Curriculum change in Australia and Ireland: a comparative study of recent reforms

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\textbf{ABSTRACT}
Curriculum policies internationally are increasingly concerned with the promotion of national competitiveness and economic development. This involves more emphasis on skills than on knowledge, on learning than on teaching and on school/teacher autonomy than regulation from the centre. At the local level such global influences are inevitably refracted in a process known as glocalization. Using a critical policy historiography approach, this study explores globalization and glocalization forces in two relatively recent curriculum reforms—the Australian Curriculum and Ireland’s Framework for Junior Cycle. Both reforms employ triadic models of curriculum design involving subjects/learning areas, key skills/general capabilities, statements of learning/cross-curriculum priorities. Globalization influences are clearly evident in the shared emphases in both jurisdictions on skills, learning and school/teacher agency. However, these reforms have inevitably been shaped by their respective local political and social contexts and the respective curriculum debates have been dominated by technical implementation issues such as curriculum overload in Australia and school-based versus external assessment in Ireland. Meanwhile, substantive issues such as the educational purposes of the reforms, the influence of market values and performativity and the significance of curriculum and teacher professionalism policymaking structures have been largely eschewed.

\textbf{KEYWORDS}
Curriculum reform; international comparison; globalization; glocalization; policy contexts

\textbf{Introduction}
At a time when comparative studies in the field of student assessment are the focus of considerable attention (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2013), comparisons of international curriculum reforms can deepen our appreciation of the political nature of curriculum policy making and heighten our understanding of how transnational policy movements are interpreted and negotiated in different settings (Wahlstrom and Sundberg, 2017).

This study involves a critical policy historiography analysis of two recent curriculum policy reforms, the Australian Curriculum (AC) (ACARA, 2012) and Ireland’s Framework for Junior Cycle (Department of Education and Skills [DES], 2015). Our analysis identifies common global influences in recent curriculum reforms in Australia and Ireland along with the refraction of such influences in their respective (g)local environments. Since both reforms are relatively new, the focus is on the \textit{intended curriculum} in both countries, what Levin (2008, p. 8) calls ‘statements of what students are expected to know and be able to do’. 
Two closely related phenomena found in international curriculum policy discourse, namely globalization and glocalization, are introduced first. From the perspective of globalization curriculum is seen as a key driver of international competition and economic development (Yates & Young, 2010). Meanwhile the concept of glocalization gives due recognition to national and local policy contexts ‘whereby the global and the local—the universal and the particular—increasingly interpenetrate, creating a new hybridity of cultural styles and mixes (Green, 1999, p. 55). Relevant features of the Australian and Irish contexts are introduced in section two while critical policy historiography is introduced in section three. Our main findings are then presented and discussed followed by some concluding remarks.

**International policy context: curriculum globalization and glocalization**

Rizvi and Lingard (2010, p. 231) see globalization as ‘both an ideological formation and a social imaginary that now shapes the discourses of education policy’ and Priestley (2002, p. 123) notes the ‘general consensus that globalization has had an impact on education’. This means that curriculum is becoming increasingly uniform (Anderson-Levitt, 2008; Ball, 2012; Lingard, 2010) under the influence of market-related forces such as the demand for transferable skills, increased school retention and greater higher education participation rates. For example, a recent comparative analysis of curriculum changes in Scotland and New Zealand (Priestley & Sinnema, 2014, p. 50) identified a ‘curricular turn [that was] prompted by globalization’ to position education systems and curriculum as drivers of economic development and national competitiveness.

This focus on twenty-first century skills and competences has been identified in various comparative analyses of curriculum including Isaacs, Creese, and Gonzalez (2015) and Voogt & Roblin (2012). As suggested by Dale (2010, pp. 312–3) the ‘common grammar of schooling [is] under strain’ as the demands of the global knowledge economy shift ‘from content knowledge to competences … and from teaching to learning’. Curriculum scholars are increasingly concerned that such approaches are ‘based not only on a rather narrow view about the function of schooling but also on a potentially uncritical view about knowledge’ (Biesta, 2013b, p. 737) with Teodora and Estrela (2010, p. 636) remarking that ‘a curriculum based on competences points to a more pragmatic approach to knowledge and to a utilitarian understanding of schooling’. In this environment curriculum decision makers are less likely to be concerned about ‘esoteric’ philosophical issues such as ‘worthwhile knowledge’ and much more likely to be concerned about economic, technical and matters of public interest. It is hardly surprising then that Priestley & Sinnema (2014, p 70) found evidence that the reformed New Zealand and Scottish curricula ‘have downgraded knowledge … greatly reduced the specification of content, de-emphasized the importance of knowledge in relation to skills, competencies etc’.

The related shift away from prescriptive specifications of knowledge content has accentuated the importance of teacher capacity and autonomy along with the role of the teacher as change agent and facilitator of student learning (Biesta, Priestly & Robinson, 2015). Curriculum policies are increasingly characterized by concerns with student outcomes and by the ‘centrality of the learner’ (Priestley & Sinnema, 2014, p. 51). Biesta (2009, p. 36) characterizes this shift as ‘the “learnification” of education: the transformation of an educational vocabulary into a language of learning’ and argues that it represents a narrowing of curriculum and a downgrading of the intentional act of teaching.

However, while transnational education policies strongly influence national education policies, they do not determine them (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Savage & O‘Connor, 2015; Wahlsstrom & Sundberg, 2017) and curriculum is often seen in terms of ‘contextualized social process’ (Cornbleth, 1990; Goodson, 1990). For example, Priestley and Sinnema (2014) found that current curriculum policies in New Zealand and Scotland are characterized by flexibility at both national and school levels where there has been a shift from what Dale (2001, p. 499) calls ‘a “localised globalism” to a “globalised localism” that itself becomes localised in varying ways’. As suggested by Goodson (2014, p. 769), ‘national school systems are refractors of world change forces’. This phenomenon of refraction, generally known as ‘glocalization’, results in ‘hybrid education systems that retain many distinctive features’ (Priestley, 2002, p. 122). The current
research considers the refraction of globalized curriculum policy priorities from the perspectives of our chosen national contexts.

