1960s was grounded either in religious or cultural beliefs, with an enormous suspicion of applied and technical knowledge, which was not considered particularly important to educating Ireland's citizens. However, according to Clancy (1989), the expansion of HE in Ireland in the twentieth century largely corresponds to the European experience, although as noted by Walsh (2014a), this expansion came later in Ireland than in many other developed European countries such as Denmark and Sweden.

Mass expansion in higher education was predicted by Trow (1973). According to Marginson (2016), Trow's predictions in 1973 – that the evolution from an elite HE system of education to one of mass provision, driven by social demand – is an accurate one. Social mobility and individual financial betterment from the 1960s began to become entrenched in societies around the globe and with it the demand for HE. As outlined by Callan (1995) 'economic and cultural institutions 'out there' have power to control our educational perceptions and

practices' (p. 94). This was as true in the 1960s and 1970s as it is now, although it can be argued that the 'out there' institutions that influence policy are currently far more numerous and influential. In 1960s Ireland, the most dominant focus of successive governments was that of addressing the state of the flailing, or rather barely existent economy.

As outlined in chapter 1, human capital theory has long been considered by governments when considering economic and education agenda setting. But neither HCT or Trow's (1973) theory of mass HE expansion can be the only explanation for increased participation, and reform of HE in Ireland that would be seen from the 1970s. It is important to illustrate what was driving the government in the early 1960s towards reform. Ireland was coming out of a period of economic isolation and inertia (O'Connor 2014), as a result of protectionist government policies as highlighted in the previous section. A new generation of committed politicians and policy makers, eager to see Ireland and its citizens emerge from economic uncertainty and flourish, enabled a complete transformation of post-primary education. Within less than a decade Irish educational policy was completely altered.

One of the most significant events relating to education during this period was the publication of the *Investment in Education* (Department of Education 1962) report which was commissioned in 1962 and later published in 1965. In 1961, the newly established Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) arranged a conference entitled *Economic growth and Investment in Education*. Ireland participated at the forum, immediately after which the government volunteered for a pilot research project, entailing scrutiny of the Irish education system by OECD representatives (Hyland 2014; Clare 2016). This interaction signified the beginning of a close connection between the OECD and Ireland's formulation of its education strategy. From this period onwards, Irish policy makers would very much heed and fully consider OECD commentary with respect to Irish education policy more generally.

In addition to the *Investment in Education* report (IIE), the then Minister for Education, Dr Patrick Hillery, commissioned the first examination of HE in independent Ireland. The *Commission on Higher Education Report* (Department of Education 1967) was published later than IIE in 1967, but both documents encompassed significant studies of Irish education and higher education, where previously there were none. The commissioning of both analyses was unique at the time because, as stated by O'Connor (2014) 'up to that point, the Irish state had shown remarkably little interest in education' (p. 194). Coolahan (1990) notes that the *Commission on Higher Education Report* (CHER) highlighted a 'dismal picture of the existing situation' (Department of Education, p. 3). The report made a number of

observations including the piecemeal nature of HE, inequality, inadequate resourcing, and low participation at entry level. CHER was published at a time when the reform of HE with a view towards modernisation began to gain traction in government circles. According to Coolahan (1990), even then there was some concern by the commission that the ethos of the university would be undermined by government ambition to equip the population with the technical requirements advocated by HCT, to drive the economy. Government intent was indeed reflected in these concerns, but rather than use the universities as the driving forces behind this endeavour, it had already announced its intention to establish Regional Technical Colleges in 1966 (Coolahan 1990) to form what is now a binary tertiary system in Ireland.

The second significant event which would impact directly on HE in Ireland in the 1960s was the abolition of secondary school fees, announced on 10th September 1966 by the then Minister for Education Donogh O'Malley. At the time, the announcement caused significant consternation within government, as it is generally held that the Minister made the public announcement without prior consultation or authorisation from cabinet (Hyland 2018). The move to bring an end to fee payment at secondary school level, which was introduced the following year, is, in my view, the most significant and impactful milestone in Irish education history. For the first four decades of the Irish independence, education was provided to children up to the end of primary school, but one third of children left education at the age of 12 or 13. For a new nation whose independence was so hard fought, the neglect of the nation's youngest and poorest citizens with respect to their education is astonishing. At the time, Minister Donogh O'Malley commented that this 'is one of the great tragedies of our history since independence…a dark stain on the national conscience' (Fianna Fáil, 10th September 2016). Nor is the decision to remove secondary school fees too removed from memory for recollection. In reality, this momentous move by Minister O'Malley, considered to be one of the more progressive members of the government cabinet, was only one generation ago.

Investment in Education Report – A Shift in Thinking About Education

The publication of IIE was a culmination of three years labour by the Irish government in conjunction with the OECD. This was the first of many OECD reports which would have significant influence on HE policy formation in Ireland. As noted by Hyland (2014), unlike successive OECD reports, OECD staff had a limited contribution to the IIE and did not participate in its drafting. This was accomplished by the Duggan Committee, which was set up by government to work on the report in conjunction with the OECD. The findings of the IIE informed future education policy in a country ready to move forward from the legacy of

the protectionist regime that prevailed up to the 1950s. The ongoing weaknesses of the barely existent HE system are highlighted in the report, as was the dire state of secondary education provision of the period. Among its other key findings, the IIE highlighted both the persistent inequalities in social classes participating in HE as well as the geographical difficulty which the location of the universities posed. All of the universities were located in Ireland's cities and in a country with poor transport infrastructure, this was tantamount to certain exclusion for those living in rural areas who did not possess the means to move to one of these cities. O'Connor (2014), however, states that the real legacy of the report is its influence on government with respect to the funding of education. The IIE laid out the rationale of why education should no longer be viewed as an obligation, a state burden and necessary expense; instead, it should be regarded as an investment into the future of the country and its citizens.

According to Fleming and Harford (2014), the period immediately following 1962, when IIE was originally commissioned, 'was the only one since Independence in 1922 when education policy was a very high priority on the government's agenda' (p. 653). Education would continue to be an issue on which Irish government would focus, depending, by and large, on the state of the economy at any given time. O'Connor (2014) recognises the publication of the report as a pivotal turning point in Irish history, demarcating the end of the first fifty years of Irish Independence. Similarly, in noting that the IIE can be considered as the beginning of modern Irish education, O'Sullivan (2005) suggests that the report 'reconceptualised education as a social institution, directing attention to the needs of the economy and…to the technological requirements of industry' (p. 129). The education system in general, and in particular higher education, would no longer remain a dormant area of policy making left to the devices of the Irish elite. Instead, education would be recognised as a right for all, bringing with it social inclusion and prosperity for the individual and society. That being said, as outlined by Loxley et al. (2014), there was little doubt or illusion as to what the primary motivation behind the commissioning of both reports was and what can be recognised as 'the urgent demand for economic development' (p. 174). What followed in the aftermath of IIE's publication was, according to O'Sullivan (2005), a shift in Irish education and society from a 'theocentric to mercantile paradigm' (p. 106), where utilitarian ideals, influenced by the principles of HCT, were ushered in by a more forward-thinking government.

On a broader dimension, most European countries were expanding their economies in the 1950s and 1960s, as HCT gained significant traction with the publications of Schultz (1961), Becker (1964) and others. Similarly to Schultz's (1961) ideas, Becker (1964) centred his

work on the idea that investment in an individual's education was as beneficial to the economy as capital investment. Donnelly and Hogan (2010) note that up to the late 1950s, cultural isolationism drove the policy of protectionism forward and 'political independence came to be equated with economic nationalism' (p. 112). In Ireland, economic stagnation, record levels of unemployment and emigration soared. Indeed, the economic situation was so devasting in the decade before the publication of IIE, Loxley et al. (2014) note that 400,000 people emigrated between 1951 and 1961. The political climate which espoused economic expansionism and greater equality produced the ideal circumstances for policy makers to focus on education (Clancy 1989). Motivated by the fallout of economic stagnation from the ruinous protectionist regimes of the 1950s, increasing pressure to keep in line with other European countries to halt unemployment and emigration, and the influence of international organisations such as the OECD, change was easily incentivised and driven forwards. In addition to the developments in other European countries in placing emphasis on education to modernise their countries, Loxley et al. (2014) make the point that other international factors at the time had a major influence on Ireland's will to change. They suggest that the OECD, a significant guidance mechanism for policy makers in Ireland, was itself very much influenced by the power dynamics between the Soviet Union and the West during this period. The Cold War and the launch of the Sputnik I in 1957 had convinced the OECD that such major developments in the history of humankind would not be possible without education. Hence, the infancy of Irish policy making in HE was very much guided indirectly by contemporary technological developments worldwide.

In 1958, the first *Programme for Economic Expansion* (Houses of the Oireachtas 1958) was published by government under new Taoiseach[3] Séan Lemass, its aim to remove protectionism and open the country up to trade and development. The primary focus of the plan, as already noted, and in keeping with Ireland's agricultural roots, was concerned with developing the areas of Agriculture, the Fisheries, Forestry, and Industry. There was no significant attribution to education – as a matter of fact, there was no mention of education in the report at all. In contrast, the *Second Programme for Economic Expansion* (Houses of the Oireachtas 1963) published in 1963 placed considerable importance on education, devoting a full chapter to it in the plan (O'Connor 2014). The impact of the policy choices in this very short space of time within Ireland – particularly from the start to the close of the 1960s – cannot be underestimated. From this decade onwards, the Irish government

[3] The Taoiseach is the Prime Minister and Head of Government of Ireland. The President is the Head of State.

committed itself to the development of education provision at all levels, with a new onus placed on HE expansion.

Establishment of Regional Technical Colleges and National Institutes of Higher Education – the birth of a binary higher education system

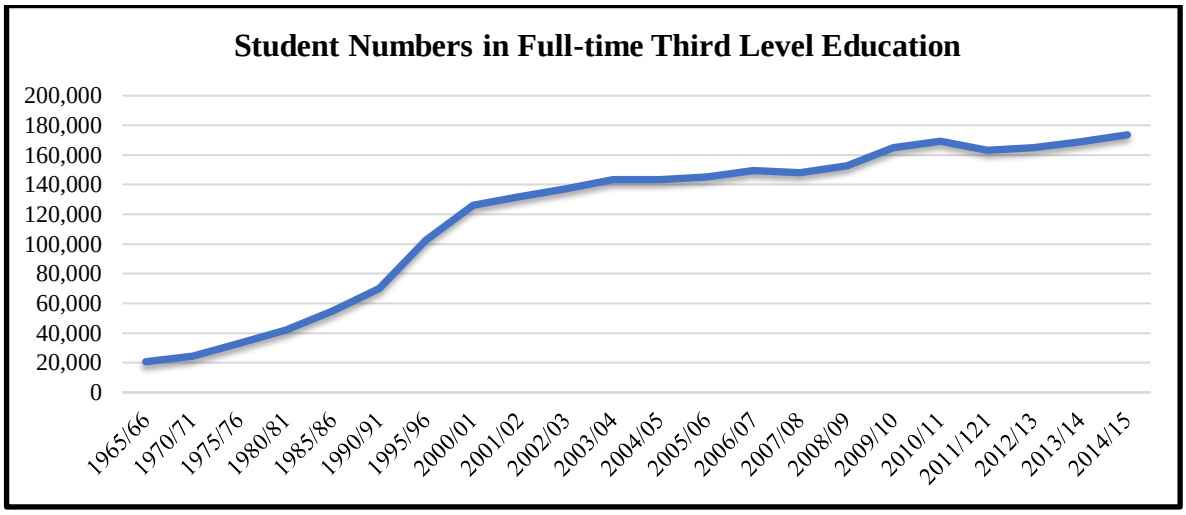
Up to the 1960s, higher education in Ireland consisted, as noted earlier in this chapter, of its four universities (Clarke et al. 2018). These universities educated the elite and aside from professional training such as medicine, were essentially given over to the pursuit of academic scholarship. But the publication of IIE in 1965 and CHER in 1967 respectively, provided the impetus and the general desire by government to expand HE provision in Ireland. Regional Technical Colleges (RTCs) were established to provide technical training for students. In 1970, five Regional Technical Colleges were created around the country with another four established between 1971 and 1977. Further consolidation of five vocational colleges in Dublin city led to the establishment of Dublin Institute of Technology in 1978 (Barry 2014). In addition to these new HEIs, one of the key recommendations of CHER included the establishment of a technological institute which would have the same status as the universities. This gave rise to the formation of two National Institutes of Higher Education, (NIHEs) – one located in the south west of the country in Limerick (est. 1972), the other in Dublin (est. 1976). Both the establishment of the RTCs and the NIHEs added a new dimension for HE provision in Ireland, providing much needed applied and technology based education for its citizens. In effect, this also acted to create a binary HE system in Ireland. The new tertiary institutions, as outlined by Clarke et al. (2018), focused on 'technological, business-oriented or more 'applied' disciplines' (p. 1051) with little attention given over to subject areas in the arts and humanities subject areas, still seen to be within the jurisdiction of the established universities.

According to Clancy (1989) there was much unease within Irish HE during the 1970s and in succeeding years as both the RTCs and NIHEs laboured to gain respect and legitimacy in the HE arena as 'educational snobbery amongst the universities' (p. 122) directed at them informed public opinion, placing them below the position of the university in the public's view. McManus (2016) echoed a similar point, commenting that the authors of CHER were of the view that universities should be retained as centres of scholarship, learning and a liberal education, and not be 'reduced' to functionalism and the economic needs of Irish society. The following decades saw these institutions develop and evolve to become firmly embedded in Ireland's HE system. As observed by Clancy (1989), this entrenchment continued unchallenged with commentary or objections only arising (predominantly from

the established universities) when the development of technical disciplines were seen to be at the expense of the arts and humanities. Moreover, there was now continuous growth in higher education enrolment, with these institutions absorbing increased working class participation in Irish HE. In effect, full-time participation rates in higher education in Ireland doubled in the period 1965-1980, and by 2005 had increased over nine-fold (see Figure 1). Both of the NIHE's were given university status in 1989 (Courtois 2017) becoming the University of Limerick and Dublin City University, while the RTCs continued to increase student numbers.

Although CHER's focus centred solely on HE in Ireland, IIE was, according to Clancy (1989) far more influential in shaping HE policy at the time. One of CHER's main legacies was the formation of the Higher Education Authority (HEA), established in 1968 to provide centralised support to Ireland's HE system. In the period following its immediate formation, the HEA had little scope to shape or make an impact on HE, due in large part to modest participation rates. Its growth and influence as a primary stakeholder in Irish HE would take shape many years later as mass higher education participation became a reality in Ireland from the 2000s.

Figure 1: Participation rates in Irish Full-Time Third Level Education, 1965 to 2015



Source: Graph produced from data supplied by the Central Statistics Office (CSO), 2018.

In 1973, Ireland became a member of the European Economic Community (EEC). The benefits of membership in terms of expansion of the education system were enormous, with Ireland becoming a major beneficiary of the European Social Fund (ESF). The first female Minister of Education, Gemma Hussey, secured the immense allocation of £37 million in 1984 (McManus 2016), at a time of recession and massive unemployment. Much of the funds went into the expansion of the RTCs and NIHEs, and also towards student supports in

the form of fee and maintenance grants in a major move towards widening participation. The EEC, and its later form the European Union (EU) would continue to be a central influence in Ireland's higher education system, particularly from the 1990s onwards.

Irish Higher Education Policy – from the mid-1990s to 2008

As observed, the period from the early 1960s witnesses some drastic change within Ireland's fledging education system. Endowments from the EEC improved the infrastructure of the HE system in Ireland, and also ensured increased participation from the working class as grants for fees and maintenance enabled students who would previously have been excluded, enter the system. By the mid-1990s, the hard years of recession of the 1980s had turned, and the government again shifted its focus on improving the HE system. The impetus for change in the 1990s was brought about by a number of factors. The economic situation of the 1980s, felt worldwide, had come to an end, and while HCT was still a major factor in driving education policy, it was other global influences which enacted the strongest impetus for change. According to Coolahan (1995), the motivation behind Irish reform of the education system during this period was informed by a 're-emergence of a more balanced approach to education, as distinct from a utilitarian, instrumental approach' (pp. 15-16) which mirrored OECD and EEC policy themes of this period.

In 1992, the Department of Education (DoE) published its Green Paper on education: *Education for a Changing World* (DoE 1992). The paper outlined government ambitions for the Irish education system as a whole and included 'equity in education' (DoE 1992, p. 32), equipping 'students more effectively for life, for work in an enterprise culture, and for citizenship of Europe' (DoE 1992, p. 32), 'strengthening policy-making' (DoE 1992, p. 32), and 'accountability' (DoE 1992, p. 33) as some of its primary aims. The paper invited discussion from all stakeholders in the education sector to achieve these aims, with a view to formally publishing a policy document following this comprehensive consultation process. The Green Paper (DoE 1992), as with significant publications on education before it, alludes again to the importance of the OECD, and this organisation's general recommendations on education policy. Ireland's status and integration in the European Community is a particularly strong theme of the Green Paper. Three years later, the then Minister for Education, Niamh Breathnach, published *Charting Our Education Future: White Paper on Education* (DoES 1995). According to Coolahan (1995), the consultation with stakeholders in Irish education which transpired 'between the publication of the Green Paper and the White Papers was unprecedented in its range, depth and character' (p. 11). This is in large contrast to later publications after the GFC, where there was little consultation

by government with those directly involved with HE provision in Ireland. I shall revisit this point later in this study. Such was the extent of the consultation process leading to the publication of the White Paper (WP) in 1995 that Coolahan (1995) asserts it could equally be referred to as the 'People's White Paper' (p. 17). O'Súilleabháin (1995) similarly commends the nature of the consultation process which led to the publication of the WP asserting that 'centralization errs on the side of over-control: decentralization errs towards chaos' (p. 22). In other words, there was a sense of symbiosis between government and HEIs between top-down leadership and mandating what is important as emphasised by those who are directly involved in the provision of education. But O'Súilleabháin (1995) cautions the delicate nature of reform policies, where momentum of change 'is almost always in jeopardy once actual implementation is encountered' (p. 32).

Although much has been made of the involvement of stakeholders in the publication of the White Paper, the merits of such an approach are clearly evidenced in the policy document. The WP strikes an admirable balance of placing education for the promotion of human and civil rights, economic and social wellbeing, equality, and diversity in society. This is observed throughout the report, but particularly so in the section dedicated to HE in Ireland:

> Higher Education promotes social well-being through preserving, widening and advancing the intellectual, cultural and artistic accomplishments of society; through rigorous, sustained and critical evaluations of the past, the present and the possible futures of society; through commitment to the highest standards of research in the various branches of learning; and through equipping society with the particular skills and qualities necessary for economic growth and prosperity. (DoES 1995, p. 91)

Of particular note in the WP is an emphasis on the need for institutional autonomy 'to determine the ways and means through which they (HEIs) will fulfil their particular roles' (DoES 1995, p. 91) within the general HE policy framework. This laissez-faire approach in particular was criticised just over a decade later in the next round of policy reforms implemented by government. But the WP also places an important emphasis on education as a means to provide skills to act in the interest of the knowledge economy and Ireland's economic prosperity in the age of globalisation. Indeed, the idea of globalisation was not new in the mid-1990s, but together with the notion of the knowledge society, was fast becoming the buzz word of policy setting in higher education during this period. As highlighted by Michel (1995) a 'globalisation of the world economy … implies the acquisition of new types of skills and competencies and dealing with multiculturalism' (p. 77). Furthermore, the WP stresses and reemphasises the link between Ireland and Europe. Given the enormous endowments transferred to Ireland from the EU and its predecessor the

European Community, this led to a state where, according to Cussen (1995) 'Irish educational development is now linked, in an appropriate fashion, into the wider context of the European Union' (p. 46). Perhaps one of the more enduring legacies of the WP, however, is the importance given to the Higher Education Authority, established in 1968, but up to the 1990s had little to do with policy construction in the area of HE.

The efforts by successive Irish governments to increase participation in higher education from the mid-1960s up to 2005 can be considered a success. O'Connor (2014) notes that while the period 1995-2005 saw a 20% increase in participation in HE across OECD countries, the greatest improvement was observed in Ireland. However, state funding in higher education has always been an issue of contention, with observers over this period, including the OECD, noting that Ireland's HE system was lacking in state funding. Despite government efforts to place an emphasis on investing in education since the publication of the IIE report in 1965, it fell short comparatively with other OECD nations (O'Connor 2014). The increased investment in higher education following the publication of the WP barely brought Ireland in line with other OECD averages, despite the growth in the 'Celtic Tiger' economy from 1995.

In 1996, the then Minister for Education, Niamh Breathnach, abolished fees for higher education in Ireland, in a similar move to Donogh O'Malley's abolition of second level fees precisely 30 years before. While applauded by many as a welcome move forwards in increasing participation in higher education, it also had many critics who stated that the increased cost to the state would be better spent elsewhere in education. The removal of tertiary level fees was intended to widen participation for lower socio-economic groups, and in ideology at least, was of sound motive. However, the free fees initiative and maintenance grants which were introduced to encourage HE participation to disadvantaged groups in the 1980s were still in place for those who qualified for this support. But students and their parents whose income raised them just over the ceiling threshold to qualify, could still ill afford third level fees. In the end, the blanket fee abolition did little to further increase participation in HE with the *Review of National policies for Education: Review of Higher Education in Ireland, Examiners' Report* (2004 OECD report) report remarking that the fees waiver 'had more than a limited, if any, impact on the disparity of participation rates amongst the different social/occupational classes' (OECD 2004, p. 56). This view is later echoed in a study by Denny (2010) who found no evidence that the introduction of free fees at tertiary level had any significant impact on participation levels in lower socio-economic groups. Rather, it was something of a monetary bonus for those in the higher middle classes, where

participation was high in any event, but now without the burden of fees. I agree with Denny's (2010) view that policy for increasing participation should begin much earlier than the end of second level education. Entry to HE education in Ireland depends solely on the Leaving Certificate and the grades attained in these state exams. Students in lower socio-economic groups typically attend schools which generally have lower grade outcomes. These students are therefore more often excluded from the outset of primary or secondary education.

The funding issue in Irish higher education continues to be a contentious one. While the reintroduction of tertiary level fees has been discussed at length in recent years, there has been staunch resistance from students and the public, although the student contribution charge, which at the time of writing stands at €3000 per year (Citizens Information Bureau 2019), can scarcely be deemed 'free'. And yet, as noted in the OECD report *Education at a Glance 2008: OECD Indicators* (OECD 2008) while overall spending in education increased 'more than 80% between 1995 and 2005…GDP more than doubled' (OECD 2008, p. 231). This is particularly the case for tertiary education, which saw little comparable change between spending in this sector to increased GDP compared to other OECD countries (see Figure 2). Despite the lack of investment, as noted in the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* (DoES 2011), Ireland was fifth 'highest of all OECD countries in terms of the higher educational attainment levels of young adults aged 25 to 34' (DoES 2011, p. 31) by 2007. I will return to the funding issue in subsequent chapters.

Perhaps one of the more observable consequences of globalisation in higher education during this period is the emergence of global university rankings. Since the Shanghai Jiao Tong *Academic Ranking of World Universities* in 2003, followed a year later by the Times Higher Education-QS Top University Ranking in 2004, the phenomenon of rankings has quickly been established and legitimised in HE systems globally (Hazelkorn 2016). Indeed, rankings have become so important that they have changed and reshaped the global higher education landscape (Marginson and Van der Wende 2006; Hazelkorn 2015, 2016). According to the World Higher Education Database (WHED), there are some 19,800 recognised HEIs worldwide, spread across 196 countries (WHED 2021). For HEIs who are ranked within the top 200, this represents a top 1% place worldwide. If HEIs are the star ships of the knowledge economy as noted in chapter 1 by Olssen and Peters (2005), rankings are the mechanism by which these HEIs (and national HE systems) are measured in terms of quality and overall performance.

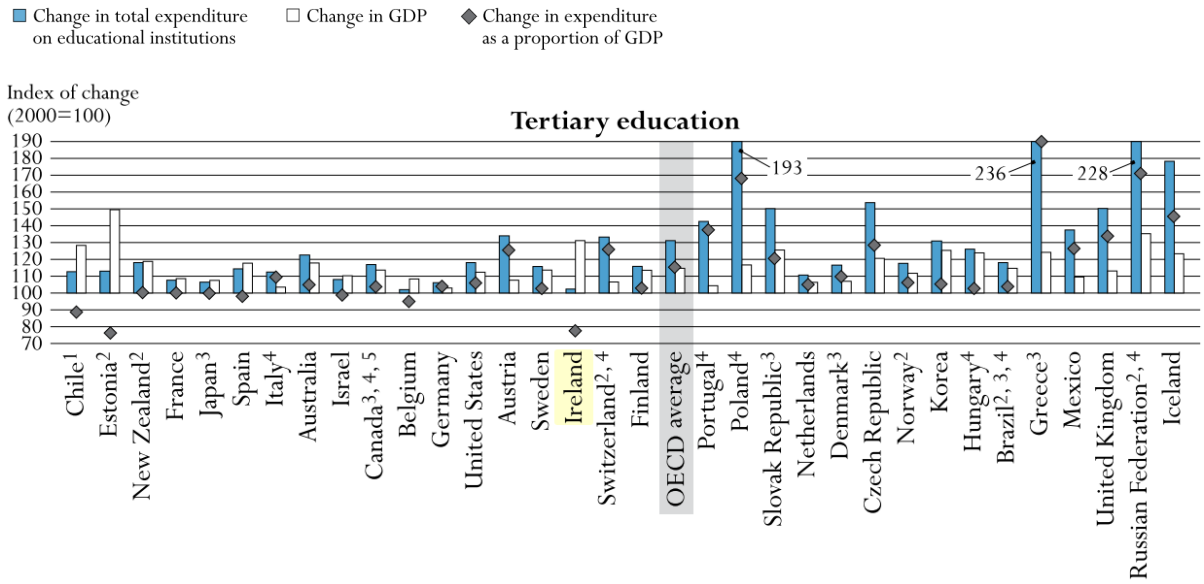
Whilst there has been criticism concerning the use of rankings and their methodology of measurement (Kehm 2014), which predominantly looks at measurables such as research output and external funding rather than teaching quality for example (Altbach 2006), there can be no doubt from an international, national and student perspective, rankings matter. As noted by Hazelkorn (2015) 'over 80 percent of undergraduate and postgraduate (taught and research) students have a high interest in rankings' (p. 150). From the student perspective, the prestige of attending an institution which is in the top 1% can add to their future economic and social capital. From the perspective of a country and HEI, a good position in the various worldwide ranking metrics represents a high return in terms of public funding awarded to them.

The connection between rankings and Irish HEIs is no exception. Even the slightest movements in Irish HEI rankings attract significant media attention (e.g. Irish Times 2020, 2021; Irish Independent 2021). But for a small HE system like Ireland's, and one which has prioritised internationalisation as a key strategy, rankings will have more importance. Attaining and maintaining a good position within worldwide rankings – and certainly a position within or around the top 100 - will therefore inevitably be a key strategy for both HEIs and government. Rankings act as a flare to attract international students who look to reputation and standing in the international community when choosing where to attend tertiary education. In addition, the multinational corporations who have bases in Ireland will also be influenced by rankings in their recruitment process as they equate HEI rank with quality. While it has been suggested that the resources and internal changes required to improve a ranked position is very often not worth the anticipated outcome for a HEI (Altbach and Hazelkorn 2017), for its relatively small size, and with less than ten publicly funded universities, Ireland is doing well. One of the most referred to worldwide ranking systems for example – the QS World University Rankings – had ranked eight Irish HEIs (representing 33% of publicly funded institutions), with five of these being in the top global 500 (representing 20% of Irelands publicly funded HEIs) (QS World University Rankings, 2021). For a country which places internationalisation strategy at the heart of its HE policy and one which continues to strive in its efforts to attract multinational corporations to Irish shores, such statistics, regardless of mechanisms by which they are measured, matter all the more.

The period of just over a decade from the mid-1990s up to the beginning of the Global Financial Crisis in 2008 was one which marked new policy developments towards equality and widening participation for disadvantaged groups, while keeping the interests of the

knowledge economy and global participation as important concerns of government. The period has had mixed successes. The 2004 OECD report, while recognising the growth in tertiary education as extraordinary, identified a number of areas for development broadly structured around the following themes: (i) strategic steering of the tertiary education system; (ii) governance and management of higher education institutions; (iii) strategic management of research, R&D and innovation; (iv) access and participation; (v) investment in the tertiary sector. While the then government did not act immediately on these recommendations, they would form a central part in its policy setting mechanism a half decade later, when the country found itself in economic crisis. The report made its proposals on the understanding that development within the tertiary education system 'should not obscure its role in the intellectual and artistic life of the nation' (OECD 2004, p. 8) or 'the contribution it makes to citizenship and the civil society' (OECD 2004, p. 8). It might be argued, as we shall see in later chapters, that while due attention was given to many of these recommendations, that these latter points were not at the top of the agenda post-GFC.

Figure 2: Changes in expenditure on tertiary education and changes in GDP (2000, 2005)



Source: Education at a Glance 2008: OECD Indicators (OECD 2008, p. 232)

Irish Higher Education Policy – from 2008

The previous sections of this chapter emphasised two significant periods when government directed its focus on HE policy - the 1960s and again in the 1990s. From the mid-1990s in particular, focus was largely concerned with the HE system, and how it can best work for Ireland and its citizens. Moreover, as we have seen, although both periods suggest a move by Irish government towards linking education with economic prosperity, the notions of equality, social democracy, and citizenship remained a central concern to policy makers,

particularly in the 1990s. Irish society has changed enormously, progressively transforming from an isolated nation on the periphery of Europe, to one of multiculturalism, and a nation which encourages diversity and welcomes modernisation. These social changes represent the positive side of globalisation. Conversely, the openness of the Irish economy has left it susceptible and vulnerable to economic shocks on the global scale. The economic turbulence beginning in 2008 drove government policy towards programmes of austerity, indicating the more negative and detrimental aspects of globalisation. The impact of these changes has been felt keenly in the Irish HE sector, which has now, more than ever, been identified as a crucial means of driving the knowledge economy, considered necessary in meeting the demands to become, again, a globally competitive nation. This transformation has been implemented with particular abruptness and rapidity. Following the GFC and the crash of the Irish economy, the Irish government set out to transform the Irish HE sector through a number of policy initiatives. These developments were included in wider reforms of the public sector in an attempt to stabilise the economy and prevent any further acute recessionary periods that were experienced in the years following 2008. As highlighted in chapter 1, one of the key objectives of the Irish plan for economic recovery *Building Ireland's Smart Economy: A Framework for Sustainable Economic Renewal* (Department of An Taoiseach 2008), was a reform of Ireland's higher education system. As outlined in the document, 'restructuring the higher education system will be a priority with a new Higher Education Strategy to enhance system wide performance' (Department of An Taoiseach 2008, p. 15). Hence, the scene was set for a state directed HE strategy, which would replace the policy status quo at that time, which was largely consigned to the individual higher education institutions who decided how best they should operate themselves. Where there was little central policy direction prior to 2008, government led HE policy documents quickly ensued: *Investing in Global Relationships: Irelands International Education Strategy 2010-2015* (DoES 2010); *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* (DoES 2011); *Investing in National Ambition: A Strategy for Funding Higher Education* (DoES 2016a); *Irish Educated Globally Connected: An International Education Strategy for Ireland 2016-2020* (DoES 2016b).

I wish to speculate here on why there was a lack of national strategy in relation to HE up this point. Contemporary globalisation is a relatively new phenomenon to Ireland, and efforts made by government to attract foreign direct investment were so successful from the 1970s onwards, that a redevelopment of HE was perhaps considered unwarranted. Moreover, HE participation in Ireland remained relatively stable until the 1990s, when it began to increase dramatically (See Figure 1). Concurrently, the economy was well placed for increased

growth, culminating in the Celtic Tiger a few years later. While the value of higher education with respect to the knowledge economy is well documented, in the case of 1990s/2000s Ireland, the economy was growing beyond anyone's expectations and excelling without any government interference at that time in the HE system. It is my own contention that because of this, the government position in relation to HE was 'business as usual'.