While the rhetoric of teacher autonomy is attractive, the reality on the ground may be rather different. For example, Teodoro and Estrela (2010, p. 636) report that, in the case of Portugal, ‘such autonomy was progressively removed with the emergence of administrative control of the curriculum’. In the US, Au (2011, p. 30) reports that, rather than developing teacher autonomy, high-stakes testing is ‘promoting the standardization of teaching that both disempowers and deskills teachers [and that] the content of the curriculum moves to match what the tests require’ with the result that ‘teachers’ power [is] being increasingly usurped through policy and curriculum structure’. A recent Australian study reports that high-stakes testing regimes ‘distort teaching practices, constrain the curriculum and narrow students’ educational experiences’ (Polesol, Rice and Dulfer, 2014, p. 640). Winter (2017, p. 70) concludes from a study of English geography and history teachers that the prevailing ‘technical-rational framework … reveals a deficit in ethical responsibility brought about by the system’s reliance on standardization, datafication and conformity around predetermined and externally imposed norms’.

Political leaders inevitably take ‘much more interest in public opinion and particularly the views of opinion leaders in key sectors or constituencies’ (Levin, 2008, p. 18). This means that national curriculum policy making is increasingly characterized by open consultation with ‘non-experts’ including parents, students and business representatives. Such provision for local influences means that participants are ‘speaking back in the vernacular [in a context where] all policy developments in education, even in the context of globalization, result in vernacular manifestations’ (Ozga & Lingard, 2007, p. 75). Given the significance of the local environment it is important that we now consider the curriculum context of both countries as a prelude to this critical policy historiography.

Background context

Schooling in both countries is divided into primary (4–12), lower secondary (12–15) and senior secondary (15–17). Whereas the AC was developed for all students from ages 4–16 the Irish reform concerns the three years of lower secondary education. Australia is a federation of states and territories with a population five times that of Ireland and a geographical area 110 times the size of Ireland. The background contexts of these post-colonial, predominantly English speaking, countries with their strong historical links are now considered from the perspectives of political influences, education structures, national curriculum bodies and international influences.

Political influences

Whereas the Australian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (ACARA) is co-owned by federal (50%), state and territory governments. Ireland’s National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) is comprised of representatives from stakeholder groups. While education was increasingly seen as having a key role in the development of Australia’s human capital (Lingard, 2018) the introduction of a national curriculum was delayed by the complexities of educational federalism. The development of the AC represents the culmination of a political move towards a more nationally consistent curriculum that began four decades previously (Gerrard & Farrell, 2014; Harris-Hart, 2010; Savage, 2016) and was enshrined in the Melbourne Declaration’s Educational Goals for Young Australians (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2008). Relationships between Australian federal government and individual states has been described as a ‘political jungle [that] adds another layer of complexity to an already complex picture’ (Australian Government, 2014, p. 228). For example, Savage (2016, p. 845ff) concluded that the national curriculum was developed in the context of ‘power asymmetries [namely] the positioning and power of the two biggest and ostensibly most powerful states (Victoria and New South Wales) relative to smaller states’. When they established ACARA in 2007 the Labour party controlled the
federal government along with all state and territory governments. Given the volatility of the Australian political environment, the government needed quick results. As the Australian Government (2014, p. 224) review concluded, the exigencies of ‘a political deadline’ meant that the development of the national curriculum would become a ‘rushed compromise . . . based on political or policy considerations rather than educational ones’. When Labour lost the 2013 general election the incoming Liberal/National government immediately commissioned an independent review of the AC.

The Irish teacher unions, which are among the strongest in the world, are key players in Ireland’s partnership approach to education and curriculum decision making (Gleeson, 2010). Rather than political party or state government agendas, it was their vigorous opposition to certain aspects of the proposed reforms that dominated the Irish junior cycle debate. On the other hand, Brennan (2011) suggests that ACARA and its AC are both ‘owned’ by the government and the education ministers, with little connection to professional networks in education.

**Curriculum structures**

Ireland has a centralized education system where curriculum is under the control of the national Ministry advised by the NCCA. On the other hand, individual Australian states and territories enjoyed complete control of their own curricula prior to the introduction of the national curriculum in 2014. There are statutory curriculum bodies in both countries. ACARA’s main functions include the development of national curriculum and the administration of the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). Curriculum implementation and student assessment outside the national tests in literacy and numeracy remain a state responsibility. Most of the nine members of the ACARA Board, which seeks to arrive at decisions by consensus, are nominated either by the Australian Government or by State/Territory Education Ministers. The Board began its work on the development of the national curriculum by defining learning entitlements that ‘build on the educational goals of the Melbourne Declaration’ (2012, p. 18).

The Irish NCCA advises the Education Minister on curriculum and assessment matters while the Department of Education and Science (DES) and the State Examinations Commission (SEC) are responsible for curriculum implementation and student assessment respectively. In contrast with ACARA, the national curriculum body (NCCA) comprises 22 key stakeholders and interest groups including teacher unions, school management bodies, parents’ organizations and business interests. This model of social partnership has been a key strategy in Ireland’s pursuit of both economic prosperity and social inclusion since the mid-1980s (Gleeson, 2010) and the representational constitution of the NCCA is enshrined in the Education Act (Government of Ireland, 1998). The representational nature of the NCCA and its strong alliances with professional networks, including trade unions, is in marked contrast to the ‘remoteness’ of ACARA and this constitutes an important contextual difference between the two countries.