Much has been written on the impact of policy change and on the government's intervention in HE since 2010, splitting public opinion on who or what the current role of Irish HE is actually for. Government has insisted that the changes are overdue given the pressures of globalisation and the appalling state of the economy immediately following the GFC. This view is outlined in the preface of the NSHE: 'in the face of these major challenges, doing nothing is not an option' (DoES 2011, p. 4). Indeed, while government no doubt acted to bolster the economy by whatever means open to them to protect it from future economic shocks, the GFC can be viewed as the leverage required to catalyse these changes. Contradicting the view of government, others (such as Gallagher 2012; Lynch 2012; Lynch et al. 2012) have written at length about what they see as the loss of Ireland's HE traditions and the growing view that the sector has now become deeply globalised and neoliberalised to the detriment of higher education ideals. I shall return to this debate in chapter 6.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I gave a brief overview of the evolution of HE and education policy formation in Ireland. It is noteworthy that the most significant impetus for change in HE policy in Ireland can be directly correlated with the country's economic fortunes; during the recessionary period of the 1950s, as a consequence of De Valera's protectionist economic policies, and again from 2008, when the country was reeling from the fallout of the GFC. More measured, considered, and inclusive policy change was initiated in 1995 with the WP. While the consultation process at the core of policy implementation during this period is extensive, little of this due deference to stakeholders in HE, or their involvement in policy making, are witnessed in polices which were published from 2010. Another striking feature in Irish HE is the recurring theme of OECD and EU influence in shaping policy from the outset. The 1960s in my view, constitutes a period of the most radical change, and in many ways reflects a real commitment to change in the face of genuine economic calamity which was so damaging for the country and for its citizens. Policy formation in the 1990s continued the approach of social inclusion and a HE system equipped not just for the economy, but for the people. Policy direction from 2008 onwards will be scrutinised in chapter 5 through two frameworks, the first of which is outlined in

the next chapter.

Chapter 3: The Value of Applying Bourdieu to the Study of Higher Education

Introduction

It is an impossible task to encapsulate in one chapter the impact that Pierre Bourdieu's vast oeuvre continues to have on research in the social sciences. From issues of inequality, social class and mobility, education, gender and far beyond, Bourdieu has gifted researchers with a framework which, while often challenging to discern, can facilitate an understanding of the complex dynamics which constitutes our social world. Bourdieu authored over 25 books and more than 250 journal publications (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1989). In addition, he made numerous television appearances in which he discussed issues pertaining to politics, sociology, education, and current affairs. The current chapter looks at some of the main ideas and concepts Bourdieu developed over the course of his extensive career and explains how they can be used to probe and analyse the policy direction of HE in Ireland in the decade following the GFC. Bourdieu's 'thinking tools' form part of the CPA framework used in the current study. The second framework, Neo-Institutional theory, will be developed in the next chapter. In chapter 5, I will apply Bourdieu's tools, together with those of Neo-Institutional theory to critically analyse and interrogate Irish HE policy.

I will begin this chapter by succinctly summarising how Bourdieu problematised the social world and how, through the utilisation of his 'thinking tools', he came to form a framework which would enlighten our understanding of society. I will follow this by outlining Bourdieu's main constructs – his thinking tools – in detail and how they interact with one another to form a powerful diagnostic framework of the social world. I will then outline my rationale for using Bourdieu's concepts to examine recent developments within HE and why this approach, in particular, provides a fruitful means of understanding transformation within this sector. To conclude, I will assess the value of using Bourdieu's theoretical framework, drawing attention to what I view as some of its shortcomings, especially with reference to the growing influence of globalisation in the HE arena. Specifically, I will review Bourdieu's notion of field autonomy and how it fails to address the escalating influence of globalisation on HE policy more generally. Following a brief review of the literature which includes approaches suggested by other scholars to address this problem, I will offer an alternative approach which I suggest can effectively offset this limitation.

The Legacy of Pierre Bourdieu

During his lifetime, Bourdieu undertook research in a diverse range of topics which included, *inter alia*, inequality, social class and mobility, education, art, media, religion, language,

politics, and sociology. The development of Bourdieu's thinking tools – in particular, habitus, field, and capital – and later refinement and of these concepts (e.g. in his *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Bourdieu 1977), *The Logic of Practice* (Bourdieu 1990a), and *In Other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology* (Bourdieu 1990b) laid the groundwork for Bourdieu's invaluable insights concerning the mechanisms of society. Using these tools, Bourdieu constructs his 'theory of practice', which he developed throughout his career. Later in life, Bourdieu became preoccupied with issues relating to capitalism, the market economy and neoliberalism, publishing *Acts of Resistance: Against the New Myths of Our Time* (Bourdieu 1998a), *The Weight of the World* (Bourdieu 1999a), and *Firing Back: Against the Tyranny of the Market 2* (Bourdieu 2003). These volumes highlight what, in his view, represented the catastrophic effects of the dismantling of the welfare state in favour of market prerogatives. While these works do not specifically relate to education and are observed changes in social order more generally, higher education, with its changed direction from a site of intellectualism to a tool of the knowledge society, has especially been affected by this shift towards market objectives. I explore this idea in further detail in chapter 5.

The Trouble with an Objective/Subjective Dichotomy

Bourdieu's work is primarily concerned with transcending the dichotomies between the subjective and objective, between agency and structure. As Bourdieu (1990b) himself states 'my thinking started from this point: how can behaviour be regulated without being the product of obedience to rules?' (p. 65). Essentially, what Bourdieu was concerned about was how agents (the subjective) behave in their environment (the objective, which is beyond agents' control) and the reconciliation between this agency and social structure. Bourdieu (1990a) was adamant that of all the divisions within the study of social sciences, the most deep-seated and the most damaging is the one that is set up between subjectivism and objectivism. To him, the task of attempting to understand social spheres by using only the objective, that is, by looking only at social structure to determine individual action, falls far short of interpreting how the social world actually operates. At the same time, Bourdieu did not consider that agents act freely, and operate within the confines of some category of rules. Therefore, both the objective and the subjective must be viewed in duality, rather than in separation and opposition in order to construct a more accurate view of social order. In short, the problem that Bourdieu was trying to unravel with his thinking tools can be summed up

as follows: how does social stratification[4] and our environment influence the kind of judgements we arrive at and the kind of decisions we make? Free agency over our choices and actions might simply be assumed. But it was Bourdieu's conjecture that this free agency – such as that which is often ascribed to Rational Action Theory[5], to which Bourdieu was vehemently opposed – is influenced by other variables, such as our belief systems and our environment. Bourdieu was interested in what bonds society together, and how, although we may believe we are free, we are constrained by rules of social order, over which we have little control.

In Bourdieu's view, social reality is a process 'dialectic of the internalization of externality and the externalization of internality, or, more simply, of incorporation and objectification' (Bourdieu 1977, p.72). What Bourdieu attempts to achieve in his oeuvre is a theoretical representation or model of social practice which attempts to minimise the dichotomy of objectivism and subjectivism. The synopsis of Bourdieu's work outlined here is, of course, a simplified overview of Bourdieu's endeavour. In reality, he spent much of the latter part of his career clarifying and refining the conceptual tools he developed to overcome the problem of the subjective/objective, agency/structure relationship. The next section looks more specifically at Bourdieu's thinking tools. Following a brief discussion of these main concepts, I will then outline how Bourdieu intended them to be used in tandem to form his theory of practice.

Bourdieu's Thinking Tools

I will begin this section by outlining what Bourdieu meant by habitus. Following this, I will look at Bourdieu's concepts of field, capital, *doxa, illusio,* misrecognition and symbolic power, which will be used in chapter 5 to analyse Irish HE. The interlinkages between these ideas will then be explored with a view to elucidate the value of Bourdieu's work in the analysis of complex social structures such as that of Irish HE, the focus of the current study.

Habitus

It is a complex concept, and yet habitus, along with the notions of field and capital, is one of Bourdieu's most recognisable constructs. It is a versatile and multifaceted aid, which in

[4] Social stratification refers to the hierarchical ordering of social groups. Rosemary Crompton's (2008) book, *Class and Stratification*, provides an excellent account of contemporary issues and debates.

[5] Rational Action Theory (RAT) makes the assumption that decision making is based on cost-benefit analysis. Despite Bourdieu's grievances with RAT, Glaesser and Cooper (2014) make a convincing case of using RAT together with habitus in their study of education choices.

conjunction with other thinking tools, can be used to probe and help us understand the social world. Bourdieu himself spent a significant amount of energy in honing, elaborating, and clarifying the idea of habitus in his *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977), *The Logic of Practice* (1990a), *In Other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology* (1990b), and *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (1992). As recognised by Bourdieu (1990b), habitus has long since been explored as an instrument of research by 'authors as different as Hegel, Husserl, Weber, Durkheim and Mauss' (p. 12). But Bourdieu reconsidered habitus in a different light to these scholars. He connected social structure – the subjective and the objective – and history in his own construction of habitus. According to Bourdieu (1990b, p.31) one of the issues he is trying to resolve is the 'absurd opposition between individual and society, which the notion of habitus, as social life incorporated…is meant to transcend'.

Bourdieu (1990b) describes habitus thus:

> The habitus, as a system of dispositions to a certain practice, is an objective basis for regular modes of behaviour, and thus for the regularity of modes of practice, and if practices can be predicted...this is because the effect of the habitus is that agents who are equipped with it will behave in a certain way in certain circumstances. (p. 77)

Of crucial significance in the above passage and one which concerns this research, is the term 'agents', which I will revisit later in this chapter. For Bourdieu, habitus is 'a feel for the game' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1989, p. 128), but expectations, hopes, the sense of the correct decision to make in a given circumstance, and expectation of the likely outcome are all conditioned by the habitus and therefore form part of an arbitrary social structure. What may appear to be freely made decisions are far from it – to some degree at least, all decisions will be preordained, the likely outcome based on history and the present. It is experience which shapes, consciously and unconsciously, the paths that are available, the possibilities for the future and what is desirable. Bourdieu (1990a) argues that the structures which characterise a social space give rise to what he refers to as 'dispositions' within agents. Dispositions are recognised as tendencies towards certain practices, how certain decisions will be privileged over others, how we behave. In short, habitus is the sum of these dispositions. To be familiar and comfortable within a social space denotes habitus, and for one who remains within their own habitus they will feel, as Bourdieu outlines, like a 'fish in water' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1989, p. 127). It implies, according to Bourdieu (1990b, p. 131), a 'sense of one's place', but also 'a "sense of the other's place"'. Moreover, it can be observed that actors are not confined to a single habitus and can, as is often the case, move towards another habitus.

Much of the current research which utilises habitus as a theoretical frame does so at the individual level, and this is particularly prevalent in research concerning access to higher education and individuals' backgrounds – whether they are middle class and more likely to participate in HE, or working class, which analysis through the lens of habitus suggests is less likely. In *The Inheritors: French Students and Their Relation to Culture* (1979) and *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (1990c), which were co-authored with Jean-Claude Passeron, for example, Bourdieu focuses on why middle class children are more likely to access higher education or go to university. Indeed, it might well be the case that later research (e.g. Reay 1998; Ball et al. 2001; Hedman et al. 2007) has used the habitus to explain inequalities in society, particularly with respect to HE and social background as it builds on work which Bourdieu had already started. According to Bourdieu, habitus is also a 'system of structured and structuring dispositions which is constituted by practice and constantly aimed at practical…functions' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1989, p. 42). 'Structured' represents the past and present – how the status quo has come to be. 'Structuring' is shaped by the habitus and practice which forms the present and future. So, habitus is the product of social space and history. While history cannot change, social spaces are constantly moving and transforming in the present. The habitus is therefore subject to constant reconstruction and reinvention. Neither, as Bourdieu was so adamant about, can we comprehend the actions of agents through examination of their habitus alone. Socially and culturally obtained ways of 'doing' are equally informed by social spaces and environmental factors. I will return to the interconnectedness of Bourdieu's thinking tools later in this chapter, and the importance of viewing Bourdieu's thinking tools in this way.

Field

The second of Bourdieu's thinking tools which I consider here is the concept of field. Along with the construct of habitus, the notion of the field is central to Bourdieu's work. Fields are the social spaces, and it is within these fields that all interactions, operations and events occur (Bourdieu 2005). Critically, it must be understood that each field has its own set of rules and parameters. The economic field for example, will operate with different ordinances and logic than exist in the fields of art, politics, education, or media – all fields in which Bourdieu carried out individual studies (e.g. Bourdieu 1991b; Bourdieu 1996; Bourdieu 1998c; Bourdieu et al. 1991a). Bourdieu sums up what he means by field as follows:

> In analytic terms, a field may be defined as a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (situs) in the

> structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc.). (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1989, p. 97)

Hence, Bourdieu considered the meaning of field to signify a myriad of social designations or networks – from the domain of religion, economy, politics, education, right down to all the subfields which make up the field. Within larger field settings, Bourdieu identified other, more specific, subfields. For example, the field of politics will be made up of different political subfields, such as the political landscape of the European Union, American politics, and the smaller subfield of Irish politics. Like habitus, Bourdieu considered a field to be fluid and transformative and these states of change are implicit in Bourdieu's work. As outlined by Bourdieu and Wacquant (1989) actors within the field setting will constantly try to set themselves apart from their rivals within the same field 'in order to reduce competition and to establish a monopoly over a particular subsector of the field' (p. 100). The field, therefore, can also be understood to be a site of struggle. Those who can dominate the field can mould it to operate to their advantage – always with an awareness that there are others who are vying for the same position of power. It is those groups or agents whose position within the fields allows them more power, who can dictate the rules in the field. It is because of this constant tension, that Bourdieu and Wacquant note that 'the field is the locus of relations of force…and of struggles aimed at transforming it, and therefore of endless change' (1989, p. 103).

Throughout Bourdieu's work in clarifying what he denotes as habitus and field, he frequently used the metaphor of a game to illuminate the interaction between the two concepts (e.g. Bourdieu and Wacquant 1989; Bourdieu 1990a; Bourdieu 1990b; Bourdieu 1993a). Indeed, when thinking of habitus and field as components of a game, the interaction between the two becomes somewhat clearer. The field can be represented as a game in many ways, although as outlined by Bourdieu (1990a), while we might observe rules within a game, what we observe in a field can be defined more loosely as '*certain regularities*' (p. 64, original emphasis), patterns and predictabilities. Hence, in the same way as we observe parameters in a game, Bourdieu and Wacquant (1989) reflected that there are 'stakes (*enjeux*) which are for the most part the product of the competition between players' (p. 98). By participating, they remark that players acquiesce that the game is 'worth playing, that it is "worth the candle," and this collusion is the very basis of their competition' (p. 98). Rules of the game are implicit within the field – thus the earlier one enters the game, the better their sense of the game and how best to participate and maximise their capital within the given field.

Bourdieu (1993a) summed up neatly what he saw as the relationship between the field and habitus when he observed that:

> in order for a field to function, there have to be stakes and people prepared to play the game, endowed with the *habitus* that implies knowledge and recognition of the immanent laws of the field, the stakes, and so on. (p. 72, original emphasis)

The rules of the game govern the activity within the field, where actors compete while constantly adjusting to evolving rules within the game. The player's habitus in the specific field – the feel for the game – governs their ability to adjust quickly to new rules within the field. As the field is a site of ongoing and constant struggle, major changes in the field will be observed over time, and as society becomes more complex and diversified, new subfields will emerge. The field is ordered through internal power relationships from within the field on one hand, but also externally through the field of power on the other. For example, to demonstrate power relations within a field, Bourdieu (1990b) drew upon the literary field. Within this field, power can be perceived by 'the power to publish or to refuse publication' (p. 141). Similarly, a successful author might use their capital within the field to transfer some degree of power to a less established writer in the form of a positive review. Hence, within a field we observe the dominant, and the dominated. These movements of inequity are permanent, fixed, features within the field, and all the while agents are exercising their power to improve their position. As Bourdieu (1993a) points out, within a field agents and institutions are 'engaged in struggle, with unequal strengths…those who dominate the field have the means to make it function to their advantage' (p. 88) but they must also be aware of resistance from other agents who are dominated in the same field. So, Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, p. 103) point out that the 'field is the locus of relations of force…and of struggles aimed at transforming it, and therefore of endless change'. Or, put another way, fields are social sites for actors (individuals, groups, or institutions) with different dispositions developed over time (the habitus) to compete with one another over capital specific to the field, with which they attain or maintain power.

As with the concept of habitus, many researchers have concentrated specifically on Bourdieu's notion of field to conduct analysis into various aspects of the social world. Studies in the field of education for example, are wide and varied and include analysis on education policy (e.g. Lingard et al. 2005; Rawolle and Lingard 2008), global education policy (e.g. Lingard and Rawolle 2011), higher education policy (e.g. Maton 2005), and inequality in higher education (e.g. Naidoo 2004). But, of course, Bourdieu's toolkit was intended to enable an examination of all aspects of the social world and other studies where

the concept of field have had a particular focus, and these have in included for example research on gender (e.g. McNay 1999)**.**

The Field of Power

At this juncture it is prudent to ask the question: who or what dictates the rules of global higher education? Why does it look and operate the way it does, and under whose direction is it structured and maintained in this way? Inasmuch as this might appear to be a straightforward question, there are certainly no forthright answers to such an inquiry. However, in the global field of education, we can certainly speculate with some degree of confidence by identifying the field of power.

According to Bourdieu (1996),

> the field of power is a field of forces structurally determined by the state of the relations of power among forms of power, or different forms of capital. It is also, and inseparably, a field of power struggles among the holders of different forms of power, a gaming space in which those agents and institutions possessing enough specific capital (economic and cultural capital in particular) to be able to occupy the dominant positions within their respective fields confront each other using strategies aimed at preserving or transforming these relations of power. (pp. 264-265)

In other words, the field of power can be viewed as consisting of dominant members from a multiplicity of fields, with the field of economics and the field of business being most prominent (Wacquant 1993). Bourdieu's view of field consists of a hierarchical view – there are multitudes of fields and vast numbers of subfields contained within. But over them all lies the field of power, and it is this field which, according to Bourdieu, really dictates what happens in other fields, and here I also include the global field of higher education. Hence, the field of power might be viewed as a collective of the most dominant actors within each field, which transcends all individual fields. Ultimately, power in society is derived from economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1986). Bourdieu (1986) equates capital and power asserting that they 'amount to the same thing' (p. 243). According to Bourdieu (1990a), power is frequently misrecognised by those who are subjected to it. This is particularly true with respect to symbolic power, which Bourdieu notes is an unseen power which can be 'exercised only with the complicity of those who do not want to know that they are subject to it' (1991b, p. 164). Bourdieu (1999b) uses the example of nobility as a demonstration of symbolic capital (power) and notes that it exists only because it has been so embedded, reinforced and recognised by the nobility themselves and commoners.

With respect to higher education, the field of power is of major significance as it influences what happens in the field setting. This influence (or control) will manifest by dictating the way an agent uses habitus to manoeuvre within the field setting. For example, with respect to higher education, the field of power dictates that knowledge economy imperatives and all that goes with this – e.g. internationalisation, increased research output, competition, concerns of rankings – should be central concerns of HE policy formation. These are essentially rules within the global field of HE. Agents within the field engage with these rules to the best of their ability (through habitus), and actions and movements in the field setting will adhere to these criteria or rules. It is the OECD and EU who are dominant actors in the field of power with respect to Irish HE and it is these bodies which are most impactful with respect to the way Irish HE policy is set. I shall return to this idea in far greater detail in chapter 5.

In the next section, I look at Bourdieu's construct of capital, the conceptual thinking tool which he employed along with habitus and field and which also is closely connected with power as just introduced.

Capital

To consider habitus and field, we need also to consider the participants which lie within a field, and what determines their position therein. For this, it is necessary to pay attention to the level of capital one has within the field, because it is this element which determines their position. The more capital an agent possesses, the more power they have within the field. In this section, I will endeavour to outline what constitutes capital and its main conditions, as it ranges from the tangible (assets, economic capital and so forth) to the intangible (social capital, reputational capital). Bourdieu (1986) asserts that capital can present itself in three fundamental guises: economic capital, cultural capital and social capital. In addition, these three types of capital can be converted into a fourth type, in the form of '*Symbolic capital*, that is to say, capital – in whatever form – insofar as it is represented' (Bourdieu 1986, p. 255, original emphasis). Symbolic capital is acquired over time and manifests as the recognised, legitimated form of capital, and in prestige and reputational capital. All forms of capital are convertible. For example, cultural capital can lead to more economic capital, which can in turn lead to more social capital, or social capital may scaffold the gain of economic capital.

It is capital which essentially represents the stake in the game, which is played out in the field. Players within the field have different levels of varying types of capital and those who possess more are at a distinct advantage. What is at stake therefore, in playing the game is

the accumulation of capital, leading to greater advancement in the field. According to Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, p. 98) 'capital is what is efficacious in a given field, both as a weapon and as a stake of struggle'. It enables its possessors to exercise influence and power in the field and so it can be understood that the notions of field and capital are tightly unified. It was Bourdieu's (1986) contention that given the distribution of capital in any situation, social interactions will tend to reproduce the power relationships that already exist in the field.

Illusio, Doxa, Misrecognition and Symbolic Power

Bourdieu (1990a, p. 66) defines *illusio* as 'investment in the game'. If we return to the analogy of the game, then *illusio* is representative of the player's belief that the game is worth participating in. The player is taken in by the game and unconsciously strives to increase their capital within the field. An alternative way of looking at *illusio* is to view it as being the 'tacit recognition of the value of the stakes of the game and…practical mastery of its rules' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1989, p. 117). The idea of *illusio* is therefore intertwined with Bourdieu's notions of habitus, field, and capital, as players believe in the significance of the game and also in the benefits (e.g. capital accumulation) of playing the game in a given field.

Doxa on the other hand is characterised by the 'immediate adherence that is established in practice between a *habitus* and the field to which it is attuned' (Bourdieu 1990a, p. 68). In other words, it refers to the unconscious belief that certain aspects of the game are taken as real, unquestioned, immovable and engrained as fact. *Doxa* signifies the taken for granted, unquestioned truths within a game, or indeed within a society; 'truths' that are rarely, if ever, questioned. This is an important construct in Bourdieu's work and is of particular significance to the current study, as will be highlighted in subsequent chapters.

Bourdieu used the term 'symbolic power', not specifically as an entity that could be observed or witnessed easily, but rather as a belief system within a field – one that may be taken as a given. To Bourdieu, this kind of power is 'misrecognised'; it exists because even those who least benefit from the wielding of this power believe it to be real. This power then becomes legitimised and embedded in the field. It is important to acknowledge that those who are subject to this power are as complicit in its existence as those who wield it. Because they accept, unquestioningly, the hierarchy of symbolic power it continues to exist. Those who are in control of the symbolic power within the given field may use it to serve their own interests. As outlined by Bourdieu (1991b), symbolic power is

> a power which presupposes recognition, that is, misrecognition of the violence that is exercised through it. So…symbolic violence… can be exercised only with that sort of complicity granted…via the effects of recognition encouraged by denial, by those on whom that violence is exercised. (pp. 209-210)

Symbolic power is an important concept because its influence can be felt everywhere and perceived at the individual level and at the collective or national level, a situation which will become evident in chapter 5 as I go deeper into the analysis of Irish HE using Bourdieu's thinking tools.

What is crucial in the understanding of Bourdieu's thinking tools is the notion that they are all connected and intertwined. It is inconceivable that any one construct of the toolkit be used in isolation, and to do so is to misappropriate Bourdieu's work. Indeed, used together, Bourdieu's thinking tools form a rich theory of practice through which all manner of aspects within the social world can be viewed. The next section looks at how habitus, field, and capital interconnect to form this robust mechanism.

Bourdieu's Thinking Tools as a Theory of Practice

> Habitus, field, and capital can be defined, but only within the theoretical system they constitute, not in isolation … what is true of concepts is true of relations, which acquire their meaning only within a system of relations. (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p. 96)

Bourdieu (2010, p. 95) summed up this theoretical system, or as it has come to be known, his theory of practice, thus:

$$[(\text{habitus})\ (\text{capital})] + \text{field} = \text{practice}$$

The above equation illustrates succinctly the relationship between habitus and capital within the given field and how this relationship is expressed as practice. Essentially, the equation is representative of how Bourdieu views the interlinking relationship between his thinking tools of habitus, capital and field. To understand Bourdieu's theory of practice, therefore, it is of crucial importance to view the habitus relationally with respect to social space, or field. Both the habitus and field are constantly evolving, never static and always dynamic, and because of this there will be varying levels of 'feel for the game' by those who occupy the field. 'Hysteresis' is a condition described by Bourdieu (1990a) which occurs where agents find themselves in an environment that 'is too different from the one to which they are objectively adjusted' (p. 62). At the same time, some agents will adjust more readily to changes in the field, whereby the 'feel for the game' is second nature. Bourdieu (2000) describes such an eventuality as 'fish in water' (p. 14); the habitus and field are in tune and the rules of the game are enacted unconsciously, like second nature.

Bourdieu's thinking tools – habitus, field, and capital – offer us a compelling heuristic that presents a powerful way in which to examine aspects of our social world and practice in ways that bring about new meaning. By following his equation, we can situate agents within a field and assume that history and experience has formed their habitus. Whatever their level of capital (power) within the field, will give us clues into the way they behave (practice). The relationship between habitus and field operates in two ways:

> On one side, it is a relation of *conditioning*: the field structures the habitus, which is the product of the embodiment of the immanent necessity of a field (or of a hierarchically intersecting set of fields). On the other side, it is a relation of knowledge or *cognitive construction*: habitus contributes to constituting the field as a meaningful world, a world endowed with sense and with value, in which it is worth investing one's energy. (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1989, p. 44)

Thus, field and the habitus can be understood to occupy equal positioning in elucidating Bourdieu's theory of practice. While habitus, field and capital lie at the core of Bourdieu's oeuvre, as noted already in this chapter, many researchers concentrate their work on one of other of these constructs, with the implicit assumption that one is a function of the other two. In other words, one might encounter research which predominantly focuses on habitus, or in which the concept of field lies at the core of the research. It should not be assumed that the other constructs have been omitted purposely; rather it should be understood that they are implicitly part of the toolkit also. The next section outlines what in my view are some of the weaknesses in Bourdieu's thinking tools, particularly in the examination of higher education which has become ever more susceptible to the influence of global forces.

The Shortcomings of Bourdieu's Toolkit

Before I begin to outline what are, in my view, some of the main shortcomings of Bourdieu's toolkit, I wish to reflect briefly on my own experience of using and comprehending Bourdieu's writings and ideas. Bourdieu's work on the relationship between habitus, field and capital to create a theory of practice is vast and the various ways in which Bourdieu's thinking tools have been used in research could form an immense inquiry in itself. While conducting research for this dissertation, I found much of Bourdieu's earlier work, which was translated into English at various stages (e.g. *Outline of a Theory of Practice,* 1977; *Homo Academicus,* 1988; *The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power,* 1996 and *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste,* 2010) dense and difficult to follow. Wacquant helpfully lays out a roadmap to reading Bourdieu's work in the appendix to '*Towards a Reflective Sociology: A Workshop with Pierre Bourdieu*' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1989), and suggests some readings, particularly some of Bourdieu's less well

known journal pieces, before moving on to *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (2010), *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977), *Homo Academicus* (1988) and *The Logic of Practice* (1990a). In my own case, I began with works which gave a broad overview of Bourdieu's work such as Webb et al.'s (2002) *Understanding Bourdieu* and Grenfell's (2008) *Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts*, before delving into Bourdieu's own work.

My experience appears to mirror more generally the perception that Bourdieu's work can be challenging to understand. This has been reflected upon by his colleague Wacquant (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1989) who suggests that the chronology of the English translation of Bourdieu's work combined with the density of writing has contributed to some researchers in misappropriating Bourdieu's work and using it in 'bits and pieces' (p. 27). DiMaggio (1979), a scholar whose early research forms a cornerstone of Neo-Institutional theory and whose work I will delve into more closely in the next chapter, reviewed some of Bourdieu's publications following their translation to English in the 1970s (*Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 1977 and *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, 1990). Echoing Wacquant (1989), DiMaggio (1979) notes that Bourdieu's prose makes it extremely difficult to follow. DiMaggio (1979) also highlights some issues around Bourdieu's approach to general explanation and use of data, noting that Bourdieu's 'theoretical stance is sufficiently ambiguous to excuse almost any inconsistency' (p. 1467) and that 'most readers will find his method more useful in generating hypotheses than in confirming them' (p. 1467). DiMaggio (1979) alludes to the ambiguity in Bourdieu's thinking tools and Bourdieu's lack of clarity around defining his terms, particularly concerning habitus. Jenkins (2002) concluded similarly that Bourdieu's oeuvre is somewhat undermined by his prose and general writing style which he says many find 'daunting' (p. 9). The complexity of Bourdieu's earlier writing and conceptual ideas and the clarification of the latter appears to be a preoccupation later on in many of his affiliations with Wacquant and others. This is a fortunate circumstance, in my opinion, as I found later publications could do much to bring Bourdieu's work to a wider audience. *Towards a Reflective Sociology: A Workshop with Pierre Bourdieu* (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1989), *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Bourdieu 1992) and *Sociology in Question* (Bourdieu 1993a) are examples but works such as *In Other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology* (Bourdieu 1990b) and *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Bourdieu 1977) are more accessible, in my opinion, to the reader. What is interesting about DiMaggio's (1979) critique is that while he acknowledges the contribution of Bourdieu to the social sciences, he also predicts that in the long run, Bourdieu's ideas would 'likely to be transformed (as his own theory would predict)' (DiMaggio 1979, p. 1472). This prediction has undeniably come to fruition with the

development of Bourdieu's thinking tools in research mentioned earlier in this chapter, and indeed is applicable to the present study. In utilising Bourdieu's notions of habitus, capital, power, *doxa* and *illusio* and their interaction within the global field of higher education, I aim to draw meaningful conclusions on how Irish HE policy has changed in the face of globalisation, but also on what, or who, is really behind these changes. In my attempt to do this, I find there are aspects to Bourdieu's work that I believe fall short. As powerful as Bourdieu's oeuvre is, there are some problems in my view with respect to using his toolkit in the present time of globalisation. I will now outline what are the main drawbacks in using Bourdieu's work for analysing changes in higher education.

Of particular importance to the current study is the notion of field limits – where does one field stop and another one begin? Bourdieu was very clear in asserting that the 'limits of the field are situated at the point where the effects of the field cease' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1989, p. 39). But the effects of actions in one field can be felt across multiple fields as field boundaries are becoming more porous as a result of globalisation. There is extreme difficulty in locating the boundaries between the fields of HE, the economy and finance, for example, as they are becoming so intertwined. Indeed Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992) himself acknowledged the difficulty in the idea that fields are completely autonomous by outlining an example of an artist and patronship and thus, the link between the fields of art and economics. He notes that 'art of art's sake' demarcates the limit of autonomy within the field of art and that relations between other fields (in the case with the economics field) begins there. What happens, then, when fields become so intertwined that one begins to appear to be a subfield of another? In Bourdieu's example of the artist, where does art stop and economics begin? Bourdieu noted the complexity and trouble with this issue as he comments that 'the question of the limits of the field is a very difficult one' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p. 100), asserting the point that field boundaries can only be established though empirical investigation. But even using such empirical methodologies to demarcate the limits of the field would be difficult to achieve given the influences of one field over another.

It is necessary to highlight here that although Bourdieu insisted on the use of empirical data to substantiate theoretical arguments, research I have encountered which incorporates Bourdieu's theory due to its philosophical strengths, versatility and robustness applies Bourdieu's toolkit in various ways, either with or without empirical research. For example, McNay (1999) discusses the use of habitus and field to supplement embodiment theories and suggests its further development within the context of feminist social theory. This is a

philosophical discussion which is grounded in the work of Bourdieu and Foucault, and so does not include primary data in its analysis. Similarly, Colley et al. (2003) draw their analysis from case studies conducted in vocational courses in their study of 'vocational habitus' (p. 471) and use this methodology to substantiate Bourdieu's work on the habitus. Hence, Bourdieu's work has been appropriated in many differing ways – from its uses in philosophical work to its uses which demonstrate findings through empirical investigation. The present study uses policy documents through critical policy analysis as highlighted in chapter 1, which incorporates Bourdieu's toolkit into this framework. Therefore, while data will be used in the form of policy documents and government publications, this data is secondary.

A further issue which I see with Bourdieu's work is the establishment of a multiplicity of subfields as a society becomes more diverse. Bourdieu outlined how many different field levels form a hierarchical structure. The field of power, as noted already, is an overarching construct, under which lie broader fields (education, economy, law, religions, art etc.) which can be divided into subfields, and then into more subfields. In short, Bourdieu's work allows interrogation of the subject matter at many different levels and degrees, from the macro, to the meso to a micro level of analysis. The current research attempts to limit the number of fields to three levels – the field of power, the field of education, and the subfield of global higher education. Ireland's position within this context is then interrogated by utilising habitus, which will be explored later in this chapter.

Difficulty in prose, field limits and a multiplicity of subfields aside, the chief issue in using Bourdieu's work in my view, and of particular importance for the present study, is the idea of how change occurs within the field setting due to outside influences. The field as a site of struggle invariably leads to reproduction within the field itself, and over time changes can be seen within the field as these struggles evolve. While Bourdieu acknowledged that what occurs in one field can, to some degree, impact on another field (hence his term 'relatively autonomous' when referring to field), as noted previously each field, according to Bourdieu, still has its own set of rules and logic. Bourdieu (1993b) referred to the refractive properties which exist within the field structure, which enable them to resist external influences and change in other fields, depending on the field's level of autonomy. The more autonomous the field, the greater its ability to refract or divert disruption emerging from other fields. But as argued by Maton (2005), autonomy within the field of global HE is becoming more fractured. He develops the concepts of positional autonomy and relational autonomy to overcome the issue of reduced autonomy. For Bourdieu, the primary cause of disruption

within a field as a result of disruption from another, occurs only on occasions of crises such as war, recession, or political disruption. Bourdieu and Wacquant note that in times of crisis the 'routine adjustment of subjective and objective structures is brutally disrupted…but…it is habitus itself that commands this option' (1989, p. 45). But the field of global HE continues to change not just as a result of struggles within the field, but also because of external influence – economic, social, and political for example – outside times of crisis.

This issue of external influence is, in my view, a fundamental shortcoming of Bourdieu's work, given the growing link between HE and the economy, not just in Ireland but globally. According to Lingard and Rawolle (2004), Bourdieu's analysis of field concentrated primarily on its internal structure and characteristics of the field. But external factors are becoming increasingly important in a globalised world. As suggested by Marginson (2008) 'global flows in higher education' (p. 304) have made the HE field increasingly porous and less likely to be autonomous. Moreover, some scholars propose that Bourdieu's work could be further developed in order to understand external effects on the internal mechanisms within a given field, or indeed, the impact of one field on another. Rawolle (2005, p. 709) sees this as 'interrelations between fields', while Lingard and Rawolle (2008, p. 729) propose the idea of 'cross-field effects' for exploring the emergence of a global education policy field. Indeed, cross-field effects has garnered much interest in recent years and has been used in abundance to address the growing lack of autonomy in HE (e.g. Lingard et al. 2005; Rawolle 2005; Rawolle and Lingard 2008; Lingard and Rawolle 2011; Han 2019). Similarly, Buchholz (2016) observes that 'global field is not a national field writ large' (p. 31) and argues that modification of Bourdieu's thinking tools is required when considering global fields.

I suggest that adopting Bourdieu's thinking tools in conjunction with another theoretical framework will also produce a sound analysis of HE policy. More specifically, frameworks which look purposefully at issues concerning globalisation and change at the field or institutional level as a consequence of events on the global stage will be particularly effective. This chapter has been predominantly concerned with demonstrating the richness of Bourdieu's work and the depth of his approach in sociological analysis. But, as with all theoretical perspectives, there are drawbacks in Bourdieu's work which in my view will not, or cannot, fully illuminate the changes in Irish HE under the auspices of globalisation. I therefore concur with Ball (1993) who suggests that 'what we need in policy analysis is a toolbox of diverse concepts and theories' (p. 10), while making the point that there is no expectation, nor should there be, that Bourdieu's work is the antidote to address all the

questions and problems that society throws at us. It is with these prerequisites in mind that I shall turn my attention to another framework which I reason can ably overcome the limitations in Bourdieu's work which I have just discussed. In the next chapter, I will outline the main constructs of Neo-Institutional theory and show how it can be used in conjunction with Bourdieu's work to form a two-pronged approach with which to analyse HE policy in Ireland in recent years.

Why use Bourdieu as a Framework to Analyse Higher Education?

In the previous sections of this chapter, I outlined the problem which Bourdieu was trying to overcome with the development of his thinking tools – that of the subjective/objective dichotomy. I summarised the main ideas behind these thinking tools, and crucially how they all work together to investigate social spaces. Previous studies which have used Bourdieu's thinking tools in relation to higher education have typically done so using two different approaches. The first approach relates to studies which concern higher education and higher education policy more generally. By and large, research in this area tends to use as its primary instrument the concept of field (e.g. Naidoo 2004; Lingard et al. 2005; Maton 2005; Marginson 2008; Börjessona et al. 2016) to investigate shifts in education practice or policy. Researchers who use this approach assert that the mechanism and nature of change can be illuminated very effectively. The second approach focusses on habitus and tends to be used in research pertaining to inequality or choice (e.g. Reay 1998; Ball et al. 2001; Hedman et al. 2007). For the most part, this type of research concentrates on the individual and how their habitus affects educational choices. Again, as with studies which have focused on field analysis, Bourdieu's other constructs are implicit.

I suggest here that while these applications of Bourdieu's work have been used to excellent effect and with robust results, these should not be viewed as the only way with which to employ Bourdieu's toolkit. By this, I mean that following other researchers and their work on higher education policy, it might naturally be assumed that the present study would follow a similar pattern, i.e. that it would use, as a primary tool, the concept of field. To some degree this is correct, and indeed, of extreme importance to this study is the field of global higher education. But habitus is not a concept which should necessarily be applied to, and used for, the study of individuals alone. For example, Maton (2012) notes that Bourdieu's habitus can be defined as a property of actors, which can be individuals, groups or institutions, and Bourdieu (1990a, p. 61) himself referred to 'groups of agents', which similarly can be defined as institutions, who occupy the same habitus. I propose that in a departure from other

studies, viewing Irish higher education as an agent within the global field of higher education will lead to a far more illuminating study.

Using Habitus in the Study of Irish Higher Education Policy

Higher education in Ireland as noted throughout chapter 2, has its own unique history, a body through which decisions are made in the present which shapes its future. The present research views Irish HE as situated within the global field of higher education. In viewing Irish HE in this way, we can begin to understand that it is shaped not through arbitrary decisions or policy made at the local level. Instead, it is shaped by what the rules of the game are in the global field of HE. In other words, Irish HE can be viewed as an agent with its own habitus, which is situated in the objective structure that is the field of global HE. Recalling again Bourdieu's (2010) theory of practice as: [(habitus) (capital)] + field = practice (p. 95), suggests that viewing Irish HE in this way will give rise to a fruitful examination of its development following the GFC which gives due consideration to its location in the global field of higher education.

McDonough (1997) notes that habitus 'exists not only in families and communities but also in *organizational contexts'* (p. 156, original emphasis). She asserts that organisations (in her study, the high school) can possess their own habitus, which shape the decision making processes of their members (in this case, the students). Similarly, Ingram (2009, p. 424) notes that a 'school's history and experiences, as well as its pupils and staff…contribute to its evolving habitus', noting also that at the same time, this also impacts on the habitus of its staff and students. Likewise, Han (2019) expresses the concept of habitus collectively when noting that the 'habitus of the institution is less influenced by its members' individual habitus but is largely formed by the external environment' (p. 283). The point I wish to make here is that schools, institutions, and organisations are not conscious individuals or agents, but research which is based on the notions of familial and institutional habitus clearly indicates the view that habitus can go far beyond the individual. In the same way that familial habitus has been used in the collective sense – that of the family – I use the habitus here in the collective sense to include all stakeholders within the institution which I define here as Irish higher education. As noted earlier, habitus links history, present, future, objective and subjective, structure and agency. What habitus suggests for the individual (and, as noted, research in this area has been prolific) is that those from similar backgrounds – social class, gender, ethnicity, nationality – tend to share a similar (but never the same) habitus, notwithstanding personal events and experience which shape them and make them unique. It is my contention here that we can view institutions in a similar way. Higher education

systems in the western world might have similar structures for example. A country's own unique history, culture and language will differentiate its higher education system, ensuring a certain distinctiveness and inimitability to some degree. At the same time, it will have a similar habitus to other HE systems where we observe for example, binary systems, internationalisation policies, and expansion of commercial research. Such practices are common in a great many countries whose higher education systems are located in a global field where they are subject to similar rules, regulations and conventions and inevitably will occupy a similar habitus as a consequence of such shared experience within the same field. Hardy and Lingard (2008), in their study on teacher professional development, refer to movements in social fields as being largely due to the 'individual and collective habitus which constitute and are constituted by them, and…are constructed through agents' locations within particular fields' (p. 64). In other words, the habitus can be seen not just as an individual phenomenon, but also as a collective one. As Thomson (2005, p. 742) also highlights, 'the social is always within agents and their actions cannot be seen as individual, since they follow the logic of the position in the field'. Thus, Irish higher education can be viewed as having its own habitus, which includes the agents within HE who make decisions or direct policy. It could of course, be argued that Irish HE could be viewed as a subfield of the global field of higher education. As noted earlier in this chapter in the discussion of fields and subfields, this is an appropriate way to approach the analysis of Irish higher education using Bourdieu's thinking tools. It can indeed, be viewed as a subfield along with other higher education systems operating within the much larger dynamic of the global field of higher education. In this view, the subfield of Irish HE will still be bound by the rules and logic of the main field dynamics and is required to play by the rules of the game as with other HE systems in the power struggles within that field.

Criticism of Institutional, Familial, and Collective Habitus

The appropriation of habitus in the manner described above might potentially be construed as a misuse or misunderstanding of Bourdieu's work. The idea might seem at first incongruous with Bourdieu's theory of practice as outlined earlier. And yet, there are a number of arguments for looking at Irish HE through such a lens. When viewed with its own habitus and operating in the global field of HE, vying and competing in this field for more capital (and therefore more market share), this begins to illuminate how Irish HE has been constructed and shaped through the years, particularly since the GFC. But it also gives us the opportunity to view Irish HE as a whole, rather than simply focusing on its constituent parts. This constructs a view of Irish HE as a unified entity, situated in the global field of

higher education. The notion that habitus has capabilities beyond its utility in viewing the individual alone is not altogether novel. Habitus has been extended beyond Bourdieu's work where alternative approaches to viewing a specific aspect of social order are required. The concept of 'family' or 'familial' habitus for example, has gained prominence in research (e.g. Reay 1998; Tomanović 2004; Pimlott-Wilson 2011), as has the concept of 'institutional' habitus (e.g. also Reay 1998; Han 2019). Both of these expansions to Bourdieu's habitus go beyond his work, but they also construct new meaning and utility to his efforts. They represent new ways in which Bourdieu's thinking tools can be harnessed to construct a theory of practice which has the ability to address new and emerging issues in the social world. By following this logic, and in a further departure from using habitus for analysis at the individual level, the present research advances the idea of a collective habitus. To be clear, familial and institutional habitus usually denote the influence of family or school (as an institution) on choice, with neither representative of a living organism or being. There are criticisms of using Bourdieu's work for such an approach, which deem that going beyond Bourdieu's original use of his thinking tools acts to dilute his work. I will now outline these arguments.

Atkinson (2011) criticises approaches that use familial and institutional habitus in research for overstretching the concept of habitus itself, warning that such methodologies could act to diminish the explanatory power of Bourdieu's construct. Atkinson (2011) goes on to suggest that the idea of familial or institutional habitus is non sensical as, in his view, habitus cannot be extended to the collective level and relates only to individuals who 'are necessarily *corporeal* or, to put it in broader terms, *organic*' (p. 337). My own view contrasts with this for a number of reasons. First, to reduce habitus in its application for analysis solely at the individual level immediately diminishes any potential to conduct investigation beyond that of the singular. Moreover, if we take an institution and acknowledge that it has its own history, its own experiences within its social field, and its characteristic ways of operating, how then, might we explain its position within the field, if it is without a habitus? A Bourdieusian perspective as stated earlier, cannot be conducted without simultaneous reference to habitus, field, and capital. Viewing Irish HE as an entity in itself, with its own habitus, within the field of global higher education achieves this neatly. Furthermore, in countering the arguments set out by Atkinson (2011) above, Burke et al. (2013) note that 'concepts of institutional and familial habitus are attempts to theorise the collective practices of groups of individuals rather than individuals' (p. 166). They argue that by looking at collective practices in the field, examination of individual habitus can be enriched. Indeed, in recognising that habitus itself is not corporeal, they contradict Atkinson's (2011) view

that habitus can only relate to the individual; indeed, habitus is a theoretical tool used in Bourdieu's toolkit in an attempt to understand the social world – not just the social space of the individual.

Conclusion

Bourdieu (1998b) summed up his opus very precisely later in his career:

> This philosophy is condensed in a small number of fundamental concepts – habitus, field, capital – and its cornerstone is the two-way relationship between objective structures (those of social fields) and incorporate structures (those of the habitus). (p. vii)

This uncomplicated summation, uncharacteristic of Bourdieu's writing more generally, encapsulates the complexity of the theory of practice which he created. Bourdieu's thinking tools are precisely that – they are instruments which help us to facilitate our understanding of the social world and to make sense of practice within these spaces. They are not intended to encompass a complete theoretical scaffold in themselves. This has the benefit, within the confines of the parameters of the toolkit, to develop a malleable framework in order to carry out meaningful analysis. It is for this reason that Bourdieu's work, with some caveats as highlighted, remains an enduring means for sociological research. When we take the notion of field and augment it with its related constructs of capital and habitus, we are well positioned to connect social structures and practice in a relational investigation which is at the centre of Bourdieu's work.

To finish this chapter, I wish to reflect on the way in which I have interpreted Bourdieu's work and how it will be used in chapter 5 to analyse Irish HE. This is particularly in respect to the utilisation of habitus to view the collective of HE itself. Although this appropriation and interpretation have drawn on other researchers who have similarly extended the work of Bourdieu (and indeed, outlined some objections to this broadening of Bourdieu's oeuvre to add balance to the argument), I have not yet deliberated on whether Bourdieu himself would welcome such an appropriation of his work. I am reminded of his own approach to other authors. Bourdieu (1990b) comments:

> As far as I'm concerned, I have very pragmatic relationships with authors: I turned to them as I would to fellows and craft-masters…people you can ask to give you a hand in difficult situations. (p. 28)

When commenting on his own concept of field, Bourdieu (1992), notes that it 'does not provide ready-made answers to all possible queries' (p. 110). Instead, he views field as a construct which 'has to be rethought anew every time' (Bourdieu 1992, p. 110) and in keeping with the dynamism of Bourdieu's thinking tools and their interconnectedness, it

would be a reasonable assumption to suggest that the same conditions can be applied to his other constructs. Indeed, as noted by Bathmaker (2015), Bourdieu himself honed and refined his thinking tools over the course of his life's work in an effort to better understand changing social dimensions. For example, Bourdieu placed great emphasis on the autonomous nature of the HE field in *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (1977) and *The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power* (1996). But later on in *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (1993b) the field of power gained more prominence as fields appeared more heteronomous than initially believed. I therefore follow Bourdieu's own example, and while staying faithful to the core tenets of this thinking tools, extend them to analyse a very changed field of global HE than was the case at the time of Bourdieu's death in 2002.

Chapter 4: The Value of Neo-Institutional Theory in the Study of Higher Education

Introduction

As acknowledged in chapter 3, it is difficult to envisage how Bourdieu's work can fully account for changes within the field of HE under the pressures of globalisation. As indicated, many researchers who have used Bourdieu's work have proposed expanding the scope of his thinking tools. Such an extended approach has proved very effective in previous studies of familial habitus (e.g. Reay 1998) and cross-field effects (e.g. Lingard et al. 2005), for example. Nonetheless, I advocate for the use of more than one theoretical concept in the present study. The rationale for this is straightforward. For a body of research as complex and multifaceted as examining a national HE system within the context of global dynamics, I am of the view that such a context is so expansive that a single framework will not suffice. Adding another approach or viewpoint to an already well developed theoretical framework, while complex, can ultimately enrich the outcome and aims of the study. This is especially true for critical policy analysis, whereby employing two perspectives will invariably address more of the key objectives outlined in chapter 1. Some theoretical frameworks are indeed a better fit for specific purposes of research more generally, while at the same time, the researcher might find some theories less ambiguous or a 'better fit' than others. In the previous chapter, I expressed my reservations concerning Bourdieu's idea on the autonomous nature of the field. But as Jenkins (2002) comments, Bourdieu's tools are 'good to think with' (p. *x*), and certainly, while this is the case, neither can Bourdieu's framework be expected to address every possible social problem we are trying to address or demystify.

Supplementing Bourdieu's work with a theoretical view that in many ways diverges from his ideas, yet in other respects compliments them, will, I believe, lead to a far richer understanding of the changing nature of Irish HE. The primary aim here is not to dilute the richness of Bourdieu's legacy. It is to use a framework which in my view better challenges and enriches certain aspects of this research, particularly in relation to the question of why Irish HE is configured the way it currently is. Influenced by external global factors outside the field of education, such an issue lies outside the scope of Bourdieu. With a view to addressing this problem, I propose that Neo-Institutional theory can ably meet this challenge for reasons I will outline in the following pages.

It is prudent here to establish what is understood by the term 'institution'. According to Meyer and Rowan (2006) and Lipnicka and Verhoeven (2014), there are various definitions of what comprises an institution as defined in the literature. What is clear is that it does not necessarily infer something which can be easily recognised explicitly as a material structure.

Very early on, Broom and Selznick (1955) defined institutionalisation as 'the emergence of orderly, stable, socially integrating patterns out of unstable, loosely organized, or narrowly technical activities' (p. 238). Lounsbury and Crumley (2007) assert that institutions can be understood as sets of 'activities that are fundamentally interpenetrated and shaped by broader cultural frameworks such as categories, classifications, frames' (p. 996) and various other belief systems. Lipnicka and Verhoeven (2014) neatly define an institution as 'a collection of rules and routines' (p. 11). Fligstein's (1997) interpretation of institutions links the role of social skills and actors who use their knowledge 'and a set of explicable tactics to try to form agreements to produce stable organizational fields' (p. 404), where we observe taken for granted meanings and the reproduction of organisations. Scott (1995) expresses a conception of institutions as 'cognitive, normative and regulative structures and activities that provide stability and meaning to social behaviour' (p. 33), while Boli et al. (1994, p. 10) see 'institutions as cultural rules giving collective meaning and value to particular entities and activities, integrating them into larger schemes'. Hence, there is great variation in the literature regarding what is representative of an institution. For the purposes of this research then, and in following these various descriptions, I define higher education as an institution, which is situated in the global field of education. In this view, higher education can be understood to have rules and routines, patterns and activities as outlined, that can be identified as a recognisable structure.

In addition to the importance of defining the notion of what is representative of an institution from the outset, it is also crucial to highlight that, in parallel to Bourdieu's work, NT also incorporates the notion of field as a social space as one of its core tenets. Theoretical frameworks which are based around a view of the field hold that agents within the field setting are mindful of others and interact when there is something at stake in the game. The field setting also implies a social order, where specific rules and conventions exist, often leading to reproduction in the field setting. Within field theory, actors have the capacity to accumulate capital and resources to secure advantage over other agents within the field setting. Such is the case with both Bourdieu's work and with NT, but the mechanism by which this competition takes place is wholly different.

This chapter will follow in five sections. The first section will trace the history and development of NT, which will be followed by outlining NT's key constructs. This is followed by the rationale for using NT in the study of HE. The fourth section describes some of the shortcomings and weaknesses of NT. The final section summarises the complementary and, in many ways, divergent features of NT and Bourdieu, justifying their use together as a

powerful investigative instrument when used within the framework of critical policy analysis.

Tracing the History of Neo-Institutional Theory

Philip Selznick's (1948) article *Foundations of the Theory of Organization* laid the foundation for viewing institutions not simply as standalone entities, but as a configuration of networks which can be used to explain transformation across social fields. But it was Meyer and Rowan's 1977 publication *Institutionalised Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony* which is most often acknowledged as instigating the development of NT as a research methodology (e.g. DiMaggio and Powell 1991; Frank et al. 2007; Scott 2008; Lounsbury and Zhao 2014). Their article remains a core reference point for researchers and students, despite NT's development and refinement as a theoretical framework in succeeding years. The fundamental idea that underpins Meyer and Rowan's paper is the notion that organisations are driven by what the authors call 'institutional myths'. They posit that 'the positions, policies, programs, and procedures of modern organizations are enforced by public opinion' (Meyer and Rowan 1977, p. 343). This public opinion is mediated through social platforms such as education, politics, the law, and media, acting as 'highly rationalized myths' (Meyer and Rowan, 1977, p. 343) which operate to consolidate the position of an organisation within society.

Meyer and Rowan's (1977) paper was followed by further publications which brought institutional change under scrutiny and put NT in the spotlight as a credible means of investigating how and why organisations transform and change. Zucker's (1977) work, for example, added a new dimension to the study of organisations within their institutional environment, and highlights how micro changes at the organisational level as well as the institutional level can be viewed through the lens of NT. This implies that much like Bourdieu's work, which has been employed to research concerns of a larger scale in using the notion of field, and more focused studies on the individual using habitus, NT can be utilised for studies at both the macro and the micro levels.

The framework of NT was significantly enriched with DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) ground-breaking work *The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields*. Building on Meyer and Rowan's (1977) paper, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) ask the question 'what makes organizations so similar?' (p. 147). But what makes this paper of particular importance for NT, is that it outlines the somewhat paradoxical condition within the institutional setting in which 'rational actors make their organizations increasingly similar as they try to change them' (DiMaggio and

Powell 1983, p. 147). DiMaggio and Powell suggest that organisations become increasingly homogenous and are 'less and less driven by competition or by the need for efficiency' (1983, p. 147) – that is to say, that change occurs not necessarily as a result of trying to be more competitive within the institutional field or to maintain optimum levels of efficiency. Instead, DiMaggio and Powell (1983, p. 147) hold that 'bureaucratization and other forms of organizational change occur as the result of processes that make organizations more similar'. What actually drives this change, and a further key aspect of NT which was introduced in DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) work, is the notion of institutional isomorphism. Isomorphism is viewed as the primary means of propelling transformation within the field setting within NT's framework. The mechanisms of isomorphism – coercive, mimetic, and normative – will be examined further on in this chapter as they are linchpins of NT. The concept of isomorphism and its iterations as outlined by DiMaggio and Powell (1983), continues to be a current and powerful tool in the investigation of change within global institutional settings, and indeed has been used to interrogate transformation in other fields including economics (North 1990) and politics (March and Olsen 1989). It is of interest that a connection between some of the ideas presented in DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) paper have been linked marginally with the work of Bourdieu. Hamadache (2015) for example comments on the influence of Bourdieu's work as being remarkably distinct in the DiMaggio and Powell paper. DiMaggio (1983, p. 149) later alluded to a connection with Bourdieu's notion of field, stating that NT uses the notion of field in the 'dual sense in which Bourdieu (1975) uses "champ," to signify both common purpose and an arena of strategy of conflict'.

It was following the publication of these seminal works by Meyer and Rowan (1977), Zucker (1977) and DiMaggio and Powell (1983), and the core underpinnings of NT as outlined here, that NT began to build traction as a credible theoretical framework to explain how organisations behave in their environment. All three papers introduced above set out the argument that organisations become isomorphic not because of any drive towards increased competitiveness, efficiency, or a belief that newly adopted structures are superior to previous ones. Instead, organisations become more homogenous and model themselves on exemplars within the field to gain legitimacy in order to enhance their survival prospects. It is this common theme which sets these papers apart and why they are often cited as the marking the establishment of NT as a theoretical framework (DiMaggio and Powell 1991; Greenwood et al. 2008; Scott 2008; Lounsbury and Zhao 2014; Alvesson and Spicer 2018).

As outlined by Meyer and Rowan (2006), the advancement of NT as a theoretical perspective is due in large part to the broad disillusionment of social scientists with regard to models of organisational and social action in which relatively autonomous agents position themselves without restraint to advance their own self interests. One such perspective is that of Rational Action Theory, which promotes the idea of free agency and, as observed in chapter 3, to which Bourdieu bore significant distaste. As with Bourdieu's work, NT counters assumptions of unbounded agency and instead locates actors and agents within the macro, meso and micro institutional environment. As highlighted by Scott (2008), the early work in NT set in motion new ways to account for and examine formal institutional structures while incorporating into the theoretical framework the concepts of 'field' and 'legitimacy'.

Neo-Institutional Theory: Key Constructs

In this section, I will consider more in depth the key constructs of NT which makes this framework such a useful tool in research. I will look in greater detail at the roles of isomorphism, legitimacy, field, and loose or tight coupling as NT's key theoretical cornerstones.

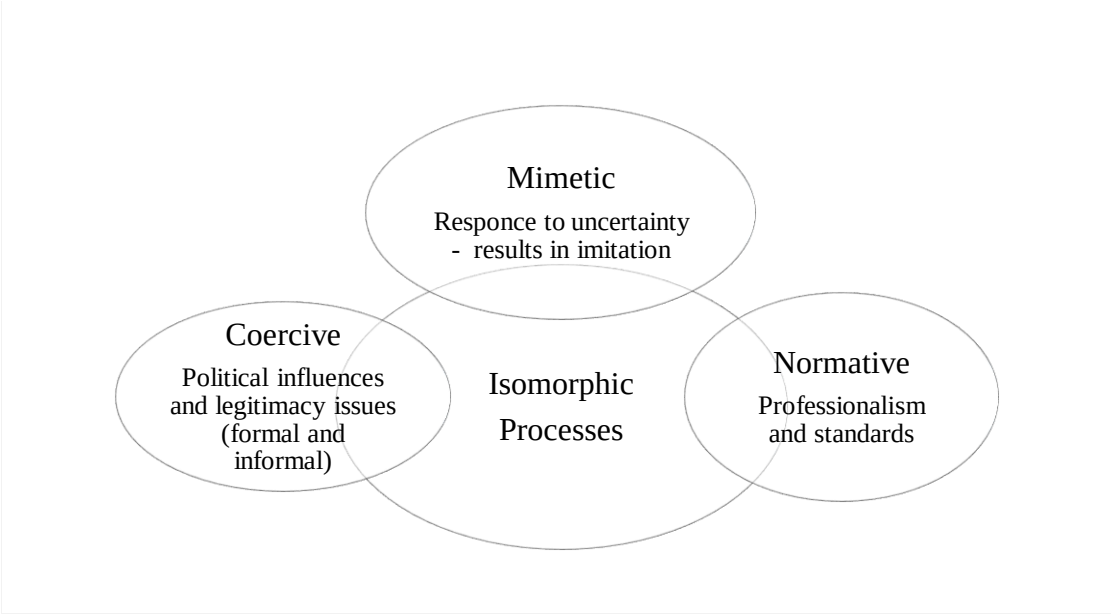
Isomorphism

At the beginning of this chapter, I cited DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) work on isomorphic processes. This concept has deservedly retained its position as one of the most important theoretical foundations of NT. As outlined by Lipnicka and Verhoeven (2014, p. 13), 'isomorphism is the most common source of institutional change' within the framework of NT. DiMaggio and Powell (1991), adapting Hawley's (1968) work, describe isomorphism as a 'restrictive process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units' (p. 66) in an environment which faces the same set of conditions. Similarly, Flach and Flach (2010), make the observation that 'the greater the complexities and pressures of the environment, the smaller the degree of freedom to change' (p. 31). Under these conditions, organisations become increasingly more alike.

As highlighted by Dumitru et al. (2014), mimetic isomorphism in particular plays a significant role in the attainment of legitimacy. Firms will copy one another either directly or indirectly and will collectively generate innovations which will cement their position in the eyes of stakeholders within the institution and the public. Organisations will almost certainly answer to central governance of some kind and are subject to regulatory frameworks imposed by authorities. This sets in motion coercive isomorphic processes that force organisations to adhere to the same rules and practices, thus driving them to become

more homogenous. Dumitru et al. (2014, p. 788) make the point that the 'more a domain is professionalized, the more it is expected that its members have certain characteristics'. This professionalism generates normative isomorphism, through the establishment of a professional code which is then transmitted from one organisation to another as individuals and groups move between them.

Figure 3: Isomorphic processes



Source: Adapted from DiMaggio & Powell (1983)

Isomorphism is often misinterpreted in the literature. DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) primary question as noted earlier in this chapter centres on what makes organisations so similar. Given that isomorphism is considered crucial to answering this question within the NT framework, institutional theory became strongly linked with the idea that all organisations adopt equal structures and practices (Greenwood and Meyer 2008). However, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) observe that isomorphism does not necessarily imply that the processes described in previous paragraphs will ensure that all organisations will be exactly analogous. Anecdotally, we recognise and perceive similarities between organisations within an institutional field, but they will always have some degree of differentiation and distinction. Indeed, different organisations within the institutional field, while appearing similar, can be very different and have diverse responses to endogenous or exogenous pressures. As emphasised by DiMaggio and Powell (1983, p. 156) 'organizations in a field may be highly diverse on some dimensions, yet extremely homogeneous on others'.

Rational Myth and Legitimacy

Meyer and Rowan's 'rational myths' (1977, p. 360) is a term used frequently within NT and refers to a situation where an organisation seeks legitimacy through conditions or rules they believe they should adhere to, and what the norms are within the institution. As 'rational myths' become more embedded within the field, organisations become increasingly isomorphic, encouraging homogeneity. It follows then, that the more alike an organisation is to others in the field, the more legitimacy it acquires. In short, the attainment of legitimacy by organisations in becoming more homogenous to others (through isomorphic processes) ensures their survival. In other words, if an organisation bears the appearances of a recognisable form, behaves like other organisations within the institutional setting, then this creates ample evidence to ensure they retain legitimacy.

One of the core assumptions within NT is the notion that legitimacy is a central concern for organisations (Meyer 1977; Meyer and Rowan 1977; DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Selznick 1996; Meyer and Rowan 2006). Meyer and Rowan (1977) recognised in the very early stages of the development of NT that organisations which 'incorporate societally legitimated rationalized elements in their formal structures maximize their legitimacy and increase their resources and survival capabilities' (p. 352). Selznick (1996) makes the point that legitimacy is seen as an organisational imperative, since organisations cannot function without social validation and public confidence. Legitimacy is sought through rationalisation or rationality (Frank et al. 2007; Flach and Flach 2010; Wang et al. 2014) with government, professionals, corporations, international organisations, and the public acting as the rationalising agents. Organisations must accept and adopt the 'taken for granted' norms – practices, rules, regulations, for example – within the institutional environment. Adherence to these rules will convey legitimacy. According to Selznick (1996), the goal of becoming legitimate is seen as a requirement 'that is both a source of inertia and a summons to justify particular forms and practices' (p. 273). These justifications are what ultimately lead to isomorphism within the institutional setting, and more specifically, memetic isomorphism as formulated by DiMaggio and Powell (1983). This idea echoes Bourdieu's perception of how agents within a given field play by the 'rules of the game' as discussed in chapter 3. Moreover, the Neo-Institutional view of legitimacy could very ably compare to what Bourdieu sees as symbolic capital. The greater the legitimacy of the organisation, the more embedded they become in the institutional field; likewise, the more symbolic capital an agent has obtained in Bourdieu's view, the higher they are situated within their relevant field.