Since there can be no curriculum development without teacher development (Stenhouse, 1975), it is important to briefly compare the respective teacher standards bodies. Ireland’s Teaching Council, which is responsible for the professional standards and registration of teachers, comprises 37 members of whom 16 are either nominated or elected by teachers, as well as nominees of school management bodies and teacher education providers. The parallel organization in Australia, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), unlike ACARA, is exclusively owned by the federal government and the Education Minister of the day appoints its Board of Directors.

Curriculum policymaking in both countries has been characterized by consultation, although this is naturally more difficult in a large and diverse country like Australia. Notwithstanding ACARA’s (2012, p. 6) commitment to ‘targeted consultation with key stakeholders’ and open public consultation with 16,800 individuals using a wide variety of approaches and environments (ACARA, 2014), Lingard (2018, p. 62) argues that there is ‘not a strong enough ongoing connection between ACARA and its curriculum work and the teaching profession and teacher professional networks’.
Consultation is one of the NCCA’s four key curriculum development strategies (see https://www.ncca.ie/en/about-curriculum/about-ncca/what-we-do). The NCCA (2010a) consultative document on junior cycle reform was informed primarily by empirical data from their commissioned longitudinal study of students’ experience of the Junior Certificate (Smyth, 2009) and by the outcomes of the associated public consultation process. While the latter found strong support for the proposed reform (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [NCCA], 2011), concerns were expressed regarding systemic issues such as equity and inclusion, teacher and school development and the proposed introduction of school-based assessment.

**International influences**

International influences are clearly evident in both of these long-established members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Sellar and Lingard (2013, pp. 13–14) argue that ‘the OECD has increased its agency as a policy actor in education globally [and that its] education policy work depends, to a significant extent, on stressing the importance of policy factors over the effects of cultural and social context’. Lingard (2010, p. 135) argues that the adoption of international practices such as national testing (NAPLAN) and high-stakes testing have ‘challenged progressive reforms’ introduced in Queensland since 1969. He believes (2010, p. 136) that ‘global policy convergence in schooling has seen the economization of schooling policy, the emergence of human capital and productivity rationales as meta-policy in education, and new accountabilities, including high-stakes testing and policy, as numbers, with both global and national features’. ACARA (2012, p. 5) declares its intention to ‘contribute to the provision of a world-class education in Australia by setting out the knowledge, understanding and skills needed for life and work in the 21st century’.

Some thirty years ago O’Sullivan (1992) highlighted the influence of ‘cultural strangers’ in Irish education policy. More recently the European Framework for Key Competences informed the development of a national skills strategy that included specific reference to the skills needed to respond to globalization and the knowledge society (Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, 2007). When the then Minister for Education and Skills asked the NCCA ‘to review the [junior cycle] innovations happening in other places’ (NCCA, 2010a, p. 5), he recognized the importance of global trends. In her Foreword to the final version of the Framework for Junior Cycle, the incumbent Education Minister highlighted the need to ‘ensure a learning experience for our young people appropriate to the needs of the 21st century … [through] a modernized curriculum’ (Department of Education and Skills [DES], 2015, p. 2). The central vision of the subsequent Strategy Statement and Action Plan for Education (DES, 2016, p. 1), namely ‘that the Irish Education and Training System should become the best in Europe over the next decade’, reflects performativity values that are difficult to reconcile with the Plan’s emphasis on equality, inclusion and social cohesion.

In summary then, given their differences in area and population, the curriculum contexts of these two countries have much in common—a strong emphasis on the relationship between education and the economy; consultation with key stakeholders; and triadic curriculum structures. Whereas Irish curriculum decision making is characterized by representational partnership, ACARA Board members are nominated by federal and state governments. Party political influences are more pronounced in Australia due to the complex and contested relationship between the federal and state governments.

**The reforms in question**

Both reforms (Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority, 2012; Department of Education and Skills [DES], 2015) are three-dimensional in that they include learning areas (Australia)/subjects (Ireland), general capabilities (Australia)/key skills (Ireland) and cross-curriculum priorities (Australia)/statements of learning (Ireland). The respective curriculum documents make frequent reference to expectations of student achievement with the notion of ‘assessment standards’ being an established aspect of the
Australian education landscape. ACARA (2014) makes frequent use of the traditional formula of 'knowledge, understanding and skills' while the Irish Framework uses various combinations and permutations of these same concepts along with competences and values.

The Irish Framework for Junior Cycle (2015) identifies eight key skills ‘required for successful learning by all students’ (Department of Education and Skills [DES], 2015, p. 10) and 24 statements of learning that are ‘central to planning . . . [and to] the students’ experience and [programme] evaluation’ (2015, p. 12). Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority (2012, p. 16) identifies seven general capabilities that ‘apply across subject-based content and equip them to be lifelong learners able to operate with confidence in a complex, information-rich, globalised world’. Although each framework has a dedicated skills/capabilities dimension, the importance of developing skills is frequently conjoined with the development of knowledge, understanding, competences and values. The Irish key skills and ACARA’s general capabilities are remarkably similar.

| ACARA general capabilities | Irish key skills                      |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Literacy                   | Being literate                        |
| Numeracy                   | Being numerate                        |
| ICT capability             | Managing information and thinking*    |
| Critical and creative thinking | Managing information and thinking*  |
|                            | Being creative                        |
| Personal and social capability | Managing myself; Staying well;      |
|                            | Working with others;                  |
|                            | Communicating                         |
| Ethical understanding      |                                       |
| Intercultural understanding|                                       |

*denotes relevance to both capabilities.

The Irish key skills are expressed in learner-centric discourse at the suggestion of students. Four of the seven skills correspond with ACARA’s ‘personal and social capability’ and this is indicative of the increasing importance afforded Wellbeing in international education discourse (Langford et al, 2014). Managing information and thinking corresponds with ACARA’s critical thinking and ICT capabilities. Although the Irish Framework does not include skills that correspond with ACARA’s capabilities of ethical and intercultural understanding, its statements of learning include cognate outcomes such as environmental sustainability, cultural understanding and citizenship which are also closely related to the Australian cross-curricular themes of sustainability, Asia and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI).

Both frameworks provide for improved curriculum planning flexibility for schools. ACARA (2014, p. 20) indicates that ‘the three-dimensional design of the Australian Curriculum . . . provides teachers with flexibility to cater for the diverse needs of students across Australia and to personalise their learning’. The Irish Framework provides for: a reduced focus on terminal examinations with increased emphasis on classroom-based assessment; school-based short courses that respond to students’ learning needs and interests; greater professional collaboration between teachers; and greater transparency for parents and students.2

Approach: critical policy historiography

A critical policy historiography approach (Gale, 2001; Mockler, 2018) was used to explore the effects of globalization on curriculum reforms in the two countries (Australia and Ireland) and to identify refracted (g)local responses to these reforms as they developed over time in their respective settings. These two countries were chosen because each of the authors has worked and researched in the field of curriculum in both contexts. While the impact of globalization on assessment has been receiving some attention internationally (Klenowski, 2009), comparative studies of the effects of
curriculum globalization are rare. There are even fewer studies where a critical policy historiography approach has been adopted to explore the globalization and glocalization/refraction of curriculum reforms.

Gale (2001) builds on Kincheloe’s (1991, p. 234) premise that historical accounts serve to ‘trace the processes of educational change and to expose the possible relationships between the socio-educational present and the socio-educational past’. He suggests that policy historiography allows the researcher to represent policies as ‘temporary settlements’ rather than the ‘self-evident and consensual’ outcomes of ‘progress’ (Gale, 2001, p. 386) and explains this phenomenon in terms of Ball’s (1994, p. 23) notion of ‘a moving discursive frame [where] a particular historical and geographical moment defines the specifics of policy production’. Believing that curriculum is policy ‘in its most public form’ (Looney, 2001, p. 153), the study explored the impact of globalized, neo-liberal, policy agendas on curriculum policies over recent decades. Gale (2001, p. 385) identifies a number of important questions that are relevant to the current study.

… policy historiography asks three broad questions: (1) what were the ‘public issues’ and ‘private troubles’ within a particular policy domain during some previous period and how were they addressed?; (2) what are they now?; and (3) what is the nature of the change from the first to the second?

Critical policy historiography enabled the researchers to analyse specific curriculum reforms that appeared to respond to ‘particular historical and geographical moment[s]’ (Gale, 2001, p. 385) with a view to understanding policy production and its associated complexities. Our inquiry centred around two main questions:

1. How is the phenomenon of curriculum globalization reflected in recent curriculum reforms and debates in Australia and Ireland?
2. How has this phenomenon of curriculum globalization been refracted in these reforms and in the associated debates?

The authors analysed relevant curriculum policy documents and reports, including digital texts. Content analysis, the process of organizing information into categories related to the central questions of the research (Bowen, 2009), involves meta-synthesis of textual content (Rapley & Jenkings, 2010). In our analysis of these policy documents we were primarily interested in the:

- influences of globalization and glocalization/refraction on curriculum reform in Australia and Ireland;
- emergent emphases on skills and knowledge; learning and teaching; teacher/student agency and regulation.

The relevant source documents were carefully read by each of the researchers at least four times. A list of codes emerged iteratively during this process and these codes were then pooled and categorized into themes. A final set of themes was agreed after prolonged negotiation and this analysis allowed us to explain the two curriculum reforms from a global perspective and to locate them in their local contexts by identifying particular tensions and issues that emerged through the associated consultation and implementation processes. The second task above also involved basic keyword searches of the two main source documents. The particular documentary sources that formed our data base are now introduced in greater detail.

**Sources**

Our primary sources included curriculum policy documents, reports and digital texts. Secondary sources included relevant academic literature and coverage in the print media. The key reference documents were The Shape of the Australian Curriculum (Australian Curriculum and Reporting...
Authority, 2012) and the Framework for Junior Cycle (Department of Education and Skills [DES], 2015). The first version of The Shape document was published in 2009 and the above reference is to its fourth iteration. Whereas the AC was developed when the Labour party was in power, the Review of the Australian Curriculum, referred to hereafter as ‘the independent review’, was commissioned by the Liberal National government when it assumed office in 2014. This review (Australian Government, 2014) was informed by some 1,600 public submissions from individuals and groups and by 69 meetings with stakeholder groups. ACARA (2015) proposed certain changes to the AC in response to the review findings and these became the subject of further consultation with the main stakeholders. Relevant articles in peer-reviewed journals also provided valuable source material for the current paper.

Irish sources included the original consultative document, Innovation and Identity (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [NCCA], 2010a), the NCCA (2011) report on the outcomes of that consultative process, and more recent consultative material from the NCCA website. These consultations informed the first iteration, Framework for Junior Cycle (DES, 2012), which was followed by extensive discussion and debate both at official fora and in the national media. This culminated in the publication of the final version of the Framework (Department of Education and Skills [DES], 2015). The authors draw on these official documents as well as media coverage and relevant Teacher Union material. Ireland has not commissioned an independent review of junior cycle reform.

Findings and discussion

Our findings regarding the respective influences of globalization and glocalisation on the reforms in question are now presented and discussed along with the emerging contrast between education politics and structures in the two countries.