'Taken for Granted' Norms and 'Loose Coupling'

The proliferation of the term 'taken for granted' within the literature of NT from the beginning of its formal recognition as a theoretical framework in the 1970s has been, and continues to be, diffuse. The rationale behind this is clear: a primary assertion within NT is that institutional rules are built into and accepted by society as 'the way things are'. Zucker (1977) for example argues that knowledge, once institutionalised, becomes reality and the manner in which things are accomplished. In short, 'it is sufficient for one person simply to tell another that this is how things are done' (Zucker 1977, p. 726). This is not unlike the idea of Bourdieu's *doxa*, which as noted in chapter 3, refers to the unconscious belief that certain aspects of the game are taken as real – unquestioned, and engrained as fact. These accepted norms are further endorsed by law and public influence and, hence, are accepted as 'taken for granted' (Meyer and Rowan 1977; DiMaggio and Powell 1991; Frank et al. 2007; Wiseman et al. 2014; Cantwell and Taylor 2015; Ogawa 2015).

A further important construct in NT and one which has gained much attention, is that of 'loose coupling'. As with many of the notions which lie at the heart of NT, the concept was given ample importance in Meyer and Rowan's (1977) paper. 'Loose coupling' implies gaps between the formal and informal structure of an organisation. As highlighted by Meyer and Rowan (1977), while organisations become increasingly isomorphic as they strive to attain concrete legitimacy through rationalised myths, organisations must also attend to practical activity. Recognising that there is a contradiction in this situation, the authors suggest that a 'stable solution is to maintain the organization in a loosely coupled state' (Meyer and Rowan 1977, p. 360). Hence, while an organisation will take on the appearances of similar organisations within the field, internally they may not actually implement policy or maintain specific rules to the letter. Ogawa (2015) suggests that decoupling within the institutional environment can occur due to a lack of clarity concerning rules and monitoring outcomes to avoid a loss in legitimacy. Frank et al. (2007) recognise the importance for an organisation to maintain legitimacy by replicating wider institutional models and so conforming to institutional myths, while maintaining control over certain aspects of their own operations (which may diverge somewhat from some other institutional aspects). Yet, at the organisational level, various constraints (be they technological, financial, legal, or otherwise) can mean that adoption of the broader rules of the institution will often prevent the organisation from following institutional rules to the letter.

Why use NT for the study of Higher Education?

In the previous two sections of this chapter, I gave a brief overview of the emergence of NT as a credible theoretical perspective and outlined its key concepts. In the following section, I will look at the rationale for examining HE through the lens of NT and why it can ably account for changing conventions of HE policy both nationally and globally.

The past number of years have seen NT being applied by researchers to a wide range of studies including education, politics, public policy, international relations, sociology, and history (e.g. Meyer and Rowan 2006; Bates et al. 2012; Peters 2012; Spruyt 2013; Alasuutari 2015; Peters 2016). Indeed, where there exists a recognisable institutional framework within which organisations operate, it can be assumed that NT will be usefully employed to analyse change within these organisations. Despite the fact that NT has been a growing phenomenon in research over the past few decades, Meyer and Rowan (2006) note that its application in the study of education in general and to HE has been diffuse. This might be surprising, not only because of the potential explanatory power and scope of NT, but also because education in itself can be identified as an institution (e.g. Meyer and Rowan 2006), as can higher education (Frank et al. 2007).

Frank et al. (2007) assert that the use of NT to analyse HE makes for good logic. They highlight that in contrast to other perspectives, NT 'supports the realization that local higher-educational arrangements are very heavily dependent on broader institutions' (Frank et al. 2007, p. 188). They also make the point that in the current environment, HEIs and all their constituents (academic roles and disciplinary fields for example) are measured and defined via international organisations such as UNESCO (I also include other supranational stakeholders such as the EU, the OECD, and the World Bank). Hence, each layer of the institution, from the organisation to the suborganisation, is keenly attuned to international standards such as university rankings and graduate employment rates.

But HE must adapt to its environments and deliver what society expects in order to maintain its legitimacy. As pointed out by Meyer and Rowan (2006), NT dictates that rational actors in each field will always operate out of self-interest, while staying attuned to contexts of history, tradition, culture and the peculiarities of institutional configurations. In this scenario, and as outlined by Cantwell and Taylor (2015), the field can be defined as a social space which constitutes agents or actors who engage 'in a common activity, who compete with one another for resources, and who face similar opportunities and constraints' (p. 413). Under these circumstances, one might assume that the most successful in this power struggle are those who excel in efficiency. However, as we have observed, the NT framework of analysis will prioritise concerns of legitimacy over those of efficiency – economic or otherwise – as

it is legitimacy which gives an organisation privilege within the field above the requirement to stay economically sound. Hence, some of the most privileged and renowned universities in the world, such as Yale, might have fewer concerns regarding economic efficiency, as it is their reputation rather than efficiency which is more meaningful in terms of defining such HEI's as successful. Yet, while prestigious universities can take advantage of their position within the field through legitimatisation, they will not be insulated entirely from sustained development and innovation in HE globally. Even these universities, and the higher education systems to which they belong, must adapt to changing globalising forces to some extent to meet the expectation which is demanded of them.

The Bologna Process (European Higher Education Area 1999), for example, has acted to define the structure and practices of higher education systems in Europe, initially through coercive isomorphic processes, as regulation and change to varying degrees was required to be compliant to the process. But the impact and effects of Bologna do not cease in those member countries who signed up to the process. From the perspective of NT, the harmonisation of European wide HE systems will not only influence but will force change and practice elsewhere. The Bologna Process initiated coercive isomorphism within HE systems of EU member states. However, it has also induced mimetic and normative isomorphism to global HE systems, as the legitimacy of European HE has been further ratified and endorsed by the EU. NT observes that other HE systems around the globe will view countries which have signed up to the Bologna Process as among the most legitimate and might be induced to follow that structure and reproduce their configuration in what they consider is now best practice. Flach and Flach (2010), in their study of the Brazilian HE system, noted not only the effects of the Bologna Process on this HE arena, but they also highlight the stress that these imperatives put on developing countries to modernise and progress their HE systems to being them in line to the standard of those in Europe.

From the perspective of many countries outside the western sphere therefore, competing with harmonised and validated (and thus legitimised) HE systems can be a struggle. This is due largely to funding and often, the lack of a strong infrastructure in HE systems. Dumitru et al. (2014) use NT to explore the effects of the Bologna Process at a considerably more focused level, concentrating their study on a small department within a Romanian university. They found that transformations also occur at the micro levels of the HE sector (in this case, a university department) as expectations of what curricula should now encompass alter to fit what is assumed to be best practice. Additionally, and as highlighted by Frank and Meyer (2007), even the most established, the oldest, and therefore the seemingly most legitimate

universities are compelled to implement change to ensure they retain their legitimacy as an organisation within the institutional field of HE. They note that where change is slow to materialise, private initiatives will emerge to address gaps in educational needs. Meyer and Rowan (2006) also observe the rise in for-profit higher education in the US and elsewhere which forces public HEIs to compete and become more market orientated in a bid to retain student numbers. This situation changes the dynamics of HE at the national levels to varying degrees.

Criticisms of Neo-Institutional Theory as a Theoretical Framework

NT can act as a very powerful theoretical framework to explain and understand the dynamics of change within the institutional field. If we view HE as an institution within the field of education – and as noted, HE lends itself well to this interpretation – transformation within its constituent parts can be understood if considered through the lens of NT. However, as is the case with all theoretical perspectives, and as highlighted in the last chapter with Bourdieu, shortcomings can be identified within every theoretical framework, and NT is no exception.

Although there is much written about NT's ability to draw meaning on institutional change, the framework has also been criticised for not adequately addressing the nature of change within the institution. Greenwood and Meyer (2008) concur with the view that isomorphism is often misunderstood, stressing that in the context of DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) work, the term does not suggest all organisations within an institutional field will become identical, as discussed earlier in this chapter. Rather, organisations converge towards the same practices and become more alike. But as argued by Hoffman (1999, p. 351) 'field formation is not a static process' and exogenous and endogenous events will trigger a reconfiguration of the institutional field. One can recognise the Bologna Process as an example of this. Matters of supranational importance akin to these events ensure that the institutional field of global education is dynamic and transformative.

Perhaps one of the main criticisms of NT, and one which is recognised by DiMaggio and Powell (1991) themselves, is its lack of attention to the dynamics of power relations within the institutional setting. They concede that little consideration has been given to how 'incumbents maintain their dominant positions or respond to threats during periods of crisis or instability' (DiMaggio and Powell 1991, p. 30). DiMaggio and Powell (1991) propose that such limitations could be offset by the assumption that 'actors in key institutions realize considerable gains from the maintenance of those institutions' (p. 30) and that the 'acquisition and maintenance of power within organizational fields requires that dominant

organizations continually enact strategies of control' (pp. 30-31). Hoffman (1999, p. 352) remarks that fields are 'formed around the issues that become important to the interests and objectives of a specific collective of organizations'. It follows therefore, that if organisations do not acknowledge the issues that become current within the field, they are in danger of losing legitimacy. Any HE system which fails to live up to the imperatives of a knowledge economy, for instance, could well find that it will only be a matter of time before a restructure is needed to regain legitimacy in the long run. Likewise, any HEI who chooses to ignore new governance policies, or fails to make curricula changes to satisfy stakeholder demand, will find their legitimacy called into question. In time, this could lead to a loss of position or ranking within the institutional field. Those organisations who act quickly and efficiently to respond to issues within the field will maintain their legitimacy and will further their position. Thus, I argue that under such conditions, NT does account somewhat for power struggles within the institution, although I find the construct is still underdeveloped. How certain issues becomes a central institutional concern in the first place, notwithstanding times of crises, changes in governance or other forms of disruption to the field, subsequently arise. The literature has given much attention to the notion of entrepreneurship in order to address this issue. Entrepreneurship in NT manifests in new developments occurring in the field, initiated by the entrepreneur, which gives rise to new practice. This subsequently impacts the field via isomorphism. However, I find this to be an adequate explanation of how change occurs in the field.

Old Institutional theory was developed from Philip Selznick's work (1948) but was quickly reconstructed to form NT, leaving significant divergence in the two. The main discrepancies between the 'Old' and 'New' Institutional theories are highlighted in Figure 4. Brint and Karabel (1991, p. 343) note that their main difficulty with NT has 'less to do with the tenets of the theory than with its silences'. They suggest that while NT is a powerful theoretical perspective in terms of identifying and examining institutional forms, it does not account for why one form is preferred over another. Brint and Karabel (1991) and Wiseman et al. (2004) allude to the utility of incorporating some 'Old Institutional' theory perspectives into NT in order to make this approach more robust in describing the forces that shape and develop institutions and organisations over time. This view is echoed by Selznick (1996) again who believes there has been too much distinction made between the 'old' and 'new' institutionalisms, which diminishes the power of the institutional perspective as a theoretical framework. Likewise, Hoffman (1999) believes that combining some of the notions held in 'old' institutional theory would inject a new vitality into NT, and better address the issue of explaining power dynamics within the field. He suggests that such an adjustment would

break NT 'free from the strict notion that social conformity will yield only predictable and isomorphic structures' (Hoffman 1999, p 367). What Wiseman et al. (2014), Brint and Karabel (1991), Hoffman (1999) and Selznick (1996) are alluding to, is the focus of power and conflicts of interest which are more embedded in Old Institutional theory, but which are all but passing concerns of NT.

Figure 4: The Old and the New Institutionalism

	Old	New
Conflicts of interest	Central	Peripheral
Source of inertia	Vested interests	Legitimacy imperative
Structural emphasis	Informal structure	Symbolic role of formal structure
Organization embedded in	Local community	Field, sector, or society
Nature of embeddedness	Co-optation	Constitutive
Locus of institutionalization	Organization	Field or society
Organizational dynamics	Change	Persistence
Basis of critique of utilitarianism	Theory of interest aggregation	Theory of action
Evidence for critique of utilitarianism	Unanticipated consequences	Unreflective activity
Key forms of cognition	Values, norms, attitudes	Classifications, routines, scripts, schema
Social psychology	Socialization theory	Attribution theory
Cognitive basis of order	Commitment	Habit, practical action
Goals	Displaced	Ambiguous
Agenda	Policy relevance	Disciplinary

Source: *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*, DiMaggio, P., Powell, W. (eds.) (1991), p. 13.

In Alvesson and Spicer's (2018) view, NT has expanded so quickly as a theoretical framework, it has become somewhat incoherent and scattered in its scope. They believe this is partially due to a lack of general accord on what does and what does not constitute an institution 'because institutions have become everything' (Alvesson and Spicer 2018, p. 7). They highlight how definitions of institutions differ across the scholarship of NT (e.g. Scott 1995; Fligstein 1997) and because of this variation, different emphasis is placed on the varying assumptions within NT such as cultural, historical, structural and rules and meanings. Others, such as Bromley and Powell (2015), have suggested that NT can be viewed as a paradigm, and in parallel with Alvesson and Spicer (2018), note that the broad definition of 'institution' in the literature poses problems. The view that all aspects of change cannot be explained from a single institutional, or any other perspective in isolation, is held by Powell (1991). I agree with this view and argue that the real value of NT lies not in its power to explain institutional effects as a whole; it lies rather in its power in elucidating how exogenous or endogenous change affects the institutional structure. Indeed, Frank et al. (2007, p. 193), note that the position of many sociological theories would forecast major

disparity ‘in the character of educational institutions in different national or regional locales, and very different trajectories of growth and change’. In contrast to these outcomes, they observe that NT is unique as it envisages a very different result to many theoretical perspectives as it predicts not divergence, but isomorphism. This allows us to consider the dynamics of change within an institution under the assumption that globalisation inevitably induces transformation.

Bourdieu and Neo-Institutional Theory: At Odds or Happy Bedfellows?

By way of completing the overview of Bourdieu and NT, I shall outline succinctly here the features of both, which when combined, construct a rigorous heuristic and in so doing justify their use together.

Taking a wider view of these theoretical frameworks, both have within their core tenets the idea of ‘field’. As noted by Slaughter and Taylor (2016), despite its ‘inherent complexity and ambiguity, “field” is a crucial concept in both the social theory of Pierre Bourdieu…and in neo-institutional theory’ (p. 351). In both views there exists a hierarchy with incumbents possessing power and status, while challengers or contenders strive to improve their position within the field. This all occurs within the confines of the field structure and by adhering to the rules of the field (or in Bourdieu’s terms, the rules of the game). But here, and crucially for this analysis, the theories of Bourdieu and NT are at odds with respect to the mechanisms by which movements are negotiated within the field structure (or the way ‘the game’ is played).

For Bourdieu, fields are sites of conflict, with each player in the field being endowed with differing levels of capital they can use to dominate the game. The most powerful players are those who know how to play the rules of the game (through their endowed habitus) and who ultimately have the capital (cultural, economic, social) to lead or dominate the game. Displacement of incumbents who dictate the field is the goal of competitors. Critically, Bourdieu assumes autonomy of the field, with each field possessing their own rules of the game with none directly encroaching on others, refracting their influence except in times of crises. As noted in chapters 1 and 3, it is recognised that the global field of HE has reduced autonomy as it becomes increasingly susceptible to outside forces and as Lingard et al. (2005) note, the economic field is particularly potent in this regard. NT on the other hand, centres not on the role of powerful actors, but on homogenising forces and convergence which emerge from within and outside of the field. The ability to transform and enact common practice enforces legitimacy within NT’s field setting.

With respect to both frameworks, Bourdieu and NT emphasise reproduction (that is, replication of the current status quo) through power (Bourdieu) or convergence (NT) within the field structure. As outlined by Fligstein and Kluttz (2016), field theory's power lies in its ability to view and understand a wide range of interactions within particular settings or social arenas. Both NT's and Bourdieu's ideas of field theory are based on this view, but with wholly different dynamics within the field setting vis-à-vis relationships between, or influence over, those positioned in other fields. In both views, interaction within the field occurs where there is stake in the game, whether it is capital (Bourdieu) or legitimacy (NT). An important point to recap here is the identification of agents within the field. Agents are not necessarily individual players and can also constitute groups, organisations, firms, governments, and other stakeholders. What identifies these agents is common practice, recognition of rules of the game, and shared meanings and norms within their field setting. Within this locale, agents or actors, continually negotiate a higher position which leads not only to reproduction within the field setting, but also to the transformation and occasional the emergence of new subfields. Such dynamics, according to Fligstein and Kluttz (2016), have led researchers to reflect on the roles of agency and action within the field, but also 'to develop sociological views of how cognition works, focusing on issues of culture, framing, identity, habit, and socialization' (p. 187). Such concerns lie within the scope of Bourdieu and NT, but with both possessing differing levels of clarity and strength in their interpretation of how these elements interact with one another.

Under Bourdieu's framework, 'power' is the most dominant agent for change. The accumulation of power is dependent largely on amassing greater quantities of capital, while habitus enables agents to understand more clearly the rules of the game ensuring the enactment of their advantage. A key concept within Bourdieu's field is the notion that agents will perceive and observe the actions of others in their own fields and will act accordingly to maintain or improve their position. Such a state of re-enactment generates and encourages reproduction within the field. The relationship between the field, habitus and capital and their interaction is therefore critical to understanding how conditions within the field are reproduced, and this must also be conditional on the field of power and what it dictates. According to Bourdieu's autonomy of the field, however, such movements can only be understood within the field itself, with little influence from other fields. This, as noted already, comes with the caveat that the exception are times of crises.

Meanwhile, NT views the field as an arena in which transformation occurs via isomorphism. Such a concept offsets the issue of autonomy in Bourdieu's field, as it predicts that

institutions or organisations within a field setting will become more alike. In this scenario, reproduction within the field occurs when certain actors change or dislocate common practice (i.e. entrepreneurs). Significantly, and as highlighted by DiMaggio (1988), notwithstanding the role of entrepreneurship, NT tells us very little about the role of agency within the field and instead, as highlighted by DiMaggio and Powell (1991), has focused on processes of legitimation and social reproduction. This view is reflected by Lounsbury and Schneiberg (2008), who highlight the need to introduce ideas of agency, politics and contestation into NT to explain institutional change and even emergence of new fields. Instead, agents are defined as being bound by the requirements of legitimacy and identification of the correct path of action, and change is invoked by exogenous forces via entrepreneurship. Indeed, the role of entrepreneurship, while making the case for instigating change, represents a weak construct within the social order and suggests that, aside from the innovative prowess of the institutional entrepreneur, transformation is generally static. Bourdieu's notion of agency and actors who strive and compete to dominate the field, moves to counter this problem.

Why, then is the study of Irish HE using theoretical frameworks like Bourdieu and NT which include an overarching concept of field so useful in critical policy analysis? As acknowledged by Hoffman and Wooten (2017), focusing on field analysis inspires researchers to look at evolution, but it also encourages examination of how and why changes in the field matter to those who are located within its boundaries (e.g. in this case academics, students, professional staff in HE). They make the point that fields matter not just 'because of their investigative power, but because actual people must deal with the consequences of their outcomes' (p. 69). This latter point cannot be understated, as it focuses on the human impact of a changing environment from a different perspective than Bourdieu's habitus. I shall revisit the issue of impact on the individual with respect to recent changes in Irish HE in chapter 6.

The theoretical partnership of NT and Bourdieu, consequently, will illuminate homogenisation through exogenous influences in Irish HE through the lens of NT on the one hand, and the forces at play within the global field of education which drives this homogenisation, through Bourdieu's notion of agency and field of power on the other. Previous research which uses the combination of Bourdieu and NT in analysis is infrequent. Hamadache (2015) as noted in chapter 4 uses NT and Bourdieu in his study of orphan drugs in the pharmaceutical industry. Hamadache's (2015) research highlights an alternative approach to the study of organisational fields when predominantly using NT, but which

introduces some aspects of Bourdieu's concept of field. Wiseman et al. (2014) recognise the value of such an approach. They highlight how Bourdieu's habitus 'provides a complementary approach to the taken for granted elements of action, social classification, practical consciousness and the reproduction of social structure' (p. 689) when combined with NT. Elsewhere, Sieweke (2014) argues that habitus can be used with NT to construct a 'cognitive micro-foundation for new institutional theory' (p. 36). While Naidoo (2004) undertakes a vigorous analysis of HE in South Africa using Bourdieu, she also highlights limitations in his work and makes the point that 'Bourdieu's thinking tools do not prevent the incorporation of other perspectives' (p. 468). She does not, however, specifically suggest NT, and instead proposes that the inclusion of discourse analysis within Bourdieu's meta-theoretical framework is 'likely to render the processes of policy development more visible to analysis' (p. 468).

Within the frameworks of Bourdieu and NT, there are both thematic commonalities and altogether opposing mechanisms underpinning their core tenets. Yet, given such contradictions, such analytical conditions will challenge, probe, and usefully interrogate complex sociological issues that transcend local imperatives to understand global forces. Within this context, it should be necessarily assumed that a single theoretical stance will not be enough to interrogate every aspect or predicament relating to the local and global divide. In short, the frameworks of Bourdieu and NT form a complementary means of analysis as each provides their own aspects of inquiry and together, they provide a considerable range of critical perspectives. Appendix 2 outlines the main commonalities and differences between the analytical power of Bourdieu and NT.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have highlighted the main principles that underpin NT as a theoretical framework and have illustrated how this perspective can very capably be applied to analyse HE. There are limitations to NT, however. In particular, it has been criticised for not explaining adequately the role of power in institutional settings. To conclude this chapter, I set out the commutuality and differences of these frameworks to elucidate the value of using both. These observations will now come to fruition as Irish HE is evaluated through the lenses of Bourdieu and NT in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: A Critical Analysis of Irish Higher Education Through Bourdieu and Neo-Institutional Theory

Introduction

In chapter 2, I traced the development of Irish HE and the role it has had in shaping today's Ireland. In chapters 3 and 4, I outlined the theoretical frameworks of Bourdieu and Neo-Institutional theory together with their main tenets, which will now be used in the analysis of higher education policy in Ireland. Together, these chapters form the contextual and theoretical basis on which to interrogate the course of Irish HE policy, and in particular, its changed trajectory over the past decade. With respect to critical policy analysis, the current chapter meets two aims. These are (iii) an examination of the distribution of power, resources, and knowledge; and (iv) interrogation of the complex systems and environments in which policy is made and implemented. This analysis is constructed with a particular focus on the period since the 2008 Global Financial Crisis. As I indicated in chapter 2, the approach by the Irish government in steering HE was, until a decade ago, generally incorporated into policy relating to all aspects of education including primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. The exception to this was the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions (PTRLI) which emerged in 1998 and focused exclusively on developing government funded research in HE – activity which up to that juncture was virtually non-existent (Harkin and Hazelkorn 2015). This is particularly noteworthy, because although a recognisable HE sector has existed in Ireland since the birth of the state, central policy to direct the system as a whole did not feature in government plans or ambitions until relatively recently. The level of direct government intervention in HE changed dramatically following recommendations in *Building Ireland's Smart Economy: A Framework for Sustainable Economic Renewal* (Department of An Taoiseach 2008) with the first dedicated policy document relating specifically to higher education emerging in 2010 with the publication of *Investing in Global Relationships: Ireland's International Education Strategy 2010-15* (DoES 2010). This was followed quickly by an overarching medium-term blueprint for the development of higher education in 2011 with the publication of the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* (DoES 2011). Subsequent policy documents ensued swiftly over the following years focusing on various aspects of development within the HE sector.

The principal policy text for this analysis is the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* (DoES 2011) (NSHE). In addition, related texts will also be examined as companion policy documents which are connected exclusively to internationalisation, a central concern of the NSHE. These are *Investing in Global Relationships: Ireland's International*

Education Strategy 2010-15 (DoES 2010) (IGR) and *Irish Educated Globally Connected: An International Education Strategy for Ireland, 2016-2020* (DoES 2016b) (IEGC). It is also prudent to look at other publications such as *Investing in National Ambition: A Strategy for Funding Higher Education* (DoES 2016a) (also known as the Cassells report), the purpose of which is to address the ever-present quandary of state funding in Irish HE. While the documents listed here are the primary focus of this dissertation as they demarcate a new direction vis-à-vis government direction for HE, a full list of policy documents relating to HE in Ireland since the 1960s up to 2019 is documented in Appendix 1.

This chapter proceeds as follows. The first section briefly depicts the conditions under which policy change in HE took place, the context for this change, and the ensuing government publications which acted to enforce an altered HE landscape. The second section will focus on locating Irish HE in the global field of HE by analysing it through the perspectives of Bourdieu and NT. This will add context and elucidate how global forces have influenced Irish HE policy. The third section will interrogate the policy documents themselves. This will be laid out in a thematic structure, which follows the visions as set out by government in the NSHE, as well as less discernible themes which surface on reading systematically through the policy frameworks. To conclude, I draw on insights from analysis of using both theoretical frameworks to form some conclusions on the nature of change in Irish higher education over the course of the past decade.

Global Financial Crisis: A Catalyst for Change

Prior to 2010, government HE policy and the individual missions of HEIs were loosely coupled, with little government intervention in how they operated or how their individual strategies were focused, as noted in previous chapters. The aftermath of the GFC introduced a top-down, government led policy direction which sought to align institutional policy with the aspirations of the state. *Building Ireland's Smart Economy: A Framework for Sustainable Economic Renewal* (Department of An Taoiseach 2008) not only outlined plans for a restructuring of HE, it also advocated for 'a commercialisation culture in third-level institutions alongside the now embedded teaching and research culture' (Department of An Taoiseach 2008, p. 15). A number of policy documents relating to HE emerged over the ensuing years and it continues to be an area of close government scrutiny. As noted, the current research focuses specifically on three policy texts: the NSHE, IGR and IEGC as in my view these documents embody the changing nature of HE over the past decade in Ireland.

Other research has identified the GFC as a critical juncture in Irish HE where government has become increasingly implicated in higher education governance (e.g. Holborow 2012;

Lillis and Morgan 2012; Lynch 2012; Mercille and Murphy 2017). So the observation that the economic fallout from the GFC engendered a degree of transformation in the Irish HE sector is not a new assertion in the current study. The intention to set out change was also clearly articulated in *Building Ireland's Smart Economy: A Framework for Sustainable Economic Renewal* (Department of An Taoiseach 2008) as noted above. The current research attempts to identify underlying conditions in global HE by arguing that change was afoot for Irish HE notwithstanding crisis in 2008. Using the frameworks of Bourdieu and NT in this critical policy analysis shows that while the GFC might have expediated the transformation in Irish HE, the factors which drove the type of transformation witnessed were already present in the background, concealed by the wealth and excesses of the Celtic Tiger years and a reluctance to move away from the status quo, as noted in chapter 2.

During and After Crisis: Emergence of a New Policy Direction

Broadly speaking, the vision for Irish HE as set out by the NSHE falls broadly into categories concerning the economy, research, quality of student experience, funding, accountability, public engagement, participation (primarily lifelong learning part-time provision), the internationalisation of higher education and structural efficiency, collaboration, and merger. Of particular note within current HE policy frameworks for Ireland are references to OECD and EU directives, a point of extreme importance which shall become evident throughout this chapter. Ireland is a member state of both the OECD and EU, so mention of these supranational organisations in policy would be expected. But the NSHE goes beyond a simple acknowledgment in the policy text. The mechanism by which these policy frameworks were constructed, and the consultation process – largely devoid of stakeholders directly involved in Irish HE – is also of significant interest. This forms an additional theme to those set out in the NSHE for analysis in the current study – that of dialogue and consultation.

The underlying assumption which is made here and as alluded to already, is that while government steered and implemented the new policy trajectory based on the various policy instruments, the real forces which lay behind they shape of the transformation are not so apparent. Examination of policy changes through the lenses of Bourdieu and NT will identify other dynamics outside of Irish government or its control, which underpin the reasons why policy moved in its specific current direction.

Critical Policy Analysis - Objectives for this Chapter

The objectives of CPA which will be examined over the following pages are (iii) an examination of the distribution of power, resources, and knowledge; and (iv) interrogation

of the complex systems and environments in which policy is made and implemented. Bourdieu and NT will be used to scaffold this critical policy analysis. For Ireland, such an investigation in HE is of significant importance as it illuminates where the policy trajectory following the GFC emanated from. To do this, I will first give an overview of Irish HE in the context of its global environment as recognised through Bourdieu and NT. I will then analyse the policy texts to see how this global view has manifested in the policy instruments as set out by the NSHE. Examination of policy texts through the lenses of Bourdieu and NT will identify other dynamics outside of Irish government or its control, which underpin the reasons why policy moved in this specific direction. So, what this implies is that it is not policy itself that changed HE direction per se; rather, it is other forces that through policy changed its direction.

Locating Irish Higher Education in the Global Field

A Bourdieusian Perspective

In chapter 3, I outlined how Irish HE can be understood to have its own habitus. Having reasoned that this is very much a different approach to how habitus has previously been constructed and used in educational research, I argue that such a move can place meaning and structure on our understanding of Irish HE's transformation within the context of global HE. Through focusing on HE in this manner – as a distinct actor within the global field of higher education – we can meaningfully interrogate the policy changes which followed the GFC. As we shall see from the perspective of Bourdieu's thinking tools, the requirement to ensure that Irish HE played by the rules of the game in the global HE field, draws the conclusion that while the GFC may have been a catalyst for change, the nature of change might be understood to be anticipated, if not predicted.

Irish HE has been at both the periphery and centre of Irish society since the birth of the Irish Free State in 1922, as delineated in chapter 2. It has had varying degrees of importance given over to it by state – from being largely on the edge of policy formation up to the late 1960s, to being a central government focus by 2010. HE in Ireland has been a site of struggle amongst religious denominations and has been tied intimately with the struggles for Irish independence. It has been an instrument of modernisation from a country whose economy was concerned with home industry and agriculture, to one of the most globalised countries in the world. It has been a conduit of culture as Irish universities count Oscar Wilde, James Joyce, William Butler Yeats, and Bram Stoker among their notable alumni. In short, Irish HE has its own unique history and narrative. Using the perspective which begins with Irish HE occupying its own habitus enables a view that it can be taken as an actor within the global

field of higher education and in turn, thereby allows an examination of Irish higher education *sui generis.* By invoking Bourdieu's construct of habitus and applying it to Irish HE, we observe the power dynamics, struggles and contestation at the global level which have shaped Irish HE and in which Irish HE is an agent. Additionally, the policy texts which I draw upon likewise view the HE system as a whole, rather than overemphasising any of its constituent parts. As such, in my view it makes sense to conduct analysis from this perspective. It allows an outlook on how Irish HE has come to be shaped not necessarily by decisions which are made in isolation by its constituent parts (e.g. The State, the Department of Education, the Higher Education Authority), but by what the rules of the game within the global field of HE dictate. Consequently, in this setting, it perceives Irish HE as a rule follower rather than a rule maker. In short, it is inferred that Irish HE is shaped by the global field of higher education and the field of power dominating this field, and not, as perhaps is widely understood, by local or national policy makers. With a view to understanding this dynamic, it is necessary to briefly refer to the drivers (or rules) of the global higher education field.