Skills and knowledge

The strong focus of both reforms on general capabilities (Australia) and key skills (Ireland) is indicative of a shift away from knowledge in the direction of skills. The AC is predicated on the belief that ‘21st century learning does not fit neatly into a curriculum solely organized by learning areas or subjects that reflect the disciplines’ (ACARA, 2013, p. 15). Drawing heavily on the educational goals of the Melbourne Declaration (Lingard & McGregor, 2014), Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2014, p. 14) defines general capabilities in terms of ‘flexible and analytical thinking, a capacity to work with others and an ability to move across subject disciplines to develop new expertise’. As well as very frequent references to general capabilities, The Shape of the Australian Curriculum (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2014) also makes frequent mention of knowledge, skills and understanding, both in conjunction with and separately from general capabilities e.g.

The Australian Curriculum recognises the entitlement of each student to knowledge, understanding and skills that provide a foundation for successful and lifelong learning and participation in the Australian community (ACARA, 2014, p 13).

… the Australian Curriculum is developed in terms of learning area knowledge, skills and understandings and general capabilities (ACARA, 2014, p 13).

The Irish junior cycle Framework (DES, 2015) represents a marked deviation from the Classical Humanist tradition that has exerted such influence on Irish education (Gleeson, 2010; Mulcahy, 1989; OECD, 1991). Frequent references to skills and knowledge are inevitable in curriculum policy documents and their incidence is of interest to critical policy historiography. It is significant that the Framework contains more than twice as many references to skills acquisition as to knowledge. While acknowledging the importance of curriculum balance, it sets out to ‘broaden students’ learning and skill set [in response to] the changing nature of knowledge, the ease with which...
students have access to information, and the pace of change in the workplace and the world generally [where] these competences and skills are critical to the preparation of young people for learning and living’ (DES, 2015, p. 7).

This shift from knowledge to skills was first mooted in the NCCA initiative to embed key skills in the teaching of individual senior cycle subjects (NCCA, 2010b). The junior cycle consultative document (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [NCCA], 2010a), containing three times more references to skills than knowledge, explained this emphasis on ‘competences and skills for learning and living in [in terms of] the changing nature of knowledge, the ease with which students have access to information, and the pace of change in the workplace’ (2010a, p. 6).

The focus of ACARA’s general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities is ‘on what the nation wants students to become in addition to what the nation wants them to learn’ (Lingard & McGregor, 2014, p. 107). However, all contributors to the Special Issue of The Australian Researcher devoted to the AC agreed that it has a ‘heavy emphasis on content knowledge as opposed to process knowledge’ (Atweh & Singh, 2011, p. 192). The independent reviewers have characterized it as ‘traditional . . . constructed around disciplinary knowledge’ (Australian Government, 2014, p. 106).

ACARA defines core content for the eight learning areas originally identified in the Melbourne Declaration. These areas ‘provide a foundation of learning in schools’ (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2014, 15): English; Mathematics; Science; Humanities and Social Science (comprising History, Geography, Civics and Citizenship and Economics and Business); The Arts (comprising Dance, Drama, Media Arts, Music and Visual Arts); Languages; Health and Physical Education; Technologies (comprising Digital Technologies and Design and Technologies).

The independent reviewers suggest that ACARA’s efforts to ‘be all things to all people’ (2014, p. 95) in response to political pressure to ‘deliver’ resulted in ‘an overcrowded curriculum’ (Australian Government, 2014, p. 31) and ACARA (2015, p. 5) would subsequently recognize that ‘the overcrowded curriculum [and associated] re-balancing’ were the main issues emerging from the consultative process.

There would appear to be considerable ambiguity regarding the mandatory core of the AC with the independent reviewers suggesting that its tri-dimensional nature has led to ‘widely varying concepts of the nature of a national curriculum [where] some saw it as a quasi-syllabus, others a road map or guide or a “bit of a framework” [and] others described the content material as just the “stuff” which gets used as capabilities are addressed’ (Australian Government, 2014, p. 111). They report that some states, sectors and schools ‘seem to believe that not all of the Australian Curriculum is mandatory’ with the result that ‘there is an awful lot of “adapting and adopting” . . . “picking and choosing” and even some rebadging’ and that teachers are confused ‘as to the amount of choice they have been given and which aspects of addressing the curriculum they will be personally assessed on’ (Australian Government, 2014, pp. 237–238).

Meanwhile, Ireland ‘has moved from being a state governed by theocratic principles to one governed by market principles [where] the focus on the human capital value of education . . . was married to a new education project focused on educating students for a market economy’ (Lynch, Grummell, & Devine, 2012, p. 21). Successive Education Strategy Statements have drawn heavily on the concrete future objective of the European Union (Gleeson & Donnabháin, 2009) to ‘become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion’ (European Union, 2000).

While acknowledging that ‘subjects continue to play an important role as part of the new junior cycle programme’ (DES, 2015, p. 17), the new Framework calls for a ‘new balance between the development of skills and competences and the development of students’ knowledge’ (DES, 2015, p. 7) while the traditional discourse of subject syllabuses (Crooks, 1990; National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [NCCA], 1989) is replaced with the looser notion of ‘specifications for subjects’.
Although the emphasis on key skills (especially literacy and numeracy) was welcomed during the junior cycle consultation process, the ‘underlying assumption in most submissions was that subjects [would] remain as the main curriculum component in a revised junior cycle curriculum’ (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [NCCA], 2011, p. 9). Although the Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland’s (ASTI, 2015) survey welcomed the increased emphasis on key skills and active learning, it decried the shift away from subject knowledge.

Curriculum overcrowding is also emerging as a problem in Ireland and the review of Junior Cycle English, the first reformed subject introduced, reported ‘concern … about the potential impact of over-assessment on students, teachers and schools’ (NCCA, 2018, p. 21), particularly in the case of schools where all the ‘new’ assessment arrangements have been grafted on while none of the ‘old’ assessment architecture has been dismantled. This shared issue of curriculum overcrowding, associated with large numbers of subject learning outcomes, can clearly militate against the prioritization of skills/capabilities and cross-curricular priorities/statements of learning.

Prior to the introduction of the junior cycle Framework, Irish students normally took ten subjects, most of which were mandatory. Following prolonged debate around the vexed question of a ‘common, mandatory, core’ it was eventually decided that the new core would simply consist of English, Irish and Mathematics, thus allowing schools and students as much choice as possible. Whereas History and Geography were part of the common core in the voluntary secondary sector, attended by more than 50% of students, this is no longer the case. While this change gave rise to lively discussion, there has been relatively little public debate about the fact that key skills and statements of learning have effectively emerged as the new ‘core’ curriculum. Notwithstanding the fact that several statements of learning have considerable relevance to history as a school subject, the History Teachers’ Association (Humphreys, 2015a) and many commentators including President Michael D Higgins (McGreevy, 2018), Hilary Ferriter (2015, 2018) have questioned its removal from the core curriculum. Concerns have also been aired regarding the allocation of 400 hours to the mandatory new ‘subject’ of ‘Wellbeing’ (O’Brien, 2017) due to the impact of this reform on the time available for teaching traditional subjects.

The overall picture emerging then is one where the development of 21st century skills permeates the rhetoric of both policy documents, often at the expense of knowledge and understanding. At the same time curriculum debate in both countries has focused on issues such as curriculum overcrowding and the content and nature of the core curriculum.

Learning and teaching

The discourse of learning pervades the official documentation associated with both reforms. The NCCA (2010a) consultative document included six times more references to learning than teaching and that ratio increases to 7:1 in the Framework itself (DES, 2015) where ‘learning to learn’ is identified as a key principle and where the brief Ministerial Foreword includes seven mentions of learning and just one mention of teaching.

The 24 statements of learning identified in the Framework set out what ‘students should know, understand, value and be able to do at the end of junior cycle’ (2015, p. 5). The focus on learning is clearly reflected in the central place afforded these statements which are to ‘be given expression through the learning outcomes in subject specifications’ (2015, p. 10) and are ‘central to planning, for the students’ experience of, and the evaluation of the school’s junior cycle programme’ (2015, p. 12). While standardization has some obvious benefits, it is important to remember Alexander’s (2010, p. 7) finding that ‘in many primary (UK) schools a professional culture of excitement, inventiveness and healthy scepticism has been supplanted by one of dependency, compliance and even fear; and the approach may in some cases have depressed both standards of learning and the quality of Teaching’.

The Shape of the Australian Curriculum includes twelve times more references to learning than teaching and five times more mentions of students than teachers. This underlines ‘the changing ways in which young people will learn and the challenges that will continue to shape their learning
in the future’ (Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority, 2012, p. 7). The discourse of subject disciplines has been replaced by ‘learning areas’ and the Shape document makes frequent reference to ‘21st century learning’, the impact of information and communication technologies on learning, and defines successful learners as those who ‘develop their capacity to learn and play an active role in their own learning’ (2012, p. 8).

It is clear from the research literature (Kirschner, Sweller, & Clark, 2006) as well as opinion pieces and readers’ letters in the Australian media that the relative merits of instructional pedagogy and constructivist learning continue to be hotly contested there. For example, the recommendation of the Gonski 2.0 report (Australian Government, 2018) regarding increased emphasis on general capabilities in the AC (F-10) motivated the following editorial in the conservative newspaper, *The Australian* (May 5–6, 2018, page 23):

> Decades of international research and first-hand experience in Australia point to the value of a greater emphasis on direct teacher instruction and less “inquiry based learning” … Important as [Mindfulness] traits are, they should be cultivated at home as schools teach children to master the basics: reading, maths, science and humanities.

As noted by Gerrard and Farrell (2014, p.644), ACARA portrays the role of the teacher primarily in ‘pedagogical and interpretive’ terms, yet ‘pedagogy’ is only mentioned once in *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum* (Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority, 2012).

The 2008 Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) (OECD, 2009) found that constructivism was the dominant pedagogy in Australia. Suggesting that ACARA needs ‘to balance constructivism with more … explicit teaching and direct instruction’ (Australian Government, 2014, p. 222), the independent reviewers argue that the AC reflects the historical influence of the Outcomes Based Education movement and ‘privilege[s] particular beliefs about pedagogy, the nature of knowledge, theories of learning and what it means to be educated’ (2014, p. 76).

On the other hand, the same TALIS report indicates that Irish teachers clearly favour transmission over constructivism (Gleeson, 2012). The vociferous opposition of their unions to the downgrading of external examinations through the introduction of school-based assessment is indicative of a prevailing pedagogy based on knowledge transmission rather than student-centric learning outcomes. This reflects, inter alia, the aforementioned Classical Humanist roots, a general disregard for teacher intentions (Mulcahy, 1989) and a failure to embrace school-based curriculum development (Gleeson, 2010).6

Against that background, a significant number of ASTI (2013, pp 15–16) members ‘entirely disagreed that the [Junior Cycle] Framework would improve learning [on the grounds of the] decreased depth of subject coverage … lack of continuity with the Leaving Certificate [and] diminution of standards’. It is also noteworthy that the recent NCCA (2018, p. 6) review of junior cycle English found a mixed response to learning outcomes with teachers wanting ‘more time to further develop their familiarity and expertise in working with learning outcomes’.