Global Higher Education Policy and the Rules of the Game

In chapter 1, I outlined how the influence of globalisation has affected the structure of HE systems around the world. What has become a dominant theme to these structures is the idea that HE is critical in producing the knowledge necessary to participate and compete in a globalised world. Dale (2005) notes that 'knowledge' has taken over from production as the primary asset required in sustaining a strong economy. Similarly, Brown and Lauder assert that there has been a shift from 'bloody wars to knowledge wars' (2012, p. 118) as governments place increasing importance on the development of national knowledge infrastructures in the global competition for new ideas and innovation. As noted by Olssen and Peters (2005), universities are seen as a crucial driver of the knowledge economy, and indeed, this view can be extended to all HEIs within a HE system. Recollecting that the 'knowledge economy' may be understood as a global contest to produce a highly skilled workforce with the dual goal of reinforcing and expanding local economies, knowledge is valorised as a highly sought-after commodity. It is in this environment that current Irish HE policy is situated. Knowledge economy requirements, human capital, competition, internationalisation and rankings are all increasingly viewed as having a central position in policy formation. Such are the prerogatives of the global field of HE as they are broadly understood to be – in short, what the rules of the game are if viewed through Bourdieu's theory of practice. HE systems play by these rules through policy directives set in national

contexts. It is of critical importance therefore, to identify who sets these rules of the game in the context of global HE.

Influences Behind Higher Education Policy Change – The Field of Power

While policy is set by national government, this is only insofar as the rules of the game, in this case, the rules of global HE, will permit. Under the auspices of globalisation and knowledge economy imperatives, national governments now appear acutely constrained in their policy choices vis-à-vis higher education. This is especially the case for open nations like Ireland, who have more invested in the game of global HE than less globalised countries. The field of power as already outlined in chapter 3 can be understood to consist of the most powerful actors across an array of fields. I argue that in a similar way to Bourdieu's example of the nobility and the misrecognition of power as outlined in chapter 3, the OECD and EU have the symbolic capital and power capable of directing global policy on education with little opposition. Although the OECD has no legislative capacity like the EU or a financial stake in ensuring countries have efficient HE systems like the World Bank, the OECD has nonetheless garnered a position of having significant policy influence over member states and their HE systems. It does this, according to Amaral and Neave (2009) through setting out the norms and practices of what is required for liberal, open economies. Similarly, Kallo (2020) outlines how the OECD has created and redefined the boundaries of knowledge through concepts such as the knowledge economy, but through its publications has been perceived as having a direct impact on HE policy setting within and beyond its member states. But the OECD also sets out the role institutions should undertake in 'developing and handing on those norms that cause actors in a given community to switch to the logic of appropriateness' (Amaral and Neave 2009, p. 85). In short, with respect to global HE the OECD (along with other organisations such as the EU) sets out the rules of this game as a holder of immense symbolic power in this field. A good example of this can be seen through the OECD's dissemination of knowledge economy ideals some 25 years ago and which have been embedded as taken for granted norms in HE. *The Knowledge-Based Economy* (OECD 1996) acknowledged that 'identifying "best practices" for the knowledge-based economy is a focal point' (OECD 1996, p. 3) of the OECD and this continues to form a large part of its agenda. Of course, the importance of sustaining a knowledge based economy is also reflected by other supranational organisations such as the EU, whose *White Paper on Education and Training, Teaching and Learning: Towards the Learning Society* (European Union 1995) explicitly linked education and training to economic growth and competition. Mechanisms to support these imperatives have been adopted into the policy imperatives of member states and beyond. The EU on the other hand, also has the legislative power to enact policy reform

through regulation. Together, these supranational organisations, I argue, are the true holders of power in terms of HE policy setting. Others can be included in this ensemble for other countries – the World Bank for example, will hold a good deal of power and sway for poorer countries. But for Ireland, it is the OECD and EU in particular who have shaped and continue to influence Irish HE policy.

EU policy directives including the Bologna Declaration (European Higher Education Area 1999), the Lisbon Strategy (Lisbon European Council 2000) and its successor the Europe 2020 strategy (European Commission 2010), have served to incorporate EU objectives into the education systems of member states. As pointed out by Alexiadou and Lange (2010), many countries have gone on to align their own education policies in accord with EU edict. But this type of direct intervention is not the only means by which the EU controls education in its member states. Murphy (2003) notes that the European Court of Justice (ECJ) has had a significant role in further integrating national policy towards the EU objective of economic competition. He asserts that up to the Maastricht Treaty, 'education policy was legally deemed to lie within the exclusive jurisdiction of individual member states…' (Murphy 2003, p. 554). However, various benchmark cases have contributed to the way in which the ECJ has manoeuvred its legitimacy over the area of education policy formation, exercising its power through circuitous means. As pointed out by Murphy (2003), changes concerning education policy were 'not predicted by the member states that signed and ratified the EEC Treaty in 1957' (p. 555), and this has resulted in some distrust among member states who have justifiable cause considering education's 'significance to the rhetoric of citizenship, civil society, and a Europe of knowledge' (p. 559). Similar views are reflected by Walkenhorst (2008), who maintains that many member states have concerns about neo-liberalisation, marketisation, and privatisation with respect to the Bologna Process. This is despite the European Commission (2003) reporting widespread backing among European HEIs for the process.

In Bourdieusian terms then, Irish HE, if viewed as an agent or actor with a habitus which enables it to play by these rules for the game and situated within the global field of HE, is subject to the powerful directives which are embedded in the field by the OECD and the EU. Consequently, it can be predicted that trends within Irish HE policy will move towards what is dictated by the field of power, or more accurately, what those in the field of power (the OECD and EU), dictate as the rules of the game within the global field of HE. Actors within the field will accept these rules as *doxa* (that is, as outlined in chapter 3, unquestioned truths and taken for granted norms) and play by the rules of the game to avoid what Bourdieu

described as hysteresis, or to retain a position within the field akin to 'a fish in water' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1989, p. 127). From this perspective, although the state will make decisions on the direction of Irish HE, it will only do so within the realm of the field and the rules of the game – and these rules are ultimately dictated by these powerful actors. In viewing Irish HE as located within the global field of higher education, it will, through habitus, become accustomed to, and better able to play by these rules. As the rules of the game change, so too will Irish HE as it responds to these dynamics through habitus. In this view, it should necessarily be expected that reference to the OECD and EU and some mirroring of their objectives will be evident in national policy objectives. This hypothesis will be tested later in this chapter as the specific themes of the NSHE (and with respect to internationalisation, IGR and IEGC) are scrutinised for detectable signs of this exogenous influence.

With respect to CPA, Bourdieu's work can very ably examine the distribution of power, resources, and knowledge (iii) in the global field of HE in which Ireland is situated and also pay attention to the complex environment in which recent Irish HE policy has been made and implemented (iv). However, recalling from chapter 3, Bourdieu's assertion that it is only in times of crises that one field will impact on another assumes the scenario that when crises pass, activity in the field will revert to functioning autonomously notwithstanding the field of power and what it dictates. But as Ball (1998, p. 122) observes, concepts 'such as 'the 'learning society', the 'knowledge-based economy'…symbolise the increasing colonisation of education policy by economic policy imperatives'. In other words, contrary to Bourdieu's maxims, the field of education is becoming increasing less autonomous and is being shaped by the concerns of the economic field. While noting this as a particular shortcoming of Bourdieu's work, I argued in chapter 3 that the assumption of field autonomy was far more plausible when Bourdieu was developing his oeuvre. Under the auspices of globalisation, however, field autonomy in higher education in increasingly eroding (Deer 2003; Maton 2005; Marginson 2006). Bourdieu himself did caution that the notion of field 'does not provide ready-made answers to all possible queries, in the manner of the grand concepts of "theoretical theory"' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p. 110). The major virtue of the concept of the field is that it promotes the constant and dynamic need to rethink the field under analysis; as Bourdieu points out, it compels us 'to *raise* questions: about the limits of the universe under investigation, how it is "articulated" …and to what degree' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p. 101, original emphasis). Neo-Institutional theory on the other hand, helps us to understand how the spread or crossing over of economic prerogatives into the field of

higher education (in the form of driving the knowledge economy) has culminated in these imperatives being reflected in Irish HE policy.

The next section draws on NT to scaffold and build on the view that Irish HE has been driven not at state level, but by global forces. NT underscores and highlights institutional conventions in the global field of HE. Utilising NT can also successfully explicate the need of the Irish HE system to maintain legitimacy under the scrutiny of a wider field of power – the EU, supranational organisations such as the OECD and other manifestations of control and influence, such as the public and in particular the media, which can dramatically affect institutional legitimacy in either a positive or a negative way.

A Neo-Institutional Theory Perspective

In keeping with Bourdieu's emphasis that history is an important basis on which to understand how fields are formed, NT, in parallel, regards historical context as significant to the study of institutions. As outlined by Frank et al. (2007) and of relevance to this study, HE as we currently understand it has been formed on 'structures whose nature and meaning have been institutionalized over many centuries' (p. 187). The validations given by these social channels form robust institutional rules which act as what Meyer and Rowan (1977, p. 343) describe as 'highly rationalized myths' and consolidate our vision of what an institution is. In other words, they inform public opinion on what can be 'taken for granted' as institutional structures. But these highly rationalised myths change over time and are replaced by new institutional norms and legitimised behaviour. As noted in the previous section which viewed Irish HE through the lens of Bourdieu, these taken for granted norms in higher education have been shaped by supranational organisations such as the OECD, EU, and the World Bank. In the context of Irish HE, it is important to keep in mind why we come to understand and accept institutional structures, as it will inform, through the lens of NT, how change within global HE has impacted on the Irish system. As noted by various authors already in chapter 4 (e.g. Boli et al. 1994; Scott 1995; Lounsbury and Crumley 2007; Lipnicka and Verhoeven 2014) there are divergent ideas with respect to what encompasses an institution. Viewing higher education through an institutional framework is particularly useful in examining convergence and diversity between HE systems and institutions as well as other processes such as isomorphism (e.g. Marginson 1999b; Frank et al. 2007; Flach and Flach 2010; Lipnicka and Verhoeven 2014; Croucher and Woelert, 2016). The current investigation similarly makes the key assumption that Irish HE can ably be investigated through institutional process and here I view Irish HE as an institution situated within the global field of HE.

How does NT account for the current dynamics which exist within the Irish HE policy arena? Earlier observations in this research with respect to Ireland's permeability to exogenous forces are assumed here. Under this postulation, NT can ably illuminate the conditions under which the Irish HE sector has transformed owing to global vagaries in the institutional field and the imperative to remain both relevant and current, the process of convergence through isomorphism (recalling that isomorphism denotes conformity in the processes and structures seen over institutions, systems and organisations) and the requirement to endure under these conditions through legitimacy. NT dictates that organisations and systems are expected to conform to rules and expectations within their institutional field and as Powell (2008, p. 975) notes they are 'subject to reputational and regulatory pressures'. Conceptually, this is not unlike what Bourdieu suggests when agents know, and conform to, the 'rules of the game'. But whereas Bourdieu's notion of field envisages a site of struggle, NT's field construct acts as a site of change through isomorphism.

While organisations' behaviour within the same field is guided by institutionalised 'rational myths', institutional fields interact with, and have influence over each other, not just at the local level, but also at the global. Critically then, for this study, NT's field, unlike Bourdieu's, does not imply autonomy (even of the relative form). With this modus operandi, NT offers valuable insights regarding the changes in Irish HE in the last decade by evaluating how gradual transformation internationally in the field has progressively impacted and shaped the policy terrain in Ireland. In the context of global competition, organisations, systems and institutions are subject to their environment and factors outside of their control, and therefore have a propensity to transform in an attempt to meet these pressures. Irish HE policy began to exhibit signs of this new dynamic within the global field of education in the 1990s particularly from the publication of *Charting Our Education Future: White Paper on Education* (DoES 1995), which alludes to the need for the 'provision and renewal of the skills and competencies necessary for the development of our economy and society' (p. 5).

NT asserts that participants within the field will be cognisant of renewed shared imperatives and, as with Irish HE, will act in accordance with these new priorities. Irish policy setting within HE has continued along this stratum, particularly since the GFC, where the urgency to reform the HE sector as a driver of knowledge economy and aligning it with this imperative as uniformly considered best practice within the field is considered an absolute priority. As the NSHE notes, a key objective is 'an innovative knowledge-based economy' (DoES 2011, p. 9) for which Ireland's HEIs and their activity are a key component. The publication of government policy documents IGR, NSHE and IEGC particularly reflect the

growing importance within the institutional field of HE of not only pinning higher education to the demands of the economy, but also of the internationalisation of HE. In an interconnected world, asserts the NSHE, Irish HEIs operate on a world stage which 'clearly demands a strategic approach to internationalisation and global engagement' (DoES 2011, p. 80). So, as predicted by NT, both endogenous pressures (the Irish government and other HEIs) and exogenous pressures (the global field of HE) will act to transform Irish higher education.

Isomorphism in Irish Higher Education

The Bologna Declaration (European Higher Education Area 1999) was arguably one of the first significant events which would dislocate Irish HE policy from focusing on the local to the more regional, European context. The Bologna Process acts as a standardisation regimen, which homogenises European HE systems. This kind of disruption has been referred to as 'glocalization' (Robertson 1995). With a focus on NT, such reconfiguration represents coercive processes, with the requirement to adhere to the policy moves of the EU. But it also enacts mimetic isomorphism where HE systems and institutions alike become more analogous as they move towards what are considered exemplars in the field (e.g. those who consistently score highly in rankings or are acknowledged as world class systems). Under the NT framework, the condition to maintain legitimacy predicts that adherence to policy changes directed from an overarching body such as the EU, will be requisite to ensuring national and international confidence in member states' HE systems. Finally, the implementation of the Bologna Process allows the observation over time of the gradual effects of normative isomorphism as academic mobility – a central goal in the Bologna Process – becomes apparent. The conventions of the Bologna Process represent the legal endorsement of a wider European agreement authorised by the member states who participate in the Bologna Process. The Irish government eagerly adopted these structural changes in HE ensuring swift conformance to this new EU directive within the European HE policy arena. Such changes were, as Mernagh (2010) notes, implemented in Ireland in a consistent and committed fashion. Indeed, the NSHE regards Ireland 'as a leader' (DoES 2011, p. 40) with respect to its success in implementing reforms from the Bologna Declaration. This observation indicates the existence not only of coercive isomorphism, but also of memetic isomorphism and highlights a strong disposition to stay within the confines of this newly transformed field.

A Question of Legitimacy

Meyer and Rowan's (1977) highlight how 'the positions, policies, programs, and procedures of modern organizations are enforced by public opinion' (p. 343) through a variety of social conduits such the law, education, the courts etc. Likewise, Hoffman and Wooten (2017) note the influence of constituents including 'government, critical exchange partners, sources of funding, professional and trade associations, special interest groups, and the general public' (p. 56). To these agents, I add the media as perhaps one of the more influential channels with regard to informing shared views, particularly with respect to gaining and maintaining legitimacy. The media has been at the centre of reporting poor management practices within Irish HEIs particularly since the GFC, raising concerns inappropriate spending of public finances. Additionally, coverage of proceedings in the Public Accounts Committees (PAC) which have featured HEIs in a negative light, are reported in the news. I shall revisit this issue with respect to Irish HE later in this chapter.

Legitimacy, as one of the cornerstones of the NT framework, has an important role to play within the context of Irish HE. Young (2009) discusses the need for HEIs to look right and to speak the right language in order to be globally accepted. Likewise, Morgan and Shahjahan (2016) highlight that HEIs' 'desire to belong to the international community rests in being a visible actor in the global knowledge economy' (p. 100). This has led to state and government being fearful of 'opting out' of this fiercely competitive ground in producing knowledge for the knowledge economy. In return for acceptance into this community, HEIs will gain in the all-important game of rankings, international students and the income that is generated by these globally driven objectives. This is particularly representative of what has occurred within the Irish HE space. Through policy shifts and the drive to become one of the world's most globalised nations, the Irish government has used the leverage of EU policy (e.g. the Bologna Process), OECD recommendations, and the GFC to pin the HE system towards global competitiveness and economic stability. Viewing this through the lens of NT however, we see very real concerns of maintaining higher education legitimacy in a globalising world. Notwithstanding the publication of the NSHE, it is likely that under such competitive pressure HEIs would engage in activities which foster knowledge economy ideals to appear legitimate.

Loose Coupling and the Struggle to Appear Legitimate

As outlined earlier in this chapter, the matter of accountability in Irish HE is one of particular concern both for government and HEI stakeholders, and it continues to be a topic of debate. This also has implications in terms of the way HEIs operate. In chapter 4, I presented the

idea of loose coupling, which is a term used to describe relaxed adherence to the rules of the field. Organisations on the surface will appear as if they are following these rules, but in reality, they are doing little to apply the practices they are expected to conform to. As Misangyi (2016, p. 408) notes, loose coupling or decoupling occurs when organisations adopt a 'legitimating program or policy and at the same time fail to implement some or all of the requisite practices' which are expected to go with the implementation. Within NT, this is recognised as a practice used by organisations to manoeuvre and navigate complex institutional fields to maintain legitimacy, at least in appearances. For example, a university might have an existing policy or strategy on public engagement but engage in little activity to meet the policy or strategy objectives. This is particularly relevant in the context of an environment which is insufficiently funded, an example of which we shall encounter further on in this chapter.

The previous sections defined the distribution of power, resources and knowledge and also examined the complex global environment in which Irish HE operates and policy is shaped and implemented. This examination, through the lens of Bourdieu and NT, links CPA objectives (iii) and (iv) as laid out in chapter 1 respectively to Irish HE. The next section moves to examine how this environment has impacted directly on Irish HE policy.

The Manifestation of Global Rules on Local Policy in Irish Higher Education

With respect to Irish HE then, perhaps it might be expected that the most powerful actors involved in policy formation are the Irish government and its representatives (e.g. the Department of Education and Skills and the HEA). However, if we view Irish HE through a Bourdieusian and NT perspective – that is, as an agent within the global field of higher education – this presents a very different picture. Against this backdrop which considers a macro view, the role of national governance accounts for much less in the transformation of Irish HE than might first appear to be the case, although the process of enacting change might have largely fallen to them. At the beginning of this chapter, I set out the visions, or themes, which are highlighted in the NSHE as particular areas of focus. The following section provides an overview before interrogating each of these themes in light of the above discussion.

Thematic Overview

With respect to the thematic structure of the policy documents, a reading of NSHE, IGR and IEGC policy texts includes economic objectives as primary concerns, but much of the narrative within these policy texts can be traced back to the EU and OECD. The NSHE

references to the OECD in terms of rankings (DoES 2011, p. 31), research performance (DoES 2011, p. 37), performance (DoES 2011, p. 42), education attainment (DoES 2011, p. 43), funding (DoES 2011, p. 43), economic growth (DoES 2011, p. 45), lifelong learning and part-time provision (DoES 2011, p. 46), restructuring (DoES 2011, p. 70) and internationalisation (DoES 2011, p. 81). Likewise, the EU is repeatedly referred to in similar capacities, particularly with respect to internationalisation. Hence, the reach of these organisations within current Irish HE policy goes far beyond a simple acknowledgment or nod. What is at the core of these policies are those which have filtered down from these supranational organisations. For example, Ireland's approach to implementing the recommendation from the Bologna Process as noted earlier is highlighted as a success, and the performance of its HE system in relation to other OECD countries is highlighted. Indeed, the 2004 OECD report emphasised concerns regarding 'the absence of a national strategy' (OECD 2004, p. 61), a situation which was remediated by the publication of the NSHE some seven years later. This latter point is hardly a coincidence. While the 2004 OECD report seems to have remained on the policy shelf during the Celtic Tiger years, it appears to have been promptly dusted off and relied heavily upon for what would become the NSHE. The 2004 OECD report is not only directly referred to several times in the NSHE (DoES 2011, p. 38; p. 68; p. 70; p. 89 and p. 93), many of its recommendations (in my view, the most austere ones and those most in tune with knowledge economy prerogatives), are reflected as policy instruments within the NSHE itself. In addition, the NSHE is also scattered with observations from the OECD's *Education at a Glance* series (DoES 2011, p. 31; p. 33; p. 40; p. 43; p. 46; p. 111 and p. 112), particularly drawing from the most contemporary issues published in 2008 and 2009. These observations will become apparent as the themes within the NSHE are interrogated later in this chapter.

Theme 1: The Economy and Emphasis on the Knowledge Society

The NSHE is clear in its assertion that higher education 'is central to future economic development in Ireland' (DoES 2011, p. 3) and that 'each aspect of higher education's mission – teaching, research and engagement with the wider community – is central to economic development' (DoES 2011, p. 31). Indeed, the policy is explicit in its goals towards building a knowledge based, innovative economy, and to do this, it is 'essential to create and enhance human capital by expanding participation in higher education' (DoES 2011, p. 10). What we see at the core of this text are directives largely in tune with economic, EU and OECD objectives, but which are still interspersed with national concerns. Lingard and Rizvi (2009) regard current OECD direction as one which stresses 'the role of education

in ensuring economic efficiency within an increasingly globalized market' (p. 451). The objectives of the NSHE can be seen to mirror this view. As outlined by the NSHE (DoES, p. 10) Irish HE will need to connect 'better with the wider needs of society and the economy, while operating in a more competitive globalised environment'.

There is particular emphasis on consolidating and reinforcing the relationship between HE and industry and enterprise. Furthermore, it is stated that HE should be more proactive in 'commercialisation and knowledge transfer and will have to pursue this in collaboration with others in enterprise and the wider society' (DoES 2011, p. 31). This objective is strikingly similar to one outlined by the OECD (1996, p. 25) which indicated that 'university/industry collaborations bring with them opportunities to increase the relevance of the university's educational mission' (OECD 1996, p. 25) but also as a mechanism to stimulate new research directions. Retention of international multinational corporations in Ireland and the attraction of new foreign direct investment are all incorporated aims of the NSHE and ensuring a highly educated workforce is regarded as the means to achieve this. The continued development of Ireland's human capital is seen as the key to the growth of the knowledge economy, which in turn is to be achieved by increasing participation in tertiary education: 'the educational level of the Irish population has to be raised. We need more graduates at every level' (DoES 2011, p. 29). In short, 'our economy depends on – and will continue to depend on – knowledge and its application in products, processes and services' (DoES 2011, p. 29). The aspiration behind fostering such a knowledge economy is ultimately framed in terms of the providing sustainable employment opportunities and good living standards for the Irish citizens. Indeed, such a focus is hardly surprising in the context of the development and publication of the NSHE in a time of recession, mass emigration, and austerity. The purpose of the NSHE is therefore one of a dual approach – to help Ireland in its recovery from the economic fallout attributed to the GFC; and, secondly, to ensure long term sustainability of national prosperity. It has been formed firmly in view of international objectives, mindful of Ireland's position as a globalised nation and as a host country for many international corporations, and very much in tune with OECD and EU directives. These directives, as noted earlier in this chapter, are constituent rules within the field of global HE in which Irish HE is situated. It is in the adherence to these rules that we can observe how habitus manifests, and how it can be understood that Ireland is very much a player in this global field rather than an outlier.

Theme 2: Research

Increased provision of research activity in terms of funding and support is outlined in the NSHE as having a pivotal role in the production of knowledge and seen as an underlying and fundamental element of bolstering a robust economy. In order to meet its ambitions to build an innovative knowledge economy, the NSHE outlines how Irish HEIs need to 'break new ground in research of the highest standards across the spectrum of disciplines and activity' (DoES 2011, p. 12). Moreover, it is suggested that research activity itself needs to increase, with particular focus on Irish national, cultural, and social requirements. At the time of the NSHE's publication, Ireland ranked in 8th place in 28 countries (DoES 2011, p. 37) with respect to research publications per 1,000 inhabitants. As noted already in this chapter and as recognised in the NSHE, Ireland had virtually no research output up to the mid-1990s and having started from a low base, rapidly built up a strong research infrastructure in Ireland's HEIs. The NSHE focuses primarily on research in the areas of science and technology and innovation, but it also places significant emphasis on the commercialisation of this research activity. As outlined in the NSHE, a core feature of 'knowledge-based economies is their ability to convert knowledge from the research base into products for economic and social benefit' (DoES 2011, p. 69). According to the NSHE, HEIs 'must recognise that knowledge transfer and commercialisation are important elements in their mission and part of their societal responsibilities' (DoES 2011, p. 70). This focus on research is one which anticipates a complete overhaul of tertiary education in Ireland and the NSHE's vision of Irish HE into the future 'should be characterised by research-performing institutions that interact effectively with enterprise and society within an open innovation system' (DoES 2011, p. 69). In parallel, this is reflected in a recommendation contained in the 2004 OECD report which put forward the idea that HEIs should encourage the 'exploitation of research through spin out companies; every effort should be made to involve private sector finance in such ventures' (OECD 2004, p. 65). But it also recommended that steps should be taken to 'expand the numbers of doctoral students in universities with the intention to more than double them by 2010' (OECD 2004, p. 65). Consequently, the intent to connect research in Irish HE with industry and enterprise is one of the key objectives of national policy on HE following the collapse of the Celtic Tiger, but one which was already outlined on previous occasions by the OECD.

Theme 3: Funding in Irish Higher Education

The contentious issue of funding with respect to Ireland's HE sector has been a long standing one. During the Celtic Tiger years, funding in the sector was not increased or adjusted to

reflect general increases in GDP over the period (see Figure 2 in chapter 2). The 2008 post-boom austerity measures imposed by government as a condition of the ECB/EU/IMF (commonly referred to as 'the troika') bailout forced enormous cuts in public spending. The *European Higher Education Area in 2012: Bologna Process Implementation Report* (European Union 2012a) noted that during the period 2008-2010, some of the most severe cuts to HE sectors in Europe were to be found in Ireland. According to the NSHE (DoES 2011), in the absence of state capital to invest at least in the short term and the impact of the ambitions and budgetary concerns involved, this status quo would persist, and as the NSHE notes 'nor…can we reasonably expect the required level of costs to be met solely by increased exchequer funding' (DoES 2011, p. 15). Instead, individual HEIs are encouraged, and indeed required, to reduce their reliance on public funding and generate additional revenue to meet any shortfall after exchequer funds are allocated. They are expected to identify and participate in activity that allows them to generate their own income in the face of reduced funding and to deliver on the ambitions contained within NSHE, IGR and IEGC. The OECD recognised this as an astute approach in 2004 when it recommended that HEIs in Ireland should be actively incentivised 'to seek external sources of funding the Government' (OECD 2004, p. 63). How they do this is up to the individual HEI and its own strategic plans. For HEIs who find that they can recruit and accommodate international students for example, this presents a logical manoeuvre in which to generate much needed funds, as is conducting research in conjunction with industry leaders. All this activity is monitored closely by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and government and a lack of compliance results in reduced income support from the exchequer. Although the NSHE acknowledges relative efficiency in the use of resources in HE in Ireland, it also acknowledges that 'investment in higher education has not kept pace with the expansion in student numbers' (DoES 2011, p. 40).

Perhaps such an urgency in the expectation that funding for HE should come from other sources is not surprising. In the climate in which the NSHE was written, the country was bankrupt, enduring widespread austerity measures and an IMF bailout. According to the NSHE (DoES 2011, p. 111), 85.1 per cent of funding for higher education came from public resources, a situation which in itself was unsustainable in the face of economic pressures in 2011. But the ambitions for Irish HE contained in the NSHE – expansion, increased research, and a better, more efficient system – and the expense that goes with this, makes it implausible to sustain this level of state funding. Instead, this grim situation, coupled with the new reforms and accountability, forces many HEIs to behave like corporations or businesses in order to sustain operations. This gives rise to individual HEIs mimicking the behaviour of

other institutions seen as successful on the national and global stage. Activity such as attracting research and increasing international student numbers are all geared towards reputational and financial gain. Such isomorphic activity is endorsed by the government through policy and bolsters the kind of commercial activity which is currently commonplace among HEIs. Through the lens of NT, this can be viewed both as mimetic isomorphism for the reasons outlined above but can also be viewed as a form of coercive isomorphism as it is financial constraints, imposed this time by government through austerity, which forces this behaviour.

In addition, although student fees have long been considered as a barrier to many potential higher education participants, the NSHE also indicates that students should 'directly share in the cost of their education, reflecting the considerable private returns that they can expect to enjoy' (DoES 2011, p. 15). To date, a reintroduction of student fees has not come to fruition, but students are required to pay a student contribution (not explicitly labelled as fees) of a maximum €3000 per annum (Citizens Information Bureau 2019), unless they qualify for the student grant. It is of interest that in relation to Ireland, the OECD recommended that 'subject to means testing, fees for undergraduate study be re-introduced and the "Free Fees" policy be withdrawn' (OECD 2004, p. 66). Despite this, the free fees initiative which was introduced in 1996 has remained in place. As shall be shown in chapter 6, there are political motivations for retaining this free fees, and this is one particular aspect of OECD directive which has not been reaffirmed in the Irish HE system to date.

Theme 4: Accountability

There are strong themes of HEI accountability contained in the NSHE. Operational autonomy and funding are outlined as being contingent on the level of HEI accountability against stated expectations and output. In other words, HEIs must perform to the standard that is required and be fully accountable for their operations, or face cuts to their funding and their ability to manage their own affairs without central intervention. The NSHE spells out the need for formalised agreement or contractual relationship between HE and the state to align expectations between higher education, government, and the public. The HEA, which has been part of the HE landscape for decades, but which possessed little legislative authority up to a decade ago, is identified as the body (itself to be reformed and given more authority) to oversee the operations of HE as a whole, but also to ensure that the individual HEIs comport themselves in line with the new directives including effective efficiency and eradicating wastefulness. At the same time, the NSHE recommends that 'institutions will be autonomous, collaborative and outward looking, effectively governed and fully accountable

for both quality and efficiency outcomes' (DoES 2011, p. 27). As outlined in the policy document, a central concern of the NSHE is the 'recognition that a diverse range of strong, autonomous institutions is essential' (DoES 2011, p. 13) while at the same time, it is noted that 'Ireland's autonomous institutions should be held accountable for their performance to the State on behalf of Irish citizens' (DoES 2011, p. 22). There is a paradox here – HEIs are expected to manage their own affairs and self-govern as appropriate, but they must be held to account for their behaviour, which should also fall within the confines of sanctioned activity as directed by the NSHE. The NSHE suggests that under this new direction, all institutions will be subject to continuous review, data retrieved from which is to be made available to the public (a further recommendation outlined in the 2004 OECD report). This kind of accountability comes with the added conditions of funding constraints as 'funding and operational autonomy must be matched by a corresponding level of accountability for performance against clearly articulated expectations' (DoES 2011, p. 14). Such practices do not merely incentivise institutions to conform to recommendations as set out by the NSHE – they force them to align themselves with NSHE (and by extension OECD and EU) principles. The HEA is the designated government body directed to engage with the institutions and oversee changes implemented as a result of the new strategy for higher education. The NSHE outlines how it is the responsibly of the HEA to engage with the individual institutions to 'enable them collectively to meet the national priorities, without wasteful duplication' (DoES 2011, p. 14). Effective leadership within Ireland's education institutions is a key priority to ensure that the goals of the NSHE are met, and crucially, it is now within the remit of the HEA to oversee the strategic plans of each HEI to ensure there is no deviation from the national strategy or 'mission drift' (DoES 2011, p. 106). Where an institution makes a departure from the national strategy, funding constraints can be sanctioned by the HEA until they realign themselves with national policy. Viewed through the lens of NT, the moves made at the sector level and at level of the individual HEIs based on these policy's represent coercive isomorphism.

Much public confidence in HEIs was lost during the GFC years, when wastefulness and extravagances of public resources within HEIs came under the spotlight of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), the government body responsible for ensuring that state bodies allocate resources efficiently (Houses of the Oireachtas 2020). For example, at one session of the PAC in 2010, questions were put to one HEI concerning unauthorised allowances to staff members. At the same committee meeting, concerns were also raised regarding teaching activities and hours spent in the classroom (Houses of the Oireachtas 2010). Such issues were highlighted during times of austerity, when funding for HE was being cut, while

vehement resistance to these cuts was ongoing. Later, further criticism was directed at other HEIs for using public funds for topping up the pensions of some retired staff (Irish Examiner 2018; RTÉ 2019). As I have suggested already, the media can play a significant role in maintaining or damaging institutional legitimacy. From an NT perspective, the kind of negative press associated with mismanagement in HEIs will reduce legitimacy, leading to a more emphatic justification of government measures to tighten accountability.

Theme 5: Public Engagement and Widening Participation

Engagement with the wider community forms part of the wider strategy of the NSHE, with recommendations that HEIs 'need to become more firmly embedded in the social and economic contexts of the communities they live in and serve' (DoES 2011, p. 78). The idea that HE communities are separate to the wider public in which they are located, is at odds with the general idea of how the NSHE sees HEIs as operating. HEIs are seen not only as education providers in the general sense but should be actively engaged in general activities which encourage and promote participation and civic engagement. But this is not the only means by which HE in the community should grow. The NSHE projects that capacity in the HE sector will double by 2030, with this additional growth emanating from the non-traditional routes of entry. These include overseas students, mature students, part-time students, and more post-graduate students. The NSHE places greater emphasis on upskilling and lifelong learning in order to equip Ireland's citizens with new means of securing employment. As highlighted in the NSHE, the GFC acted to magnify this shortcoming in the higher education system more generally. The report notes the lack of part-time and flexible provision in HEIs in the first instance, resulting in the age range of students participating in Irish HE as being the 'narrowest…across all OECD countries reflecting the current unresponsiveness of Irish higher education to the skills needs of adults' (DoES 2011, p. 46). This status quo is exacerbated by the lack of funding for students who wish to participate in further education, but without the resources to do so. While grant systems for tuition and maintenance provide support for full-time predominantly school leaving students, students who are in employment undertaking part-time study do not qualify for such grants, which is still the case today. The 2004 OECD report acknowledged this gap and advocated for part-time students to be treated in the same way as full-time students with respect to fees and maintenance grants, so that some barriers for participation from this cohort would be removed. But this lack of financial support from government, while NSHE in parallel is mandating increases in enrolment leads to a mechanism of loose coupling as recognised by NT. While policy or strategic plans will include widening participation as an objective of

the HEI, this objective will not necessarily come to fruition because of a lack of incentivisation for the student, and concurrently, lack of funding for the HEI. So where there is adherence on paper to the objectives set out by the NSHE, in reality it is often the case that the HEIs are just 'muddling through' (Crilly et al. 2012, p. 1429) the complex environment in which they are situated via this loose coupling.

Theme 6: Internationalisation

Internationalisation is highlighted as one of the more important imperatives in the restructuring of Irish HE. As IGR asserts, 'Ireland, as a small, open European economy, relies fundamentally on international engagement' (DoES 2010, p. 11). While there is some focus on this aspect of higher education in the NSHE, it is considered of such importance that it has warranted two separate policy strategies in the form of IGR (DoES 2010) and IEGC (DoES 2016b). From the perspective of the IGR, the 'most compelling rationale for internationalisation is investment in future global relationships' (DoES 2010, p. 11) and therefore it has a crucial role to play in bolstering Ireland's international profile. The direct economic impact of attracting international students to Ireland is significant, not only in generating fee income, but also in the impact these students have on the economy indirectly via rent, spending, tourism, labour etc. The economic objectives of IGR over its five-year lifetime to 2015 appear exceptionally ambitious as they aim to 'enhance the total economic impact of international education by some €300 million to approximately €1.2 billion in total' (DoES 2010, p. 31). Internationalisation then, is framed as not just in terms of direct income for the HEIs; it is also viewed as activity to generate income for the Irish economy more generally. A clear path to market Ireland to international students is 'Ireland's position as a native English-speaking destination' (DoES 2010, p. 38), which according to IGR is a crucial inherent advantage. This position is all the more strengthened by Brexit, which has now left Ireland in the unique position of being the only English-speaking country in the EU (notwithstanding that many HEIs across the eurozone offer programmes which are taught through the medium of English). The proposal to recruit international students was laid out as an opportunity which Irish HEI's should take advantage of in the 2004 OECD report, which suggested that they 'should market themselves more energetically internationally with a view to doubling the international student population in five years' (OECD 2004, p. 49). This is in fact a conservative appraisal as it transpired in the intervening years. I shall return to the actual growth in international student numbers in chapter 6.

Theme 7: Efficiency, Consolidation and Merger

A key focus of the NSHE concerns efficiency in Ireland's HE system through amalgamations, consolidations, and mergers. The existing Institutes of Technology (formally Regional Technical Colleges) are the primary target of this initiative, which endorses the amalgamation of institutes 'into existing universities or institutes of technology or into technological universities' (DoES 2011, p. 109). This particularly applies to some of the smaller institutions with the logic being promoting coherence and critical mass, and therefore increased efficiency in the HE system. The recommendations are anticipated to result in a smaller number of institutions within the system as a whole. In addition, the NSHE recommends the development of regional clusters whereby existing HEIs collaborate to provide coordinated teaching and learning activities in their locality. Again, the emphasis is for increased efficiency and reducing what government sees as the disjointed nature of higher education delivery, particularly across the Institutes of Technology (IoTs). What is not deemed appropriate however, are mergers between universities and institutes for technology, although recommendations are made for collaboration between these two types of institutions with the regional clusters as outlined above. Although it was not specifically outlined in the NSHE, a subsequent report produced by the HEA (2012a) proposes a merger between Ireland's two biggest universities – Trinity College Dublin and University College Dublin, together with the Marino Institute of Education. As the report suggests, 'Ireland does not have the capacity to sustain more than one major research-focused university of international standing' (HEA 2012a, p. 21). Proposals for a merger between Trinity College Dublin and University College Dublin were initiated originally in 1967 by Minister Donogh O'Malley, the same pioneering Minister for Education who abolished secondary level fees. The rationale for merger then was as Walsh (2014b) puts it, to overcome 'the problem of Trinity College Dublin' (p. 5) – to put the university firmly under state control, but also to circumvent the ban on Catholics attending this university by Catholic bishops as mentioned in chapter 2. There was little enthusiasm for the merger then, and even less appetite for it a half a century later.

The details of how mergers would be operationalised are set out in the 'landscape' and related documents (HEA 2012a; 2012b; 2013a; 2013b). Following the publication of the first landscape document, *Towards a Future Higher Education Landscape* (HEA 2012b), each of Ireland's HEIs were invited to outline their own strategic vision, which in turn informed the proposals outlined in *Completing the Landscape Process for Irish Higher Education* (HEA 2013b). These proposals set out the potential reconfiguration options for the HE

system in Ireland and I go into considerably more detail on the subsequent system restructuring via mergers and consolidation in chapter 6 when examining the tangible changes in the Irish HE since the publication of the NSHE. In a few short years, there has been a striking reduction in the number of publicly funded HEIs operating in Ireland since the reorganisation of the Irish HE structural landscape was put into motion (see Appendices 3 and 4).

As noted, the idea of consolidation or merger within Irish HE is by no means the first time it has garnered attention. Whereas the idea for merger as outlined above was politically motivated, the consolidation which has been outlined in the NSHE is driven by system efficiency. This kind of efficiency is also reflected in a recommendation set out in the 2004 OECD report which states that 'greater collaboration between institutions be encouraged' (OECD 2004, p. 63). Although the 2004 OECD report does not explicitly outline the means of achieving such collaboration, it nonetheless outlines it as something which should be considered. Neither is this recommendation overlooked in the NSHE, which outlines how the proposal for collaboration is 'broadly in line with the recommendation of the OECD Review of Higher Education in Ireland' (DoES 2011, p. 70).

Theme 8: Consultation and Dialogue

A final observation which I wish to draw attention to is not so much thematic in the sense of a policy, but which I consider particularly noteworthy in terms of policy construction. The NSHE notes that it is the product of 'wide consultation process across education, enterprise, trade unions, and wider interest groups' (DoES 2011, p. 3) and proposes that in the face of the recessionary challenges facing Ireland in relation to HE reform, 'leaving it too late is not an option' (DoES 2011, p. 4). The consultation process with respect to shaping the NSHE was indeed diverse, but within the HE sector itself, there appears to have been little involvement or inclusion. A reading of *Appendix C: Membership of the Strategy Group* (DoES 2011, p. 129) of the NSHE, includes just two members from HEIs in Ireland. In parallel, the IGR, published a year before the NSHE, outlines a similar consultation process, and includes in its 'High-Level Group' members from specific government departments and industry-related organisations such as Enterprise Ireland, Fáilte Ireland and Science Foundation Ireland (DoES 2010, p. 35). While the IGR document alludes to inclusion of 'representative bodies and institutions, as appropriate, from the education sectors' (DoES 2010, p. 35), the associated working groups (of which four are outlined) likewise do not include any HEI representation.

In the context of the redevelopment of an entire HE landscape it is at the very least questionable that representation from the country's main universities and HEIs is by and large omitted from this process. It suggests a reluctance on the part of government to engage with stakeholders within HE and a determination to take control of the HE sector rather than the 'laissez-faire' approach to governance. At the same time, the NSHE affirms the need for cooperation at the institutional level for the strategy to succeed. Although there was little consultation with HEI stakeholders with respect to the drafting and publication of the NSHE itself, an important outcome which did emerge is the requirement for each HEI to engage with the HEA regarding the implementation of the national strategy. The HEA entered into a strategic dialogue process with Irelands publicly funded HEIs in 2014. Each HEI is now required to outline how it will proceed in its contribution towards the national objectives as outlined in the NSHE. The strategic dialogue process focuses on institutional performance which is set against agreed targets with the HEA. Failure to meet these targets has significant funding implications for the HEI. Cycle 1 of these strategic dialogues for example, saw the HEA withholding €5 million in institutional funding to ensure initial engagement with the dialogue process. The objectives of cycle 1 was published by the HEA in 2014 (HEA 2014), followed by outcomes from cycle 2 (HEA 2016). As a result of strategic dialogue, the Irish HEIs have each entered into a 'compact', or formal agreement with the HEA, which effectively aligns institutional missions, strategies and profiles with national objectives. They also act as 'strategic objective indicators of success against which institutional performance will be measured and funding allocated' (HEA 2018a, p. 2). In other words, HEIs must synchronise their own strategies with national objectives or be at risk of losing much needed public funding.

Theme 9: A Missing Theme?

Earlier in this chapter, I discussed the importance of HE in Irelands history from how it has shaped the country itself, to the proliferation of scholars who have attended our institutions. What is interesting about the NSHE however, is that it says very little about what Irish HE has accomplished to make Ireland the nation it is. I reflected in this chapter the idea that Irish higher education has its own unique history, but this history appears to have somehow been forgotten in the NSHE and in its place a different kind of future. In other words, the global dynamics as discussed have all but taken over with little room given over to other, less economically based, concerns.

The OECD and EU have promoted the idea of the knowledge economy, with prioritisation given over to the certain types of 'knowledge' that are seen to be required to drive this

directive forwards, namely that of science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM) and business subject areas. The NSHE follows suit and subsequently says little about the provision or increase in support for subject areas other than those associated with the economy and industry. The NSHE does give a nod to 'artists, and expert practitioners in the humanities and social sciences' (DoES 2011, p. 13) who make valuable contributions to the wider community and civic engagement. Indeed, the NSHE also suggests that these subject areas – the arts, social sciences, and humanities – play a vital role in nurturing students' creativity and enthusiasm for continuous learning in an envisaged future Ireland. But few pragmatic or practical suggestions on how these subject areas can be sustained in this future HE framework are outlined. Developments such as the Humanities Serving Irish Society (HSIS) are given as an example of how these areas can be incorporated into national development, but the HSIS is not a government body – it is an interinstitutional entity which existed before the publication of the NSHE. What is encouraged is multidisciplinary research and 'especially initiatives that connect the AHSS and STEM' (DoES 2011, p. 67). While this idea is not articulated any further, I shall explore this in chapter 7 where I interpret what this might look like and how it might manifest in Irish HE.

Conclusion

In summation, the NSHE, IGR and IEGC are all aimed at a reorientation of higher education which is intrinsically linked to Ireland's economic welfare into the future. Given the climate in which these frameworks were written, the articulation of this relationship can be widely understood as a functionalist approach for the country, given the state of the nation during and in the aftermath of the GFC. As I have alluded to, loosely pegging HE aspirations to the economy is not a new approach and has been outlined in national policy frameworks in education since as far back as the *Investment in Education* (DoES 1966) report and continued with *Charting Our Education Future: White Paper on Education* (DoES 1995). What is new however, is the emphatic and controlled way in which HE policy is now directed through the policy instruments as discussed in this chapter. Viewed through CPA and scaffolded by Bourdieu and NT, it has been shown that the origins of Irish HE policy over this period has been shaped – almost mandated in fact – by the OECD and the EU. While the overarching policy scape for Ireland's HE system would be incomplete without reference to these organisations' position over the field of global HE in any context, their role in moulding higher education policy in Ireland following the GFC in difficult to dispute. This is particularly true when one analyses the recommendations from the 2004 OECD report against the policy instruments as set out by the NSHE and they are remarkably similar in their recommendations.

Chapter 6: The Aftermath of Crisis: A Changed Irish Higher Education Landscape

Introduction

In chapter 5 I analysed, through CPA and under the frameworks of Bourdieu and Neo-Institutional theory, the changes in Irish HE which emerged following the Global Financial Crisis in 2008. I argued that when viewed through both frameworks, predictable tendencies emerged towards repositioning HE in Ireland to become more focused on global and economic concerns with a disposition to follow OECD and EU directives. I highlighted that while government set about implementing change, the underlying impetus for transformation, while catalysed by the GFC, was dictated not by the state, but by more outward global forces. Chapter 5 focussed on the nature of policy change, specific motivations behind HE policy adjustment, and the identification of the key driving forces. By examining the period before and after the 2008 crisis, it is clear that the HE landscape in Ireland has been considerably altered. Prior to the GFC, HE was predominantly government funded with little obligation to account for sector activity. But this status quo has dramatically shifted, with Irish HE now working for government, country and society through the directives outlined in the NSHE. If this scenario bears a certain familiarity, it is because Irish HE is following a well-established path which exists in higher education elsewhere, as confirmed by analysis in chapter 5.

The current chapter will pay attention to the impact of government led HE policy over the course of the past decade, how the terrain of Irish HE has transmuted more generally, and what this reconstituting of policy, through austerity and beyond, has come to mean for various HE stakeholders in the aftermath of economic calamity. While I will discuss some of the more tangible repercussions of policy enactment, I will also emphasise other, perhaps less perceptible, consequences. I refer here to the entrenchment of neoliberalism in particular and also to new managerialism which can be observed more recently in Ireland's HE system. Both of these phenomena will be viewed through the lenses of Bourdieu and NT. Consequently, this chapter addresses three objectives of CPA as outlined in chapter 1. These are: objective (ii), which accounts for the differences between policy rhetoric and practiced reality, objective (vi), which examines the nature and resistance to or engagement in policy (in this case from all stakeholders), and, to a lesser degree, objective (v), which is the exploration of social stratification and the impact of policy on relationships of privilege and inequality.

The higher education reforms were introduced under the auspices of one of the worst economic crises in Irish history. The strategic moves made in the NSHE, IGR and IEGC

and associated policies to ensure HE works to bolster the economy from future economic disruption may be considered sensible and astute. In a time of mass unemployment and emigration, it might appear difficult or even counterintuitive to argue with efforts which are put in place to get people back to work, to reach full employment and to sustain this scenario for the country in times ahead. As a publicly funded state entity, government has ordained through policy since 2008 that HE is where it should be – that is, working for the state and its citizens to strengthen the economy. What is being highlighted as a major concern more generally, however, and what I will explore in this chapter, is the suggestion that the direction of Irish HE has gone too far in its linkages with the economy. So while the NSHE stresses the importance of ensuring competitiveness in the field of global HE, there is a sense among many that this has erroneously become the primary goal of higher education in Ireland, with many aspects of policy in need of moderation. In summary then, this chapter will look at the aftermath of HE policy change in terms of the visible and less discernible outcomes of the NSHE and related policy documents. Furthermore, it will set out the arguments of those who are opposed to the current trajectory of Irish higher education.

This chapter will follow in two main sections. The first section shall focus first on some of the more visible changes which have taken place in Irish HE over the past decade. Following this, in section two I shall look more specifically at the impact of the state's consolidated policy direction and what are perhaps the less perceptible outcomes, which see increased competition under financial pressures, and with it the entrenchment of neoliberal ideology. Indeed, the NSHE as we saw in chapter 5, was explicit in its viewpoint that HEIs must engage in commercial pursuits. Reluctantly or not, such activity and focus is now commonplace among Ireland's universities and HEIs as they become more dependent on funding outside of that granted by the exchequer.

Perceptible Effects of Policy Change on the Irish Higher Education Landscape

Recalling from chapter 5 that the areas outlined for redevelopment lay under the general purview of research, funding, accountability autonomy and consultation, widening participation, internationalisation, and structural changes to the system, I will revisit each of these themes with a view to understanding how the NSHE has shaped Irish HE in terms of the more visible aspects of change. These changes are in my view, indications of the habitus at work. Irish HE has transformed in accordance to what higher education systems should resemble as laid out by the EU and OECD in particular.

Research

The publication of the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions (PTRLI) in 1998 set out an initial path to enshrine research endeavour within Ireland's HEIs. Research activity is now at the core of the Irish HE system and as noted by the HEA (2020, p. 1) is 'undertaken in a global context where knowledge and people are increasingly mobile'. Significant inroads have been made in fostering the pursuit of research in Irish HE since the publication of the NSHE in 2011, with specific importance given to the development of a critical mass in 'research capacity, to ensure that we attract the best researchers and develop world-class capability in high-value niche areas' (DoES 2011, p. 4). Following the publication of the NSHE, the Irish Research Council (IRC) was established in 2012 following a merger of the Irish Research Council for Humanities and Social Sciences (IRCHSS) and the Irish Research Council for Science, Engineering and Technology (IRCSET). Recommendation for a similar merger was outlined in the 2004 OECD report, which favoured an approach that would see the IRCHSS and IRCSET being subsumed into an enlarged Science Foundation Ireland (SFI). The IRC's primary mission is both to oversee and support research, but also to allocate funding, but while under the remit of the HEA and the Department of Education, its funding decisions are autonomous (IRC 2020).

In terms of student participation in research, 8,038 full-time and 1,977 part-time research students were enrolled in Irish HEIs by 2018, with 51% of this number being female (HEA 2018c). While the number of full-time students has remained largely static since 2012, there has been a 27% increase in the number of part-time research students over the previous five years (HEA 2018c). It is also of note that 44% of the full-time cohort and 84% of part-time students were 30 years of age or over (HEA 2018c). This represents a changing dynamic in terms of who is participating in research activity, particularly in relation to the part-time students.

Funding

Investing in National Ambition: A Strategy for Funding Higher Education (the Cassells report) was published by government in March 2016 to address the 'funding crisis' (DoES 2016a, p. 5) in Ireland's HE system and to offer some alternative funding models. The report is stark in its predictions, outlining the requirement for 'additional annual funding of €600 million by 2021 and €1 billion by 2030' (DoES 2016a, p. 7) to meet the requirements of a quality HE system, while also considering increases in the population. The Cassells report outlines several recommendations for future funding options. These include (i) a predominantly state-funded system (DoES 2016a); (ii) increased state funding with a

continuation of income from student fees (DoES 2016a); (iii) increased state funding with deferred payment of fees through income contingent loans (DoES 2016a).

The contentious issue of funding and who should pay for Ireland's HE system remains one of considerable debate. At the time of writing the current study, five years following the publication of the Cassells report, agreement has yet to be reached relating to higher education funding. The issue is not just economic of course – there are significant social and political risks associated with these determinations. Disenfranchising a socially engaged generation of school leavers with the promise of large debts on completion of their tertiary education is neither pertinent politically, nor does it encourage the increased participation levels which are aspired to in NSHE. On the other hand, the NSHE acknowledges that the measures it sets out for increased efficiency – consolidation and mergers, economies of scale, increased productivity and commercial activity – will only go so far, and exchequer funding will not meet the required level. And while both the NSHE and Cassells report have alluded to a reintroduction of student fees as a possible solution, as has the 2004 OECD report, student resistance to these measures has been steadfast, a point I shall return to later in this chapter.

In November 2019, the Oireachtas[6] published *An Overview of Tertiary Education Funding in Ireland* (Houses of the Oireachtas 2019). This report suggested that some light might be shed on this conundrum by September 2020, but with the onset of Covid-19 and the political quandary of Brexit looming large on the political agenda, these issues have taken precedent in Irish affairs. The new government ministry of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science was established in 2020 and at its helm is Minister Simon Harris. Minister Harris (Harris, 2020) has committed to finding a long-term resolution to this issue by 2021.

Accountability, Autonomy and Consultation

Perhaps one of the more contentious policy instruments contained in the NSHE is its requirement for more accountability within the HE sector. Current policy somewhat contradictorily places institutional autonomy as a high priority declaring that there is a 'positive relationship between the performance and innovation capacity of higher education institutions and the extent of their autonomy' (DoES 2011, p. 39). Yet Von Prondzynski (2011), the then President of Dublin City University, was critical of the NSHE and its vision of state control of HE on its publication, remarking that 'there is no evidence from anywhere

[6] Ireland's House of Parliament

that a centralised coordination of institutional strategies creates wider benefits for society' (7th January 2011). He asserts that the expert group responsible for drafting the report had an inherent misunderstanding of HE, particularly with respect to autonomy and what this concept actually represents in the context of higher education. On the one hand, there is advocacy for institutional autonomy to ensure that HEIs operate proficiently and to the best of their capabilities; on the other hand, the idea that a publicly funded body can operate without being answerable to how it spends these funds is no longer accepted by government, or indeed by the public more generally. Such a rhetoric is unconducive to an effective working relationship between state and the HE sector. Government have continued to ensure a tight grip over the way in which HEIs operate and in the allocation of state funding. In July 2019, a reform of the Higher Education Act of 1971 (Houses of the Oireachtas 1971) was initiated by government, which would furnish the HEA with additional legislative power over the HE system. Essentially, such a move would act to further reduce the autonomy of HEIs and give greater government oversight. Although any such amendments have yet to transpire, this is further evidence of the divide between government and leadership in HE where suspicion, rather than trust, in the system endures. But there is a glimmer of optimism from late 2020 as moves by government to improve the partnership with HEIs can be observed. I will revisit this point in chapter 7.

Concerns of Equity – Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning

Measures have been introduced to address low attendance in HE from some areas of the population following recommendations in the NSHE to widen participation. The *National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2021* (HEA 2015) was published to tackle low participation from specific groups in the community. It explicitly targeted first time mature students, students with disabilities, part-time/flexible learners, further education, and Irish Travellers. According to the *Progress Review of the National Access Plan* (HEA 2018b), while some advancement has been made in increasing student numbers with disabilities and from lower socio-economic groups, higher participation from the other target groups has been difficult to achieve. Another recent report on HE participation, published by the HEA, *A Spatial & Socio-Economic Profile of Higher Education Institutions in Ireland* (HEA 2019) also notes modest progress in this area. This latter report invoked media criticism of government policy in widening participation because of the sheer disparity between students from more affluent backgrounds and engagement from lower socio-economic groups in tertiary education. The Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) scheme has assisted many students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds in

accessing university and college places at reduced points. The initiative also offers students additional academic, personal, and social supports if they are successful in securing a college place (HEAR 2020). Similarly, the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) scheme offers access to higher education for school leavers at reduced points who have a disability (DARE 2021).

Recommendations on the need to widen participation and increase part-time learning provision was a key proposal within the 2004 OECD report. The report recognised that part-time education is a less viable route for many in participating in HE as it is 'dissipated by the fact that… part-time students are not eligible for maintenance grants and have to pay fees' (OECD 2004, p. 30). The report goes on to say that discriminating against part-time students in such a way acts to disincentive students and it endorsed a strategy in which this cohort is given equal status as full-time students with respect to fee payment and eligibility for financial assistance. Likewise, the Cassells report contains recommendations to widen participation for part-time and lifelong learning to enable a 'levelling of the playing field' (DoES 2016a, p. 49). Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the lack of public finances, this is not one of the 2004 OECD recommendations which made its way into the NSHE or subsequent policy. 'Springboard'[7], introduced in 2011, however, is an upskilling initiative in Irish HE which offers free or 90% of fees leading to certificate, bachelor's degree or master's qualifications. This incentivised scheme is offered primarily to people who are unemployed or seeking employment. More generally, for those who are in employment, it is still the case that those who wish to participate in HE on a part-time basis must pay their own fees, with little government support or financial help. This acts to disincentivise part-time learning, particularly for those who are working and who have young families. The sacrifices might just seem too much to reap the benefits personally, which by extension also affects HE participation and expected benefits for the economy.

Internationalisation

It is of particular note that IGR was not only a new direction for policy in Irish HE, but also the first internationalisation strategy policy of its kind in Europe (Finn and Darmody 2017). Many of the objectives contained in IGR over its five-year span to 2015 may have appeared exceptionally ambitious in its aim to increase the impact of international students on the Irish economy from €300m to €1.3bn, as highlighted in chapter 5. Nonetheless, efforts in this area over the course of the policy were such that this goal was more than met. By the time the

[7] For more detailed information on the Springboard initiative, see https://springboardcourses.ie/

subsequent policy on internationalisation emerged with the publication of IEGC (DoES 2016b), these targets were far exceeded. International HE represented a staggering €1.58bn to the Irish economy by 2016 (DoES 2016b, p. 5). This figure would be again revised upwards in IEGC which set a new target of €2.1bn, to be reached by raising the recruitment and enrolments of international students in Irish universities to approximately 44,000 by the end of the 2019/2020 academic year (DoES 2016b). This figure is inclusive of EU and non-EEA students. As noted by Durst and Groarke (2019), the drive to attract international students to Ireland in the past decade has resulted in an increase of non-EEA nationals to Irish HEIs of 45%, from 9,325 in 2013 to 13,519 in 2017. As a small country with limited HE capacity, such a figure demonstrates two trends. Firstly, the impact that recruitment of international students has on the economy in terms of generating income is obvious. Secondly, it indicates that HEIs are enthusiastic participants in the internationalisation endeavour. Without their efforts such goals would be unachievable, but as noted earlier in this chapter, although the NSHE invoked various policy instruments to reduce costs, these would not ultimately be sufficient. Instead, HEIs have focused on the international market for external income.

For cash strapped HEIs the rewards of being successful in attracting international students are immense. A place on one of the four medicine programmes offered in Irish universities can cost up to €55,000 a year for a student who is paying non-EU fees[8]. By comparison, the maximum contribution for Irish and EU students on the same programme of study is €3,000 per annum (Education in Ireland 2021). For HEIs there are many benefits in having large numbers of international students - cultural diversity, openness, maintaining global links. But the financial benefits in an environment of significant reductions in public funding are perhaps one of the main drivers. Inevitably, without expanding the capacity of HE programmes, the opportunity cost of retaining spaces for such high financial rewards outweighs local and EU competition. This is against the backdrop of government ambition to continue to increase participation in HE for Irish citizens. *Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025* (DoES 2016c) has directed focus towards increasing participation again in anticipation of meeting the needs of a high skills economy in the future. It is likely that in the face of Covid-19, places will be directed in the short term for Irish students to fill the inevitable gaps which are left from travel restrictions and the reduced number of international students attending Irish HEIs. With the completion of Brexit negotiations, however, Ireland will now be the only English-speaking country in the EU, a position where

[8] Taken from https://www.educationinireland.com/en/How-Do-I-Apply-/Tuition-Costs-Scholarships/Fees-for-Non-EU-Students/Non-EU-Undergraduate-Tuition-Costs.html (last accessed 15/01/2020)

opportunities for expanding international activity may present themselves. This position should be considered with care however, as dependence on revenue from international students bears considerable risk, as we have seen in Ireland and elsewhere from the repercussions of Covid-19. I shall revisit this scenario in chapter 7.

Efficiency, Consolidation, and Merger

A key aspect of the NSHE includes the introduction of more efficiency within the HE sector as a whole, with institutional mergers highlighted as a pivotal means of achieving this. As outlined in the policy document, while a large number of institutions exist in Ireland which have given rise to increased participation over the years, mergers and alliances 'will be supported where they can deliver greater institutional quality' (DoES 2011, p. 99). Central to this approach is the establishment of a smaller number of institutions which are organised more coherently, are clearly articulated, and possess distinct institutional missions. In short, a comprehensive consolidation of Ireland's HEIs to ensure, as outlined by the HEA (2013a, p. 5) 'a more coordinated and coherent system of interconnecting, complementary higher education institutions, each with a clearly defined mission'. Up to the establishment of the NSHE, the higher education system in Ireland was very much a fragmented landscape (Harkin and Hazelkorn 2015), binary in reality and in governance, which included Institutes of Technology (IoTs) falling under the remit of the Department of Education and Skills while the university sector was overseen (loosely) by the HEA. The proposed restructuring of the HE system as defined by the NSHE, with subsequent plans to streamline the system are laid out in the higher education 'landscape' documents (HEA 2012a; 2012b; 2013a; 2013b) with the HEA acting as an oversight body. These new structures are based not only on mergers, but also on the idea of regional clusters. Following the reconfiguration of Irish HE, the HEA envisages a system which comprises universities, IoTs, Technological Universities, and a modest number of specialist providers which continue to be publicly funded (HEA 2013a, p. 11). The expectation from such a system is a smaller number of institutions, a greater level of collaboration via thematic and regional clusters, as well as an increased level of inter-institutional alliances.

Actual mergers within the IoT sector were stagnant up to 2018, awaiting enactment of legislation to allow this activity to proceed. The signing of the Technological Universities Act 2018 (Houses of the Oireachtas 2018) into law paved the way for two or more IoTs to merge and create a new Technological University (TU). As of 2021, there are two designated technological universities and three consortia engaged in the process of becoming designated TUs:

- Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin): A merger of Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT), Institute of Technology Blanchardstown (ITB) and the Institute of Technology Tallaght (ITT), designated January 2019.
- Munster Technological University (MTU): A merger of Cork Institute of Technology (CIT) and Institute of Technology, Tralee (IT Tralee), designated in January 2021.
- Technological University for the South-East Ireland (TUSEI): Proposed merger of Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) and the Institute of Technology Carlow (IT Carlow).
- Connacht Ulster Alliance (CUA): Proposed merger of Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT), Institute of Technology Sligo (IT Sligo), and Letterkenny Institute of Technology (IT Letterkenny).
- Athlone IT and Limerick IT consortium: Proposed merger of Athlone Institute of Technology (Athlone IT) and Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT).

The above represents the mergers of non-university higher institutes of education. As outlined in chapter 5, there is currently no proposal for any formal mergers between the existing universities, although collaboration is actively encouraged. For a full overview of mergers and consolidation within the Irish HE system, see Appendix 3 and Appendix 4 which provides a listing of publicly funded institutions before the publication of the NSHE in 2011 to February 2021. What can be observed clearly is the reduction in the number of institutions which exist now versus those before 2011. Lillis and Lynch (2014) note that while Ireland's HE system is viewed as binary, it is becoming less so. This scenario will increasingly be the case as more TUs are designated into the future and the lines between the traditional university and the newer ones becomes blurred.

This section succinctly outlined the perceptible changes in Irish HE since the GFC and the introduction of a national higher education policy strategy. These developments represent the tangible, visible side of transformation within the sector. There are other forms of change to be considered however, which may be less apparent. The next section will emphasise arguments pertaining to what many see as the abandonment of higher education values in Ireland, in favour of a more economically focused direction.

The Missing Theme

In chapter 5, I discussed the NSHE's lack of recognition of the history of Irish HE and how it has come to shape the country's very nature. As Kavanagh (2016) notes, from the

nineteenth century and the rise of nationalism in Ireland, there has always been an emphasis on culture in the Irish universities, a quality which has been eroding in recent years as the perceived needs of the economy and society take precedence. This is to the detriment of programmes and subject areas which enable the promotion of national identity, cultural awareness, and a sense of place in the world. Within Irish HE, this is increasingly the case. The humanities and arts subject areas are increasingly seen as an indulgence (Walsh 2012) because they are not usually connected particularly well with economic productivity. This scenario, argues Walsh (2012, p. 223), is a perilous one as it denies people access to their culture and impedes the 'development of imaginative, artistic, linguistic and even political sensibility; and returns the arts to the preserve of a cultured elite'. Similarly, Weiler (2011) makes the point that now more than ever, it is the duty of the universities to become 'real centers of cultural encounter and multicultural discourse' (p. 218) to best equip students with an awareness of globalisation. Only through this type of learning will students understand what it is to have a national identity and better interpret what (or whose) knowledge matters.