Biesta (2009) characterizes the general shift from teaching to learning, from content knowledge to learning processes, in terms of ‘learnification’. Learning outcomes have been part of the Australian education landscape for some time and the independent reviewers reported that support for the development and implementation of a national curriculum was particularly strong in ‘states who had more closely experimented with Outcomes Based Education’ (Australian Government, 2014, p. 2) and the associated discourse of what Donnelly (2007) calls ‘Essential Learnings or standards-based education’.

Whereas statements of curriculum objectives were eschewed for many years in Ireland (Mulcahy, 1989), each reformed junior cycle subject includes large number of prescribed outcomes e.g. English has 39 learning outcomes for the three years of while Business Studies has 37. Individual Australian Education Authorities have responsibility for the implementation of the Australian Curriculum in their own States. Queensland curriculum documents are set out in terms of content descriptions, indicators of learning and student-centric achievement standards (Queensland Studies Authority, 2015). Year 8 English in Victoria has 32 content descriptors expressed in the form of learning
outcomes (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, undated), each with its own code. Meanwhile, New South Wales Board of Studies (undated) uses the more traditional discourse of course objectives and outcomes linked to course content.

From a pedagogical perspective, the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL, 2011) regulations include 176 mentions of learning as against 144 mentions of teaching, with learning and teaching being used conjunctively on 41 occasions. Meanwhile, the Irish Teaching Council’s (2016, p. 3) Code of Professional Conduct is predicated on the four ethical values of respect, care, integrity and trust and provides a guiding compass as teachers seek ‘to uphold the honour and dignity of the teaching profession [and] has an important legal standing [with regard to] fitness to teach’. The Code sets down basic principles regarding professional values/relationships, integrity, conduct, development, collegiality and practice and sees students becoming ‘active agents in the learning process and develop[ing] lifelong learning skills (2016, p. 7).

Overall then, the strong emphasis on student learning suggests that both reforms are clearly influenced by what Biesta (2009) calls learnification and the associated learning outcomes approach. Whereas the pedagogy of the curriculum has been the topic of considerable debate in Australia, Irish debate has been dominated by modes of student assessment.

**School and teacher agency**

The promotion of school/teacher agency and curriculum flexibility is a commendable feature of both reforms. This is reflected in the Irish discourse of ‘curriculum framework’ and in Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority (2012, p. 11ff) stated intention to set out ‘a broad outline of the proposed curriculum [that will] provide teachers with flexibility to cater for the diverse needs of students across Australia and to personalize their learning’. Assurances are offered that teachers’ professional knowledge will be valued and that ‘school authorities will be able to offer curriculum beyond that specified in the Australian Curriculum’ (2012, p. 11).

Notwithstanding this liberating rhetoric however, Gerrard and Farrell (2014, pp 642–3) are critical of the influence of mandated curriculum on teacher autonomy insofar as the ‘Australian Curriculum constitutes “what to teach” not “how to teach”’ with schools and school systems rather than teachers being responsible for ‘delivering’ curriculum reform’. They note that policymakers in the two most populated Australian states (NSW and Victoria) have used curriculum standardization to control schools’ curriculum practice and to provide

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\text{... a platform to respond to perceived discrepancies in teachers’ current uses of authorized curriculum ... [for their} \text{ interpretation and use of curriculum documents, their pedagogical enactments of curriculum ... and the ways in which they exercise ... professional authority in the intersections between pedagogy and curriculum (2014, p. 647).}
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This form of ‘systems-level control over curriculum ... separates curriculum authority from pedagogic authority’ (2014, p. 650–2) and it can only have damaging effects on teacher professionalism (Fitzgerald & Knipe, 2016; Helsby, McCullough, 1996; Polesel, Rice, Dulfer, 2014).

In an Irish education system characterized by Ministry regulations (Coolahan, 1994, 2018) and heavily influenced by high stakes examinations (Gleson, 2010; Hyland, 2011), teachers’ professional identities and continuing professional development experiences are rooted in their subject expertise. While school-based curriculum development has not been a noteworthy feature of this environment (McNiff, Collins, 1994) the NCCA (2009) now characterizes teachers are ‘key agents of change’. The junior cycle consultative document was predicated on the belief that ‘local innovation delivers better results than centralized command and control models’ (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [NCCA], 2010a, p. 5) and one of its four key pathways involved a shift from ‘curriculum conformity to schools having freedom to be different’ (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [NCCA], 2011, pp 22–27). Meanwhile, the Framework affords freedom to schools and teachers to ‘decide what should be included in their junior cycle programme and how
it should be organized’ (Department of Education and Skills [DES], 2015, p. 50) and gives ‘schools greater flexibility to design programmes that are suited to the needs of their junior cycle students and to the particular context of the school [allowing] discretion to decide what combination of subjects, short courses or other learning experiences will be provided in their programme’ (2015, p. 7).

The Framework acknowledges the integral relationship of teaching, learning and assessment and emphasizes the role of the teacher as ‘leader and facilitator of learning in the classroom’ (DES, 2015, p. 29). However, junior cycle debate and discussion were dominated by modes of student assessment rather than pedagogical beliefs and values. The initial version of the junior cycle Framework (DES, 2012, p. 18) proclaimed that the existing Junior Certificate examination was to ‘be phased out and replaced by a school-based approach to assessment’. The Framework document (DES, 2015, p. 35) sees the primary purpose of student assessment in terms of ‘supporting student learning and promoting student achievement [and notes that] successful implementation will depend to a very significant degree on the professional skills and abilities of teachers and their collaborative engagement with their subject department colleagues [and on] effective school leadership to create a supportive professional context for teachers’.