As recognised by Nussbaum (2010), the humanities have long been acknowledged to encourage critical thinking and the tools for a healthy democracy. Moreover, they promote a deep understanding of culture, history and heritage. For Ireland, as noted in chapter 2, great efforts were made by those involved in the Gaelic League from the mid-1800's to ensure that Ireland's language, culture and traditions were not lost. In the age of information and technology in which we now live, it is somewhat ironic that this distinctiveness is slowly being lost. Central to the issue with arts and humanities and research associated with both, is that their value, while well established in the literature as above, can be difficult to measure economically. As noted by Hazelkorn (2015), research in the arts and humanities has struggled to gain attention in recent years against the more technically orientated subject areas associated with productivity in a knowledge driven economy. This is particularly the case since the GFC. Some minor inroads have been made with arts and humanities research funding more recently, a point I shall return to in chapter 7.

Less Tangible Changes Observed in Irish Higher Education Since the GFC

Such debate centres on the erosion of integrity and standards concerning, *inter alia*, academic freedom, autonomy, and the trivialising of subject areas in the arts and humanities in favour of science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM). In short, the current policy directive in HE has become more about the economy and less about the ideals of what higher education could or should represent, which I alluded to at the end of chapter 5. In recent years, there has been a notable shift towards neoliberalism in HE in Ireland as it continues

to be chronically underfunded by government, leaving HEIs to position themselves as competitors in a global HE environment. Government directed policy over the past decade has led to increases in international student numbers and in research output, as well as commercialisation of higher education activities against the backdrop of significant decreases in government funding. As highlighted in chapter 5, this policy landscape has been shaped by external factors and as pointed out by Lillis and Lynch (2014), HEIs worldwide are experiencing similar pressures. Such a narrative manifests in entrenching neoliberal ideologies within higher education as HEIs behave like corporations and businesses in the drive to secure valuable resources outside of exchequer supports. Indeed, the NSHE explicitly outlines the requirement for HEIs to engage in ways to find alternative sources of income so that they can 'reduce their strong relative reliance on exchequer funding' (DoES 2011, p. 16). In addition, the NSHE reduces HEI autonomy, pinning funding mechanisms to institutions' ability to conform with these national objectives. While austerity measures introduced in the wake of the GFC significantly impacted on all aspects of society, these were felt very keenly in higher education (Clark et al. 2018), which has acted to exacerbate this situation. Certainly, while activity pertaining to commercial pursuits emanated from some individual HEIs before the crisis, this was not centrally led or subject to appraisal to ensure continued funding. Rather, such activity was driven by the individual institution.

While the motivation behind policy change and the typology of policy instruments were analysed in chapter 5 through Bourdieu and NT as instruments of CPA, the following section will interrogate, likewise through the lenses of these theoretical frameworks, how these ideologies have come to be so rooted in the Irish HE system.

Neoliberalism in Higher Education

According to Harvey (2005):

> Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. (p. 2)

Such characteristics can be applicable to many social structures – the economy, financial markets, property markets for example. With respect to HE, Edmond (2017) notes that one of the defining characteristics of neoliberalism is the use of state or sovereign power to endorse and defend competition and commercialisation. In Ireland, government-led policy has not only acted to leverage and endorse commercialisation activity in HEIs, but it has also actively ensured that this becomes enshrined in institutional strategic plans. The current

policy landscape does not allow for an 'opting out' of this neoliberalising activity as it is ingrained in the policy framework of NSHE. What analysis in this study has shown thus far is that Irish HE is especially susceptible and permeable to effects of global forces through the field of power and isomorphic processes. Consequently, a summation of current trends within the Irish HE policy setting would be underdeveloped without due attention given to neoliberalism and its growing pervasiveness within the HE field more globally (Ball 2013; Sin et al. 2018; Shultz and Viczko, 2016; Manathunga and Bottrell 2019). Rather, neoliberalism has become so ingrained and synonymous in research relating to the field of HE that more often than not, the condition is simply or implicitly assumed. Rawolle and Rowlands (2013), for example, discuss the difficulties in defining neoliberalism in HE, and note that while the concept is very often outlined in research, it is less often explained or defined in any distinct way.

Within HE, the neoliberal agenda manifests itself in several ways. Firstly, as outlined by Saunders (2010), the idea that students will benefit personally from tertiary education in the future places them as a consumer and HE as a commodity or private good for which they should pay. The scenario whereby students are required to pay fees for participating in HE, has been laid out in the NSHE as a possible means of plugging the funding gap. Furthermore, as noted, the Cassells report outlines a number of possible solutions in funding higher education in Ireland, which also includes sharing the cost of higher education with students as those who reap its long-term benefits. Such developments are not unique to Ireland of course. As noted by Rudd and Goodson (2017), changes in policy since the GFC have also altered the HE landscape in the UK towards what they describe as a *'reconstituted neo-liberal period'* (p. 1, original emphasis) with the introduction of higher fees. Such a move comes as a result of government assumptions regarding private gains from HE to the individual, and in this regard it treats the student not so much as a beneficiary of a tertiary education for their own or society's benefit, but as a consumer.

But increases in student fees are only one aspect of a neoliberal agenda within HE. Internationalisation of higher education is closely connected with economic imperatives, and as Ball (2012a) suggests, education has now become 'big business' (p. 116) globally, leading to competition within global HE systems. It also leads HEIs to complete with each other at a national level (Hazelkorn 2011). Indeed, Rizvi and Lingard (2009) suggest that education is increasingly viewed as an export industry which is driven by demand for international education. International education is in turn driven by national economic imperatives and as Altbach (2007) notes, internationalisation of HE is an important objective of policy in many

countries. Popp Berman and Paradeise (2016) contend that cultural shifts, globalisation, and the changed nature of the relationship between HE and the state have led to increased competition and financial pressure on universities in Europe and North America in particular. Consequently, concerns of rankings, accountability and annual reviews, commercialisation, dependence on international student fees, expanding overseas recruitment, and Public-Private Partnerships underpinned by concepts of human capital and the knowledge economy have become commonplace in Ireland and elsewhere (Khoo 2011; Clarke 2012; Holborow 2012; Giroux 2014b; Ball 2015; Bamberger et al. 2019). Such concerns place HE at the centre of commercial activity more generally, which further directs HEIs towards neoliberal strategies. Skilbeck (2003) suggests that while some stakeholders in Irish HE were satisfied with maintaining the status quo without significant alterations before the GFC, global pressures ensured that a rhetoric of change was beginning to emerge.

The policy instruments set out in the NSHE have moved to typify and sanction neoliberal practice in Irish HE, ensuring it becomes anchored in the system. Austerity and funding cuts have intensified the situation, ostensibly leaving few options for HEIs to function outside of these neoliberal parameters. What is inferred here is that under the auspices of economic crisis, the overarching HE strategy is to educate the populace, create jobs and generate revenue though recruiting international students and other commercial activities, while being less reliant on government funding. Mercille and Murphy (2017) remark on the 'the harmonization of educational systems across the continent' (p. 375) of Europe which enables the neoliberal agenda to be driven forward. This is in line with O'Brien's (2017) contention that the neoliberal condition is also now endemic in US higher education. Indeed, in Ireland's case, there is a large degree of recognition that the policies implemented in Irish HE via the NSHE, IGR and IEGC have led an intensification of neoliberalisation within the Irish HE system (e.g. Holborow 2011, 2012; Lillis and Morgan 2012; Lynch 2012, 2013). Mooney Simmie (2012) similarly asserts that 'the irresistible tune played by the Pied Piper of Neo-Liberalism' (p. 485) continues to ensure its further embedding in Irish HE policy beyond crisis.

New Managerialism: Neoliberalism's Bedfellow

A further facet of the materialisation of neoliberalism within Irish HE, and one which has garnered much criticism, is the rise of 'new managerialism' within the sector. 'New managerialism' is often recognised as the bureaucratic supporting mechanism of neoliberalism. This section defines new managerialism and how it has manifested within Irish HE.

The directives as set out by the NSHE require internal planning within the HE system and also within the HEIs themselves in order to meet its objectives. This has led to extensive reforms in HE management. These reforms, labelled 'new managerialism', have been extensively criticised for eroding the core values and missions of HEIs in favour of commercial or market principles (Garvin 2012; Gallagher 2012; Holborow 2012; Lynch et al. 2012; Lolich and Lynch 2017). Deem (2004) notes that new managerialism can be understood as a set of ideologies regarding organisational practices and ideals which are used to 'bring about radical shifts in the organisation, finances and cultures of public services such as local government, health or education' (pp. 109-110). Elsewhere, according to Lynch et al. (2012) 'new managerialism' is closely aligned with neoliberal policy and signals not only a change in the way HEIs are managed, but also heralds a new form of capitalism, embedding new sets of values within social, economic and political institutions. New managerialism can be recognised as a bureaucratic form of governance which promotes neoliberal ideology and prefers *inter alia* performance indicators and accountability, output over input, competition, favouring short term contracts over longer-term employment, and decentralisation of institutional budgets. In short, as Lynch puts it, 'new managerialism represents the organisational arm of neoliberalism' (2017, p. 159). Within the public sector, and increasingly in HE, this manifests as a valorisation of private sector style management aimed towards increased productivity and efficiency.

Ball (2015) notes that changes in the way HEIs operate can be represented as 'the big-neo-liberalism, "out there" ' (p. 258) at the macro level, and 'the little neo-liberalism, "in here" ' (p. 258) for academics in the HE sector. He notes that 'we cease to be a community of scholars' (Ball 2015, p. 259) and instead communicate through competition which results ultimately in institutional rankings. Indeed, Ball's (2015) observations are not unique and feelings of demoralisation, anxiety and precarity as a result of changing work practices including lack of contracts and retrenchment amongst faculty, are well documented in the literature (e.g. Saunders 2010; Courtois and O'Keefe 2015; Mercille and Murphy 2017). In Ireland, work practices have been impacted by this changing working environment. As Lynch et al. (2012) note, this 'valorises long work hours, strong competitiveness, intense organisational dedication, while assuming a lack of ongoing care commitments' (p. 41). In this culture, family and care commitments are overlooked in the promotion process, and 'homosociability'– that is to appoint candidates who are most like their assessors or appear 'safe' choices – can act to inhibit the appointment of women to senior positions. Moreover, this 'careless culture' (Lynch et al. 2012, p. 55) acts to discourage those with caring

responsibilities – be it child, parent or relative – to apply for senior positions due to additional workload and expectation of doing longer hours.

According to Courtois and O'Keefe (2015), the casualisation of workers within HE is a further development which has become pervasive under the neoliberal ideology, a situation which is often overlooked. Their findings suggest that many who currently work in HE in Ireland do not hold permanent positions and are working on tenuous temporary contracts, with little possibility of promotion or career progression. Courtois and O'Keefe note that 'casualisation has exacerbated existing gender inequalities and unequal power relations, contradicting the meritocratic ideals universities promote' (2015, p. 46). This observation is disquieting. Instead of making progress in valuing the human element in higher education and society more generally, the neoliberal policies which have been enacted in Irish HE are increasingly moving away from civic ideals around notions of equality and fairness, in favour of efficiency. This situation is replicated elsewhere. According to the University and College Union (2019), casualisation continues to be a major concern in the UK, with approximately 70% of researchers on fixed term, rather than permanent, contracts. Disconcertingly, this study outlines how such precarity and uncertainty impacts the individual from mental health to financial stability. In Ireland, this situation is compounded by the fact that union participation in HEIs in quite low. According to Lynch et al. (2012) union density among academics is below that which is observed in primary and secondary schools, clearly reducing scope for a unionised response to such circumstances of employment.

Examination of Neoliberalism and New Managerialism in Irish Higher Education Through Bourdieu and Neo-Institutional Theory

While Bourdieu did not explicitly apply his thinking tools in the study or impact of globalisation or neoliberalism, he was very much in opposition to both, associating them purely as a function of the economic field. Bourdieu's field of power itself predicts such a state of entrenchment of these forces around the globe, and certainly other aspects of this thinking tools can be used to examine neoliberalism within HE. According to Bourdieu (2003) 'globalization refers to an *economic policy'* (p. 84, original emphasis) which unifies the economic field and 'this very precisely defines the neoliberal policy inseparable from the veritable economic propaganda' (Bourdieu 2003, p. 84). For Bourdieu, globalisation and neoliberalism go hand in hand with powerful economic agendas, effectively reducing government responsibility from such central concerns as housing, social welfare funding, education, health. Privatisation, deregulation, and the influence of supranational

organisations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in particular, have played a significant role in driving neoliberal ideology forwards. In chapter 3, I discussed Bourdieu's notion of *doxa. Doxa* describes an unconscious belief that there are certain aspects of the game which players take as established, fixed and unquestioned, self-evident. This ingrained universal belief informs the way agents behave in the field. In chapter 5, I outlined how the rules of the game within global HE could be understood as *doxa*. If we understand neoliberalism as *doxa* in the field of global HE, then it follows that agents will behave in a way which assumes such rhetoric is dominant, unrefuted. As Chopra (2003) points out, neoliberalism is established as 'an unquestionable orthodoxy that operates as if it were the objective truth' (p. 421). But as noted, it also has much to do with the field of power. Crouch (2011) asserts that while neoliberalism is supposed to relate to free markets, the reality is that it has more to do with the powerful dominance of giant corporations and supranational organisations. This concurs with the view of Williams (2020), who notes that the hegemony of neoliberalism is alive and well. In other words, neoliberalism is an accepted modus operandi and has become hegemonic within global institutions such as HE.

Likewise, within the framework of NT, neoliberalism can be understood as a 'taken for granted' norm in HE. Through NT's isomorphic processes and the prerequisite of the Irish HE system to ensure it retains legitimacy in the face of global pressures, Irish HE is compelled to behave in a way predicated on the grounds that it is recognised as a leading HE system, replete with world class institutions. Recollect from chapter 4 that NT assumes agents will respond to environmental factors within their field and act accordingly. This environment will include policy and decisions made elsewhere within the field and will ultimately lead to changes being enacted in the local environment via coercive, mimetic, or normative isomorphic processes. Ultimately, then, inasmuch as it is within their power to do so, agents will transform (or at least be seen to) to suit their environment. Neoliberalism should not be viewed as a planned methodology or as an alternative ideology for Irish HE. The High Level Strategy Group who drafted the NSHE did not set out a specific approach towards neoliberalism. Instead, the system has become more neoliberal because of the targets and aims set out via policy instruments that induced neoliberal and new managerial processes. These ensure that Ireland's HE system is competitive and well regarded from a global perspective, or well placed in the global field. Failure to 'opt in' to this interpretation of HE runs the risk of Ireland's HE system looking, at best, dated and irrelevant. Such a scenario is unfavourable given government's attempts to retain existing multinational corporations and attract others into the country, with a principal selling point being its highly

educated workforce. Indeed, with respect to global competition for resources and talent in HE, the NSHE unequivocally states that 'Ireland cannot afford to be left behind' (DoES 2011, p. 13), reinforcing this NT perspective.

This scenario is reflected elsewhere. Centeno (2015) observes that the spread of neoliberal ideology in Latin America more generally over the past 20 years can be explained at least partially by NTs construct of isomorphism. In particular, government elites who are at the centre of national economic and political strategy have pushed policy decisions towards those which appear to work in richer, more developed countries. This has acted to reinforce the spread of neoliberalism in this region. As outlined in chapter 4, NT asserts that once certain types of knowledge become embedded in the field, it simply becomes a taken for granted norm. This is the kind of narrative which has led to the legitimisation and widespread rollout of neoliberal policies in the public sector and within HE worldwide. As pointed out by Hall (2017), those within the HE sector are so enclosed by policy mechanisms and structures which shape higher education that it becomes particularly challenging to imagine an alternative or look beyond what is happening in the present. Along these lines, Ball (2012b) asserts that education policy and reform are no longer a 'battleground of ideas, they are a financial sector, increasingly infused by and driven by the logic of profit' (p. 27).

Hence, we see that the new direction of HE policy in Ireland following the GFC has not only impacted on the shape and landscape of higher education, but it has also altered the ideological terrain towards neoliberalism. This situation is not without critique. The next section will examine more closely criticisms of HE policy over the past decade.

Resistance to Policy Direction

There has been much dissent within the HE community in Ireland regarding the neoliberal conditions which have been enacted through policy since the GFC. Indeed, as noted by Kavanagh (2016), there is disquiet and apprehension about these developments more internationally in tertiary education. Counter hegemonic arguments against the rise of neoliberalism in Irish HE are becoming more prevalent in discourse and critics of this new status quo have written at length against the neoliberalisation of the Irish HE system. Casey (2012) champions a 'return to a robust form of self-governance' (p. 50), rather than one which is government led while others (e.g. Lynch 2010) favour a return to moral values and care within Ireland's HE system. Aside from the written accounts which emanate predominantly from academics within HE, other manifestations of defiance include student protests concerning proposed fee hikes. Such a public rally occurred in 2010, when students marched on government buildings in protest against a proposed increase in student

registration fees. More protests occurred across Ireland in 2016, following the publication of the Cassells report (2016) which suggested implementing an income-contingent student loan system akin to that which operates in the UK, as one of its proposals to plug the funding gap in HE. Student representatives are steadfastly against the proposal and expressed concern at that juncture that such a system would create a two-tiered HE system, and act to separate those who can afford HE and those who cannot afford to pay for it (Irish Times 2016). Although a grant system is available for students who are on lower incomes and which currently covers tuition with a small maintenance stipend, the reintroduction of tuition fees would negatively impact students at all levels, particularly those from middle income families. Furthermore, all the inroads made for a more equitable society resulting in the abolition of third level fees in 1996 would be eliminated very quickly (although as noted in chapter 2, the cumulative effect this had on participation was negligible, it is the principle of the act to which I am referring). To deprive young students of a chance to attend a tertiary education because of monetary concerns runs counter to equality ideals Irish society has aspired to in the past when second level fees were abolished by Minister O'Malley in 1966, and third level fees removed by Minster Breathnach in 1996. As highlighted by Rudd and Goodson (2017), if education is primarily funded by the taxpayer – which remains the case in Ireland – and therefore must function for the public, then education must be available to all and 'serve a broad set of interests and purposes' (p. 187). And yet, this principle runs antithetical to the ideology of neoliberalism which is predominantly underpinned by practices of entrepreneurialism and commercialisation. As I outlined in chapter 1, Ireland is one of the most globalised countries in the world and depends on foreign direct investment and the presence of large multinational companies to maintain a stable economy. In order to retain current multinationals in Ireland and attract further investment, a primary selling point which the government uses is the high standard of education of its citizens, and the high number of HE graduates. If successive governments are to continue to use this as a rationale for international investment, then logically it would follow that they continue to remain committed to the funding of HE rather than simply passing the cost on to the student.

While these detractions are often side-lined or ignored, there have been occasions where, backed by media coverage and other publicity as with the student protests, internal policy in HEIs can be overturned or subverted if there is enough traction and support. Policy which runs counter to academic freedom as outlined in the Universities Act (Houses of the Oireachtas 1997), can very often be ill received, particularly where there is an interpretation of prioritisation of income over a HEI's core values and principles. A prominent Irish HEI found itself at centre of media coverage for such a proposal more recently. Ultimately, the

proposal to amend internal policy concerning academic freedom was abandoned following intense criticism from both staff and students. But this does neatly demonstrate that there is ample resistance in Irish HE more generally to subjugating actions which prefer profit over academic integrity. Nevertheless, I concur with Downs (2017) who notes that some forms of critiquing current HE strategy direction which places an overemphasis on the utility in higher education 'may unwittingly evoke nostalgia for a bygone era which is (erroneously) cast as superior to present arrangements' (pp. 59-60). Downs (2017) outlines how many attempts which purport to offer some alternative to the neoliberal ideology currently witnessed globally in HE, overemphasise ideals of what higher education ought to be, instead of offering a concrete rationale for change in a pragmatic sense. With regard to Irish HE, it is my own view that what is needed is an appraisal of current practice and an open dialogue on what direction it might take if differing perspectives from a wide range of stakeholders is taken into account rather than a 'one way or the highway' approach which has been orchestrated by chosen members in enterprise, business, and technology areas.

Conclusion

This chapter scrutinised the visible changes in Irish HE following the introduction of the NSHE, IGR and IEGC. The sector continues to transform in terms of structure as efficiency and consolidation is viewed as a key priority. I also explored some of the less visible changes in the sector resulting from policy shifts in the aftermath of the GFC which included the intensification of a neoliberal agenda within the sector. It has illustrated some of the main tensions which currently exist in the arena of Irish HE and has highlighted the concerns of many that the sector is becoming too commercialised. The prevalence of neoliberal ideology, driven by current policy, has inevitably permeated and influenced the strategic missions of even the oldest, most respected universities in the state, leaving many to question what the role of HE is for in Ireland. Resistance to many of these changes has gained some traction and the global emergency of Covid-19 along with its repercussions will very likely inform future policy direction. The next chapter will look more closely at Irish HE into the future, where a such a balance might be deemed within grasp.

Chapter 7: Irish Higher Education Policy – Beyond One Crisis and into Another

Introduction

Following the critical analysis of Irish HE policy in chapter 5 through the framework of Bourdieu and Neo-Institutional theory, and an overview of the resultant HE landscape in Ireland in chapter 6, this chapter presents a case for seeking some adjustment of the policy instruments for the remaining years of the NSHE. The current policy framework has just under ten years before it runs its course and is replaced by its successor. The impact of Covid-19 has had significant repercussions in Ireland and elsewhere. In addition, the effect that Brexit will have on Ireland's HE system is as yet unknown. The previous two chapters highlighted the effect of swift policy enactment, catalysed by the pressure of crisis and the subsequent ramifications. This is an important time for Irish HE and the country. What is being suggested here, is that considered reflection be undertaken with respect to further policy implementation going forward, particularly with respect to the next national strategy for HE in Ireland.

This chapter follows in three main sections. The first section considers the research questions posed at the beginning of this dissertation, and responses to these questions as enlightened through critical policy analysis which has been scaffolded by Bourdieu and Neo-Institutional theory. Following this, the second section reflects on the frameworks which have been used in this study, particularly in relation to theory development. The final section conveys an approach for future perspectives of Irish HE.

Research Findings

At the outset of this dissertation, I posed the following key questions to be interrogated in the current study:

- To what extent was Irish higher education policy which was implemented in the aftermath of the Global Financial Crisis shaped by global forces?
- How has policy which was introduced in the aftermath of Global Financial Crisis changed Ireland's higher education landscape?
- The emergence of Covid-19 will continue to have significant implications globally, not least in our HE systems. At this critical juncture, what are the considerations for Irish HE with respect to how it is shaped in the future?

I shall summarise the answers to the first two questions shortly, having addressed these through critical policy analysis over the course of this dissertation. The third question will

be addressed in the final section of the current chapter.

It was proposed in chapter 1 that critical policy analysis (CPA) could ably illuminate the fundamental underpinnings of these questions. Recall from chapter 1 that at least one, but usually more, of the following will be present when conducting analysis through CPA (Young and Diem 2018):

(i) an interrogation of the roots and development of educational policy
(ii) differences between policy rhetoric and practiced reality
(iii) examination of the distribution of power, resources, and knowledge and the creation of 'winners' and 'losers'
(iv) scrutiny of the complex systems and environments in which policy is made and implemented
(v) exploration of social stratification and the impact of policy on relationships of privilege and inequality
(vi) the nature of resistance to or engagement in policy by members of historically underrepresented groups

This dissertation, grounded in CPA and scaffolded by the frameworks of Bourdieu and Neo-Institutional theory, has incorporated the objectives presented above, albeit to differing degrees. This in line with my aims as set out in chapter 1. Chapter 2 charted the history of Irish HE up to the GFC in 2008 which provided context for the current study, but also acted to examine (i) the roots and development of education policy. Chapters 3 and 4 set out the main tenets of the theoretical frameworks used in this dissertation to examine the remaining objectives. Bourdieu and NT were chosen for their ability to look beyond a localised context towards a more global perspective. Both constructs employ the use of field to examine the environment under scrutiny, whilst differing in their interpretation of how field dynamics operate. Analysis through these frameworks as enabled the first two research questions posed above to be rigorously addressed.

Chapter 5 interrogated the role of power, resources, and knowledge under which the NSHE, IGR and IEGC were formed, which constitutes objective (iii) of CPA. By invoking Bourdieu's thinking tools, the OECD and the EU were identified as the main agents positioned in the field of power, which dominates the global field of higher education in which Irish HE is situated. NT elucidated how Irish HE has transformed through isomorphic processes in order to maintain legitimacy within the field of global HE. Furthermore, this chapter emphasised the complexity of the environment in which Irish HE is positioned,

which accounts for CPA objective (iv). Chapter 5 achieved the objective of providing an answer to the first research question.

Chapter 6 followed by examining the aftermath of policy implementation. With respect to CPA, this chapter set out to address (ii) the differences in policy rhetoric and practiced reality, (particularly with respect to widening participation and attention to non-STEM subject areas). This chapter also highlighted resistance to policy which falls into objective (vi) of CPA, and to a lesser degree the impact of policy with respect to privilege and inequality (v). What is of particular significance in chapter 6 is the critical literature which was used to examine the entrenchment of neoliberalism within the Irish HE system, particularly evident since the GFC. Critique of neoliberalism and the impact of globalisation on HE more generally predates the GFC by a considerable timeframe. Recall from chapter 1 that CPA gained traction on foot of research which emerged from prominent critical policy researchers including Apple (1982), Ball (1991, 1993) and Dale (1989). These prominent critical policy scholars have gone on to write extensively on the impact of globalisation and the embedding of neoliberalism in education (e.g. Ball 1998; Apple 2001; Dale 2005). Their work has been followed and supplemented by a considerable volume of critical examination in these areas as highlighted in chapter 6. Yet, despite this, globalisation and neoliberal ideology continue to influence and become more deeply rooted in our education systems. It might appear that these important critical analyses of policy have been side-lined or disregarded. However, as I have shown in chapter 6, phenomena associated with globalisation such as neoliberalism, new managerialism and marketisation have become *doxa*, 'rational myth', and taken for granted norms in HE. They have been driven by the field of power and have become embedded in global HE through isomorphic processes. The question then remains: if these concerns have already been extensively problematised and critiqued for over two decades, yet are more endemic in our HE systems than ever, is there anything to be done? Can anything be done? I shall return to this issue in the final section of this chapter as I discuss what I view as an important critical juncture not only in education but in global society – that of Covid-19 and its aftermath. In summary, chapter 6 ably and extensively answered the second research outlined at the beginning of this dissertation and above.

Reflections on Theoretical Frameworks used in this Study

I shall now reflect on the theoretical frameworks used in this study. I will first consider the appropriation of Bourdieu's habitus as used in the analysis of Irish HE. Following this, I will

briefly appraise the effectiveness of CPA in this study and put forward a development of this framework for consideration.

Bourdieu's Habitus

In chapter 3, I outlined the main components and constructs of Bourdieu's thinking tools. I suggested that while habitus has primarily been used to bring attention to equality issues associated with the individual, this view of habitus should not dismiss its utility in going beyond the individual. Indeed, the use of Bourdieu's habitus as outlined in the current study is unconventional and in itself can be viewed as a redevelopment of Bourdieu's habitus. The appropriation of Bourdieu's thinking tool in this way - which allowed a view of Irish HE as an agent located in the global field of HE - constructs an alternative approach in how habitus can ably be used to examine a collective of agents. I signalled in chapter 3 that the standard approach when using Bourdieu's thinking tools in the study of HE has generally been accomplished through the field perspective. I argue that studies in HE when using Bourdieu need not be so limited, for the reasons I set out in chapter 3 and more briefly here.

Critical Policy Analysis

Incorporating Bourdieu and NT in a critical policy analysis of Irish HE has constituted a robust framework which has effectively scrutinised the local environment through the demands of global pressures. As observed in chapter 1, when CPA is chosen as the approach for analysis, differing theoretical perspectives are employed which are largely contingent on the type of research question posed. This I suggested, is a feature which makes CPA a particularly robust method of analysis. The choice of framework used to underpin CPA, therefore, requires careful and meticulous consideration. This, I propose, should be incorporated into the CPA framework as the very first objective. Therefore the following addition could be added to Young and Diem's list:

(i) identification of appropriate theoretical framework(s) to underpin CPA with respect to the particularities of the research question and its context

Futures Thinking

This last section acts to address the final research question posed in this dissertation: The emergence of Covid-19 will continue to have significant implications globally, not least in our HE systems. At this critical juncture, what are the considerations for Irish HE with respect to how it is shaped in the future? It will also introduce the concept of STEAM which I suggest is an area for future research.

Muller and Young note that 'futures thinking' (2010, p.11) with respect to research and theory in education has lacked any real momentum. As has been highlighted throughout this dissertation, when government set out to transform Irish HE, in the abruptness of change no new ideas or original strategy were seemingly considered and instead they were derived from OECD and EU directives. While noting that temporal considerations and the gravity of Ireland's economic misfortunes following the GFC was not conducive to a long process of reform, I agree with Walsh and Loxley's view that the strategy group who initiated the current HE policy paradigm in Ireland via the NSHE 'followed a well-worn path in presenting a reform agenda driven largely by economic considerations' (2015, p. 1142). The salient reality that conversations which consider HE futures could well continue to be dominated to some degree by discourse on globalisation and the knowledge society is not in dispute here. For globalised nations such as Ireland such interests are crucial and consideration of these is likely to stay in the long term. Nor is there any suggestion here that a return to some level of self-sufficiency is appropriate. But the degree to which economic concerns in HE take centre stage should be explored as Ireland moves forward in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic and Brexit. Indeed, it is because of such global events, rather than in spite of them, that it is not only useful, but it is critical, to pause and reflect on other policy imperatives which might be explored. And while it might appear from previous chapters that the requirements to remain competitive in the global knowledge economy have left no alternatives for policy makers regarding the current policy trajectory, I argue that such a unidimensional steer should not be treated as a forgone conclusion.

I make three assumptions when considering the future long-term direction of Irish HE policy. These assumptions are based on observations made in the current study. The first assumption is that Ireland's position as one of the most globalised countries in the world assumes a continued outward focus which is conducive to the country's economy and the livelihoods of its citizens. The second assumption concerns the Irish government's disposition to base any action vis-à-vis HE policy direction on OECD and the EU directive. The third assumption I make here is that while the full impact of both Covid-19 and Brexit are as yet unknown in Ireland or elsewhere, these global events will influence HE policy in Ireland in the short and longer term (and indeed, already have). With a view to these considerations, I shall also ask the question: what is higher education for? The assumptions made here should enable a measured, well considered approach with respect to HE policy formation which includes concerns of a national as well as international nature, while at the same time recognising the global imperatives as delineated by organisations such as the OECD and EU.

This is particularly in view of the disorder and changes in society which will undoubtedly emerge in the coming years as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Global Trends as Delineated by the OECD and EU

In its publication *Trends Shaping Education 2019, Executive Summary*, the OECD outlines how 'global mega-trends' (OECD 2019, p. 1) in the near to medium term will impact on the future of education policy setting. These trends are identified as: (i) globalisation and the shift of global gravity with respect to economic power towards Asia; (ii) citizenship and democracy; (iii) security in a risky world; (iv) living longer, living better and the reality of ageing populations; (v) modern cultures, which include emerging life and work patterns under the influence of a 'network society' (OECD 2019, p. 2). In parallel, the EU's 2012 report *Global Europe 2050* (European Union 2012b) underlines unfolding global trends up to 2050 which are broadly in line with the OECD's. The EU identifies six dimensions of concern including: (i) global demographic and societal challenges; (ii) energy and natural resource security and efficiency, environment, and climate change; (iii) economy and technology prospects (iv); geopolitics and governance: EU frontiers, integration and its role on the global stage; (v) territorial and mobility dynamics and (vi) research, education and innovation (European Union 2012b, p. 8).

Such are the declared medium-term concerns of these global organisations who influence so much of Ireland's HE policy. Each will be relevant in informing HE policy in Ireland to varying degrees. The Covid-19 emergency post-dates both publications, and while Covid-19 is likely to affect future policy setting decisions, the current study assumes that the main tenets of these publications remain intact. There is little denying that many of the concerns outlined by the OECD and EU are crucially important, not just to policy makers in Ireland or Europe, but globally. Interests of global ecology, climate change and better living standards matter to everyone, and now more than ever, given the global impact of Covid-19 and the planet's ever diminishing ecology left for future generations. But what should differentiate national policy direction is the extent to which these global mega-trends are translated into local policy texts, and critically, what order of importance these issues are assigned in forming national policy. It is this latter point which lies at the core of this chapter.

If Not Knowledge for the Economy, Then What is Higher Education For?

As noted by Cuthbert et al. (2011), there are many ways in which to shape an education system. Shortly after the publication of the NSHE, the then Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairi Quinn asserted that reform in education does not just concern 'boosting economic

growth. It is also about helping students reach their potential and prepare for citizenship' (Quinn 2012, p. 125). But while there has been explicit planning in terms of using HE to boost economic growth contained in the NSHE, few tangible actions can be identified which concern preparing students for the future with respect to critical thinking skills or nurturing a sense of national identity.

Hedge and MacKenzie (2016) outline how the subject areas of English, History, Geography for example, 'offer us a distinctive way to understand and interpret human experience' (p. 8), while O'Sullivan (2014) asserts that the humanities should 'be about investing future generations of students with a sense of civic morality, a creative imagination and a critical regard' (pp. 162-163). Giroux (2014a), noting the effects of austerity and rise of neoliberalism within the universities in America and elsewhere, calls for the universities to be reclaimed as a public good to preserve the 'link between education and democracy' (p. 18). But as highlighted by Levinson (1999), the idea of a HE system which performs for the economy is not mutually exclusive to one which has at its core a philosophy of citizenship and democracy. She notes that 'as is the case with citizenship and autonomy, the goals of economic competitiveness can also be incorporated within autonomy-driven education' (Levinson 1999, p. 136). Similarly, Nussbaum (2010) emphasises the need to retain subject areas such as economics, business and science, but not insofar as these subject areas erode the importance of humanities, arts and social sciences in curricula. Rather, they should all be given equal attention. What all of this suggests is that an approach which creates space for all disciplines as required for a thriving, modern and democratic knowledge society, is very much in tune with striking a balance for society. STEM and arts and humanities together encourage a backdrop of creativity, flexibility and the adaptability which are fundamental aspects for the economic success of the individual, and collectively for society. This is consistent with recent commentary from the current Irish president, Michael D. Higgins, himself a noted poet and sociologist. As outlined by President Higgins (2019) the narrow and utilitarian view currently within Irish education is detrimental to our 'capacity to critically evaluate, question and challenge' (16th May 2019). Furthermore, Higgins (2019) suggests that the hegemonic discourse of the knowledge society within Irish HE has become too dominant, warning of a danger that the 'powerful and vital force of creative thinking in the creation of truly functioning societies will come to be forgotten' (16th May 2019). Gallagher (2012) has similar views suggesting that while innovation, commerce and industry are not to be dismissed, such endeavours need to be supported by well-rounded graduates, who have the ability to make considered decisions.

As noted earlier in this chapter, the importance of cultivating citizenship and democracy through education is a key objective of the OECD (2019) and one which could be considered for inclusion in a more concrete way within Irish HE policy objectives. In chapter 6, I highlighted how the NSHE suggests a connection of the arts, humanities, and social sciences with STEM for a multidisciplinary approach to research, but without any formal defined terms of how this might be enacted in policy or practice. Indeed, there are intimations elsewhere within the NSHE which suggest a certain affinity towards arts, humanities, and culture. For example, the NSHE mentions how 'the Irish language, culture and the creative arts are primary sources of our distinctiveness and we should deepen our understanding of these' (DoES 2011, p. 51). This is a particularly valid point in the case of Ireland, but again, there are no explicit suggestions on how this might be achieved. Indeed, what is of concern is that the expression of aims and objectives within the NSHE has done precisely the opposite of ensuring the retention of national distinctiveness in our higher education system. There are tangible ways to incorporate arts and humanities into HE however and I follow here with an example of one such approach.

A Case for STEAM

The integration of the arts (and also the humanities and social science) with STEM has come to be known by the slightly longer acronym of 'STEAM'. In the context of more recent policy documentation relating to HE in Ireland, the emergence of this kind of relationship between STEM and the arts and humanities has gained some limited foothold but has not garnered significant attention in any meaningful way. According to a recent HEA publication we are 'likely to see the rise of STEAM: greater integration of Arts with STEM content' (HEA 2018d, p. 5). The concept of STEAM is a relatively new phenomenon, and its possible adoption into the Irish system has as yet not been articulated further with respect to policy, other than an acknowledgement in *Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025 – Ireland's Future* (DoES 2016c). This document states that students will be encouraged to 'consider science and technology within a wider context and to draw in insights from other studies such as the humanities' (p. 75). The report acknowledges the importance of arts-related subjects but again is not definitive in how this approach might be implemented other than to state that 'options can also be offered for STEM students to take non-STEM elective subjects that pique their curiosity' (p. 75).

Taylor (2016) suggests that STEAM should not be considered as some curriculum whim but should be considered as a serious option in order to prepare young individuals to positively cope with 'global challenges (crises) that are impacting the economy, the natural

environment and our diverse cultural heritage' (Taylor 2016, p. 89). Given the recent disruption of Covid-19, this is of real importance in my view. It is the prerogative of education at all levels, and particularly that associated with higher education, to ensure that all graduates have a grasp on the human impact of progress and growth. If students in HE are studying science, technology, engineering, or mathematics – areas that increasingly impact on developments and functioning of our daily and future environment – they must be aware of what kind of impingement their future jobs and careers have on their environment. But there are other benefits to an individual's career. According to Deloitte, a leading financial services multinational, 'IT leaders should add an "A" for fine arts to the science, technology, engineering and maths charter – STEAM, not STEM' (2015, p. 104) because in their view, the design of engaging solutions to difficult problems requires creativity and criticality.

As pointed out by Watson (2020), by adding arts to the curriculum, technical universities can help STEM students to develop leadership and communications skills, while other, more liberal universities can enhance their programmes by adding technical skills which might be found in industry. What STEAM does is strike a balance in HE and it places renewed importance on the arts, humanities, and social sciences, without seeing them fade further into the shadow of STEM. I concur with Taylor's (2016) point made earlier, and regard STEAM not as the latest 'fad' in education, but as something that can strike a very real balance in HE.

Higher education is often presented with concerns of the future, both for the individual and for society. For the individual, HE can add social and cultural capital and induce a sense of civic responsibility. For society, HE is a means of establishing stability, social values, and norms, and of driving change for the future. However, as outlined by Craft et al. (2013, p. 90) the future 'as it is represented in educational policy discourse and practice is often invoked merely rhetorically and tokenistically'. So, while the NSHE outlines a vision of Irish higher education 'that can successfully meet the many social, economic and cultural challenges that face us over the coming decades' (DoES 2011, p. 4), its main focus for the future centres more on the economic benefits it can bring to the country rather than any nurturing of civic responsibility or cultural awareness. The introduction of more STEAM orientated programmes could help to address such issues into the future. I suggest that this should be considered as an area for extensive future research.

Covid-19: The Beginning of the End for Neoliberalism?

As noted in chapter 3 and chapter 5, Bourdieu outlined that in times of crisis one field will often impact on other fields. I outlined that the GFC was indeed such a period. When I first began undertaking the EdD programme in the University of Glasgow in 2015, Ireland was just out of recession. In June 2016, Brexit became a new reality on the horizon, bringing with it concerns in Ireland of how this might impact the country. I anticipated then that the next event which might present as either a time of crisis or of opportunity – and this is yet to be clear from Ireland's perspective – would be Brexit. Covid-19 has unquestionably eclipsed this notion. In early 2020, Covid-19 began its rapid and impactful spread around the globe, killing over 3.1 million people by April 2021 and infecting over 148 million more (John Hopkins University 2021). In Ireland, all schools, colleges, and childcare facilities were closed from the 12th March 2020, most remaining so for a further year with the exception of a few short weeks at the beginning of the 2020/21 academic year. The Irish HE landscape was once again transformed – this time, over a timeframe of days, rather than months or years. Face-to-face lectures and teaching moved to remote learning, while assessment shifted online. There will be incalculable repercussions from Covid-19 in the months and years to come affecting all walks of life, with HE being no exception.

National and regional lockdowns to curb the spread of the virus have led to renewed interest towards issues of a global concern. One of these concerns centers on neoliberalism and its place in a post Covid-19 world. I suggest that this is an area of research which will gain significant traction in the future. Policy makers' inertia on devising original proposals in HE strategies could well be called into question, as rehashing old policy constructs becomes less of an option. The Financial Times (2020) reflected that if there is 'a silver lining to the Covid-19 pandemic, it is that it…shine(s) a glaring light on existing inequalities' (3rd April 2020). This editorial piece continued with observations on the lack of preparedness of health systems, the fragility of many national economies, and the impact of the pandemic on the most vulnerable in our societies. It suggests that 'radical reforms – reversing the prevailing policy direction of the last four decades – will need to be put on the table' (Financial Times, 3rd April 2020). It proposes that it is time governments begin to actively look at their own policies and economies rather than simply assuming neoliberal logic is the correct direction in which to turn. Or from a Bourdieusian perspective, as *doxa*, or from an NT perspective, a taken for granted norm. What the Financial Times is suggesting is that we need a new kind of *doxa* and new constructs of taken for granted norms.

In parallel, Bonfert (2020) highlights the need to reflect on societal inequalities and power relations which are associated with the dominant socio-economic model and asserts that Covid-19 could very well bring an end to neoliberalism. Bonfert (2020) convincingly argues, in my view, that it is neoliberal concerns of profit maximising and cost efficiency, with a total disregard for environmental factors, which created the conditions for Covid-19 to emerge and to subsequently spread virtually unhindered through global supply chains. This is all at the expense of our natural resources, and which puts the earth's ecology at risk. This view is likewise shared by Saad-Filho (2020), who notes that human intrusion and destruction of nature may have initiated the emergence of Covid-19, but that there can be little doubt that 'destruction of collectivity under neoliberalism exacerbated the impact of the pandemic' (p. 479). As noted by Saad-Filho (2020), Covid-19 has exposed serious structural weaknesses in some of the most uncompromising and wealthiest neoliberal economies such as the UK and USA, who were unable to manufacture personal protective equipment for their own healthcare workers at the beginning of the crisis.

Repercussions of Covid-19 to Irish Higher Education

In the same way that Covid-19 exposed the 'Achilles Heel' of what appeared to be strong economies with robust structures, it has exposed the weakness of neoliberal policies within our HE systems. As one of the world's most globalised countries, Ireland will have a lack of insulation to such events to some degree. But as noted earlier, the focus on Irish HE since 2010 has primarily been an attempt to help protect the country from such events as the GFC into the future. And while the increase in revenue generated from internationalising in the short term was exceptionally high and beyond expectations as outlined in chapter 6, the impact of Covid-19 is sure to raise questions on whether it has been needlessly too exposed. The fallout from Covid-19 for Irish higher education is difficult to measure at this early stage, but there are some indications to suggest the implications will be severe for Ireland and its HE sector, which I will consider briefly here. In previous chapters, I outlined how, following the GFC, Ireland's HE policy changed through crisis, mechanisms of power and isomorphism towards neoliberal polices. I argued that in the face of crisis, there was a certain trajectory set out to the kinds of policy which were introduced. The recruitment of international students formed a large part of these policies – indeed, as observed, this aspect of HE was deemed of such importance and so vital to Irish higher education more generally, that they warranted their own policy frameworks in the form of IGR and IEGC. Irish HEIs adhered to these policy recommendations, resulting in a phenomenal 45% increase in international student numbers from 2009 to 2017 (Durst and Groarke 2019). In May 2020, the Irish Universities Association (IUA) estimated that as a direct result of Covid-19, the

decrease in international student numbers would result in a loss of €181 million in fee income from international students for Irish universities, an additional €34 million from on campus accommodation, and a further €86 million in commercial revenues (RTÉ 2020). Although this puts the cumulative loss estimated by the IUA at €374M for 2020/21, I speculate here that this is likely to be a conservative figure by the time HEIs return to post Covid-19 operations, in whatever form that will take.

The above picture highlights very clearly the impact which the policy recommendations of the NSHE, IGR and IEGC – introduced out of one crisis – is now having in a time of a very different emergency. The internationalisation of Irish HE has worked very well in terms of policy setting in action from a top-down perspective. National strategy to internationalise HE was orchestrated through the field of power and isomorphism, legitimised in national policy, and filtered to the strategic objectives of Ireland's HEIs. And it performed to expectations. But the irony here is that the very policy 'solutions' which were introduced following the GFC to ensure that HE works for the economy and becomes less reliant on exchequer funding, is at the root of a potentially even bigger funding crises in Irish HE post Covid-19. This is not to say that Irish universities should not continue to recruit international students. The addition of international students to Ireland benefits the students themselves, but also Irish students and culture more generally. But the focus cannot continue to be on the fee income that these students generate. Irish HE must find a more sustainable means of funding. Inevitably, the question now to ask is 'if neoliberalism is failing, then what?'. Has the Covid-19 crisis heralded the beginning of the end of the dominant neoliberal hegemony, and if this is the case, what will replace it?

On 24th April 2020, Ireland's Prime Minister, An Taoiseach Leo Varadkar, launched the 'In This Together' campaign to help Irish citizens to stay connected, to stay active and to be mindful of their mental health during this crisis. As Varadkar (2020) recognises:

> The impact of Covid-19 has been dramatic. As a country we have come together to try to protect ourselves and to save others. We have all played our part. We have pulled together in the most remarkable way. (gov.ie, 24th April 2020)

For the HE system, the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Simon Harris, announced a €5 million financial package to support students' mental health during the pandemic (O'Shea 2020), to be used for student counsellors and psychologists. This move recognises that student wellbeing and mental health is a priority, in a time where Covid-19, by the very nature of trying to control it, can compound feelings of isolation and loneliness, particularly for students who are living outside the family home.

The arts, humanities and culture, so embedded in the Irish psyche and tradition, and yet, as we seen in chapter 6, so overlooked when post GFC policy swept through the HE sector, have been brought back to people's minds as they seek avenues of diversion and leisure during lockdown. Across the HE sector, approaches to tackling Covid-19 have been galvanised in conjunction with government to provide advice and recommendations, track and trace, research and innovation, provision of training and hospital facilities, among a whole host of other initiatives (IUA 2020). In short, government and the HE sector really are 'in this together' in the struggle to contain and overcome Covid-19. In the midst of pandemic, lessons about active collaboration have been learned. In a post-pandemic world, stakeholders in HE, such as HEI leaders, should be included in shaping the Irish HE sector. In chapters 5 and 6, I suggested that there has become deep seated mistrust between government and the HE sector and the way in which they have come to operate. The Covid-19 pandemic has seen close cooperation between the two sectors and their mutual understanding that the country must work together developed in this crisis, would be an optimistic way forward for future association, mutual trust and meaningful dialogue.

It remains to be seen what Covid-19's longer term impact will be on Irish HE. In the shorter term, like other HE systems, it is navigating its way through the blended learning solutions that many, if not most, HEI's are engaging in. I anticipate that online learning, in one way or another, will be here to stay, but face-to-face teaching will ultimately remain the primary mode of delivery as with pre Covid-19. The emergence of MOOCs in education was applauded as being a game changer for the future, but they have failed to live up to their expectation (Lederman 2019). Leonard (2019) notes that retention rates in MOOCs have always been low (noting a very poor figure of 3.13% in 2017/18), and while on paper they might appear to be a silver bullet in delivering tertiary education, differences in online and on-site teaching, time zones and student motivation all contribute the MOOCs initiative failing to launch successfully. Different forms of knowledge will come and go, and different ways of transmitting and channelling it will be developed. But it is the learning experience which makes the difference, and that process matters. All students who embark on studies in higher education – full-time or part-time, school leavers or mature students – are embarking on a milestone and rite of passage in their lives and they want to share this experience with others. So, while online learning can augment, and as we have seen with Covid-19, replace classroom teaching, it cannot take its place in the longer term.

Earlier in this chapter, I outlined how the impact of globalisation on education has been highlighted by critical policy analysts and elsewhere for a considerable number of years

before the GFC. Despite forming robust arguments with respect to the detrimental effect of neoliberalism on HE, this work has had little impact on the growing pervasiveness of this condition. However, in much the same way as I defined the GFC as a critical juncture in Irish HE policy, I view the Covid-19 pandemic as a critical juncture which has already affected the field of global HE (and by extension Irish HE). I am not just referring to the mechanism by which HEIs operate in terms of lecture delivery. I am also alluding to the shift in thinking on the meaning and impact of globalisation and neoliberalism more generally, which Covid-19 has brought to attention. In the aftermath of the pandemic, I anticipate that dialogue on globalisation and neoliberalism in HE will gain significant, and broad, traction in the way that previous criticism as outlined already in this chapter has not achieved.

A Future of Irish HE through the Perspectives of Bourdieu and NT

As observed in chapter 6, Bourdieu (2003) was vehemently opposed to neoliberalism and spoke out against the erosion of public welfare in favour of privatisation. While his commentary refers to neoliberalism more generally, developments within higher education can certainly be encompassed and understood in Bourdieu's views. Elsewhere, Bourdieu (2003) criticises supranational organisations such as the World Trade Organisation (WHO) who enact policies which commodify education. These organisations act as a 'sort of *invisible world government* in the service of the dominant economic powers' (Bourdieu 2003, p. 49, original emphasis), whose real power is 'based on the *institution of insecurity'* (Bourdieu 2003, p. 29, original emphasis). By this, Bourdieu is suggesting that political regimes are so entangled with economic goals, that national governments – although Bourdieu is not specifically speaking of Ireland – feel bound to follow rules set by these supranational organisations. Throughout this research, I have shown that such tendencies can be explained through Bourdieu's notion of power and through the lens of NT which outlined the process of isomorphism and legitimacy in this process. Despite the trends of supranational organisations and their projections of 'megatrends' concerning education objectives in the medium term, the Covid-19 crisis has exposed weaknesses in Irish HE policy which have emerged as a result of initiatives in the NSHE, IGR and IEGC. But it has also shown collaborative strengths between state and the HE sector, not observed since before the GFC. While concerns of the global should not be ignored, neither should concerns of cultivating a HE system which includes all aspects of knowledge, including those pertaining to national and cultural perspectives. So, while such views on a new direction in higher education might be considered counter-isomorphic and contradict Bourdieu's field of power in the present, this is not necessarily the case in the future. As noted earlier in this

chapter, very real concerns with respect to neoliberalism are emerging globally. If resistance to this ideology gains traction in the OECD and EU, then the logic of Bourdieu's field of power and NT's isomorphism hold that as such ideas become more embedded in practice, it will be these new strategies that could themselves become the 'taken for granted' norms in shaping HE policy into the future.

A Brighter Future?

In recent months, there have been promising, albeit minor, moves by the state for better cooperation between government and the Irish HE sector. In late 2020, Minister Simon Harris, in the recently formed Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, outlined his vision for Irish HE into the future. This includes more autonomy for Ireland's HE institutions, but also a realignment and new understanding between government and higher education. As Harris (2020) pointed out, 'the establishment of the department is the first step on what I see as our collective journey' (23rd October 2020). Minister Harris (2020) goes on to suggest that 'agility and flexibility of universities are key strengths and this requires an appropriate level of autonomy' (23rd October 2020), and suggests that for this autonomy to be realised, while there is a requirement for accountability, it is at the institutional level where strong governance is required. And while this might appear to be a small, tentative step it is my contention that while a government led HE system is here to stay, a minor step to relinquish some control back to the HEIs is a welcome one.

Moreover, in chapter 6 I suggested that as subject areas for which research is difficult to measure in monetary terms, the arts and humanities have been especially side-lined in favour of a focus on STEM, areas which are often economically quantifiable. The Irish Research Council (IRC), as noted, plays a significant role in facilitating research output, and the types of research they support have been rearticulated and defined over the past decade. Indeed, within the *Irish Research Council Strategic Plan, 2020-2024* (IRC 2020), the IRC has been given direction by government to focus particular attention on the arts, humanities and social sciences. As outlined in the *HEA 2018-2022 Strategic Plan*, research activity should no longer be considered under the purview of solely economic concerns; instead, there will be an 'improving balance between basic and applied research, between societal needs as well as economic drivers' (HEA 2018d, p. 6). The IRC reflects that this position as enables 'balance in the research ecosystem and of the broad-based development of the research landscape' (IRC 2020, p. 12).

Personal Reflections

At the beginning of this dissertation, I sketched out my own position as a professional in a university community, in a role which is very much focused on an outward global context. I began my career in the university without a great deal of knowledge on the vast context of global higher education more generally, or where Ireland was situated in this context. But when I started in my current role and embarked on the doctorate programme in the University of Glasgow shortly after, the real scale of global higher education and where I, as well as the university I work in, are located in this colossal environment, began to become clearer. I quickly realised that Irish HE forms part of a much bigger picture which comprises European higher education, which is in turn part of the global picture.

But I also came to understand that higher education in itself only forms part of the story as I began to undertake this research. The global political economy very much shapes the nature of HE, both globally and in Ireland and I have begun to comprehend what that means for a small country like Ireland. To contextualise my own role and professionalism without reference to the global view might have been difficult; but I now see the global everywhere, and regardless of how one might regard their own professionalism as lying strictly within a national setting, this cannot be the case any longer. Indeed, as I highlight at the beginning of this dissertation, I was very much aware of the changes that were going on in Irish HE following the GFC – the streamlining, budget cuts and job losses. I am now only too aware of the context for these changes and the Irish HE systems susceptibility to global forces whatever form these forces may take. Nor can this period be viewed in isolation as a single event of particular acuteness, never to be repeated. Following some years of stability and continued bedding down of the policy objectives outlined in the NSHE, Covid-19 has brought with it more destabilisation for Irish HE. And while as of yet there are no official moratoriums on recruitment of professional staff in universities, anecdotally, I am aware of many positions which have been vacated since the onset of the Covid-19 crisis which have not been filled. This is somewhat reminiscent of events in Irish HE following the GFC, and of course, this still impacts on the professional and academic staff who are still in situ. It remains to be seen if these circumstances will manifest into a more official policy stance on recruitment.

From my own perspective, this research has very much opened up an entirely new way of perceiving my own professionalism and my own career as a whole. I considered myself to be a somewhat reluctant professional at the beginning of my career in higher education. As

I moved forwards and ultimately embarked on undertaking research in the area of Irish HE, this reluctance has changed to enthusiasm in learning more about this vast entity of which I am a part. Perhaps most of all, this research has culminated in a more reflective approach to my own career in higher education. Irish HE is a topic which in my own view, has had little attention given over to its continued transformation, particularly over the past decade. It is an area which I wish to continue being a part of with respect to my continued research in the area.

Concluding Remarks

The public mood in Ireland to the Covid-19 crisis is unlike its reaction in the aftermath of the GFC. The predominant public disposition which emanated from the latter was one of anger, disappointment, resentment, and distrust in the system which failed them. Government led HE policy emerging out of the GFC led to similar misgivings over governance issues, culminating in a divide and wariness between state and higher education sector. In contrast, while Covid-19 has given rise to a public mood which is tempered with fear and anxiety, it has enacted unity and collaboration. At the beginning of the GFC, Barrack Obama's then Chief of Staff, Rahm Emanuel, made the oft quoted statement to the Wall Street Journal, 'you never want a serious crisis to go to waste' (Wall Street Journal, 11th November 2008). He was referring to policy opportunities which might present themselves during times of crisis, opportunities which might radically change the public mindset 'to do things that you think you could not do before' (Wall Street Journal, 11th November 2008). Did the Irish government waste the opportunity to do something significantly different when is set out its goals for Irish HE in the NSHE a decade ago? As indicated previously in the dissertation, there was nothing particularly novel in the policy direction set out by the NSHE, but viewed through the lens of Bourdieu and NT, nor was there going to be. But this is not the end of the story. Both of these theoretical frameworks as we have seen, allow for scope to enact choices for a different path into the future in a post Covid-19 Ireland.

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Appendix 1: Higher Education Policy Documents, Ireland, 1965 - 2019

Policy Document	Year
Investment in Education	1965
Commission on Higher Education Report	1967
Education for a Changing World: Green paper on education	1992
Charting our Education Futures: White paper on education	1995
Universities Act	1997
Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions https://trimis.ec.europa.eu/programme/programme-research-third-level-institutions#tab-funding	1998
National Development Plan 2000-2006	2000
Programme for Prosperity and Fairness	2000
Achieving equity of access to HE in Ireland: Action Plan 2005-2007	2004
OECD: Review of National policies for Education: Higher Education in Ireland Examiner's Report	2004
Report of the Interdepartmental Working Group on the Internationalisation of Irish Education Services	2004
Institutes of Technology Act	2006
National plan for equity of access to Higher Education 2008-2013	2008
Building Ireland's Smart Economy: A Framework for Sustainable Economic Renewal	2008
Investing in Global Relationships: Ireland's International Education Strategy 2010-2015	2010
National Recovery Plan 2011-2014	2011
National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030	2011
A Proposed Reconfiguration of the Irish System of Higher Education; Report prepared by an International Expert Panel for the Higher Education Authority of Ireland	2012
Towards a Future Higher Education Landscape, including Process and Criteria for Designation as a Technological University and Guidelines on Regional Clusters	2012
Higher Education System Performance Framework 2014-2016	2014
Supporting a Better transition from second level to higher education	2015
Innovation 2020: Ireland's Strategy for research and development, science and technology	2015
National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2015-2021	2015
Irish Educated Globally Connected: An International Education Strategy for Ireland, 2016-2020	2016
Investing in National Ambition: A Strategy for Funding Higher Education	2016
Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025	2016
Higher Education System Performance 2014-2016	2016
Higher Education System Performance 2014-2017	2017
Gender Action Plan 2018-2020	2018
Technological Universities Act 2018	2018

Technology Skills 2022: Ireland's Third ICT Skills Action Plan	2019
Future Jobs Ireland	2019
Action Plan for Education	2019

The table represents policy documents relating to HE; it does not include consultation papers, reports or midterm reviews or press releases which are numerous over this period.

Appendix 2: Differences and Similarities between Bourdieu and Neo-Institutional Theory

Theme	Bourdieu	Neo-Institutional Theory
Field concepts	Yes	Yes (Institutional Field)
Reproduction in the Field	Yes (via power)	Yes (via convergence)
Power Dynamics	Yes	No
Globalisation	Weak view	Yes
Changes within Fields	Diversification (Powerful Actors)	Convergence (towards the practice of powerful actors)
Change within fields – external influences?	During times of crisis	Yes
Meso Level Social Order	Yes	Yes
Macro level	Yes - but limitations exist when looking across different fields	Yes
Autonomy within the Field	Hierarchical	No
Agents of change	Incumbent/Challenger	Isomorphism, Entrepreneurship (weak view)

Appendix 3: List of Publicly Funded HEIs Before the NSHE (2011)

	Universities
1	University College Dublin
2	Trinity College Dublin
3	University College Cork
4	National University of Ireland, Galway
5	National University of Ireland, Maynooth
6	University of Limerick
7	Dublin City University
	Institute of Technology
1	Athlone Institute of Technology
2	Institute of Technology Blanchardstown
3	Institute of Technology Carlow
4	Cork Institute of Technology
5	Dublin Institute of Technology
6	Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art and Design
7	Dundalk Institute of Technology
8	Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology
9	Letterkenny Institute of Technology
10	Limerick Institute of Technology
11	Institute of Technology Sligo
12	Institute of Technology Tralee
13	Institute of Technology Tallaght Dublin
14	Waterford Institute of Technology
	Other Higher Institutes of Education
1	Mary Immaculate College
2	St. Patrick's College Drumcondra (later incorporated into Dublin City University)
3	Mater Dei Institute (later incorporated into Dublin City University)
4	St. Angela's College Sligo
5	National College of Art and Design
6	Marino Institute of Education
7	Church of Ireland College of Education (later incorporated into Dublin City
8	University)
9	Froebel College of Education (later incorporated into Dublin City University)
10	National College of Ireland
11	St. Patrick's College Carlow
12	St. Patrick's College Thurles (later incorporated into Mary Immaculate College)
13	All Hallows College (later incorporated into Dublin City University)
14	St. Patrick's College Maynooth (later associated with National University of Ireland, Maynooth)
15	Dublin Dental University Hospital (later associated with Trinity College Dublin)
16	Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies
17	Shannon College of Hotel Management (later incorporated into National University of Ireland, Galway)
18	Royal Irish Academy of Music
19	Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland

List adapted from Higher Education Authority (2013b) 'Completing the Landscape Process for Irish Higher Education', from https://www.education.ie/en/Learners/Information/Providers-of-Higher-Education/List.html (last accessed 09/02/21).

Appendix 4: List of Publicly Funded HEIs After the Introduction of the NSHE (as of February 2021)

	Universities
1	University College Dublin
2	Trinity College Dublin
3	University College Cork
4	National University of Ireland, Galway
5	National University of Ireland, Maynooth
6	University of Limerick
7	Dublin City University
8	Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland
9	Technological University Dublin
10	Munster Technological University
	Institute of Technology
1	Athlone Institute of Technology
2	Institute of Technology Carlow
3	Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art and Design
4	Dundalk Institute of Technology
5	Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology
6	Letterkenny Institute of Technology
7	Limerick Institute of Technology
8	Institute of Technology Sligo
9	Waterford Institute of Technology
	Other Higher Institutes of Education
1	Mary Immaculate College
2	St. Angela's College Sligo
3	National College of Art and Design
4	Marino Institute of Education
5	National College of Ireland
6	St. Patrick's College Carlow
7	Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies
8	Royal Irish Academy of Music
9	Shannon College of Hotel Management
10	Burren College of Art – Coláiste Ealáine na Bóine
	Other Funded Institutions
	Royal Irish Academy

List adapted from Department of Education (2021) 'Providers of Higher Education', from https://www.education.ie/en/Learners/Information/Providers-of-Higher-Education/List.html (last accessed 09/02/21).

Appendix 5: List of Private Higher Training Providers (as of February 2021)

1	Carlow College
2	CCT College Dublin
3	Clanwilliam Institute
4	Dorset College
5	Dublin Business School
6	Galway Business School
7	Griffith College
8	Hibernia College
9	IBAT College
10	ICD Business School
11	IICP Education and Training Limited
12	Independent Colleges
13	International College for Personal and Professional Development
14	International School of Business
15	Irish College of Humanities and Applied Sciences Limited
16	National College of Ireland
17	Saint Nicholas Montessori College Ireland
18	The American College Dublin
19	The Open Training College
20	Children's Therapy Centre Limited
21	Dublin Institute of Design
22	Gaelchultúr Teoranta
23	Institute for Supply Chain Excellence
24	Irish Payroll Association
25	Public Affairs Ireland
26	SQT Training Limited
27	HSE - Regional Centre Nursing and Midwifery Education Blanchardstown
27	HSE - Regional Centre Nursing and Midwifery Education Tullamore

List adapted from Quality and Qualifications Ireland (2021) 'HET Private Providers', from https://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/HET-Private-providers.aspx (last accessed 09/02/21).