However, teacher union opposition to school-based assessment for the award of a national qualification was unrelenting (see, for example, McPhail, Halbert and O’Neill, 2018; McGuire, 2015; TUI, 2012). ASTI argued that the role of the teacher is one of advocate for students rather than judge2 while the Teachers’ Union of Ireland (2012, p. 1) condemned ‘the re-emergence’ of an assessment approach that had previously been rejected by both post-primary teacher unions and expressed reservations regarding teacher unpreparedness, work overload and resourcing issues. Although respondents to the NCCA consultation process had been ‘critical of the Junior Certificate examination for putting too much pressure on students and testing memory rather than understanding’ (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [NCCA], 2011, p. 15), they expressed strong support for retention of the state exam on the grounds that it ‘acts as a motivation for students and provides a practice run for the Leaving Certificate’.

Education Minister Ruairí Quinn’s radical response to teacher union resistance was to replace the state examinations with the school-based Junior Cycle Student Award where 40 per cent credit would be awarded for school-based assignments with 60 per cent going for written examinations to be administered and corrected by students’ own teachers (Walshe, 2014). Strong teacher union opposition to this proposal resulted in industrial action and school closures.

Following a change of Minister, an independent mediator was appointed who reported that, since ‘no agreement has been possible … an impasse has been reached’ (Travers, 2015). A ‘compromise plan’ (Humphreys, 2015b) was eventually arrived at. The net effect was that, when the first cohort of students completed their study of English for their Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) in June 2017, students in schools staffed by TUI members received details of their results in a terminal external examination, two classroom-based assignments, assessed and moderated at school level, and a synoptic assessment task undertaken in school and externally assessed. Meanwhile, students in ASTI staffed schools received results for the external components only on the JCPA. This means that students in schools staffed by TUI members receive different certificates than students in schools staffed by ASTI members. While it is important to note that all schools are now implementing the curriculum reforms, this anomalous short-term solution, redolent of Gale’s (2001) notion of ‘temporary settlement’, fails to provide a level playing field for students. The uneven and confused response of schools in the face of such industrial unrest can be seen in the enactment of the new English curriculum (NCCA, 2018).

In contrast, some Australian states have strong traditions of school-based curriculum development (Kennedy, 1992; Skilbeck, 1981) and these may help to explain why Australian teachers’ views (Willis & Klenowski, 2018) regarding their advocacy and evaluation roles differ radically from those of their Irish counterparts. Whereas Irish teachers believe that within ‘the distinctive Irish educational and cultural context’ their engagement in school-based assessment for national accreditation ‘would
expose [them] to undue pressure [in the local community]’ (Travers, 2015, p. 1), the Queensland Teachers’ Union (QTU).

... opposes assessment models which are norm-referenced, external to the school ... and endorses models which are criteria-based, standards-referenced, school-based, continuous and developmental ... [and] supports a position that if external assessment is to be introduced in a particular subject area, school assessment should represent a minimum of 75% of the total marks (Queensland Teachers’ Union, 2015, p. 39).

ACARA K-10 syllabi include provision for three forms of assessment (for-, as-, of-learning), all of which are the responsibility of students’ own teachers. In the case of Year 11–12 students, external examinations form 50 per cent of a student’s final marks in most states, with the remainder being awarded for school-based assessment with appropriate cross-moderation.  

Overall then, the commendable rhetoric regarding school and teacher agency has, in practice, been compromised in both jurisdictions. The freedom afforded Irish teachers to develop their professional autonomy by escaping the tyranny of external examinations has been spurned while the control over curriculum exercised by state authorities impacts on school and teacher autonomy in Australia. Notwithstanding the strong commitment to learning outcomes in both jurisdictions, their approaches to the assessment of learning are remarkably different. Meanwhile the focus on teacher agency in both countries has obvious implications for the relationship between curriculum and teacher professional development policy structures which are considered in the next section.

Local politics and structures

Localization forces such as educational politics and structures influence the respective curriculum reforms in each country. For example discussion of the educational purposes of these curriculum reforms has been hindered by the realpolitik in both jurisdictions. This means that the associated curriculum debate has been technicist rather than critical in nature, with a focus on implementation issues as opposed to the educational purposes of the reforms. Early Australian debate regarding national curriculum was dominated by power struggles between federal and state interests regarding the perceived need to standardize curriculum across the whole country (Savage, 2016). Once the reform was introduced into schools however, the focus shifted to curriculum content and overcrowding. On the other hand, the Irish debate was dominated by stakeholder (teacher union) and industrial relations issues rather than national politics while substantive issues such as educational purposes, underlying ideologies and the integrity of the teaching, learning and assessment relationship were largely ignored.

Although political considerations trumped debate regarding the epistemological and cultural foundations of the Australian curriculum (Atweh & Singh, 2011), members of the Australian research community have been vocal in their opposition to marketization and performativity (Ditchburn, 2012; Lingard, 2010; Luke, 2006; Polesil, Rice & Dulfer, 2014) and in their questioning of the rush to conform with world education standards and practices (Australian Government, 2014; Lingard, 2018; Luke, 2010). From a cultural perspective, Cassinader (2016, p. 338) is critical of ACARA’s unwillingness to move beyond ‘Western-centred, Euro-American frameworks of knowledge’ whereas the independent reviewers argued that Western and Judeo-Christian cultural influences had not been properly recognized.

The Irish educational environment is not renowned for critical curriculum debate (Gleeson, 2010; OECD, 1991) with the resulting void (DES, 2016; Gleeson & Donnabháin, 2009; Lynch et al., 2012) being filled by market and performativity concerns. Against that background it is hardly surprising that, apart from Mooney-Simmie (2014), there has been little critical analysis of the influence of globalization on the junior cycle reforms. For example, apart from the debate around History, the rather fundamental issue of the nature and constitution of the core curriculum did not arise. Rather it was the technicist issue of modes of student assessment that dominated the debate, just as curriculum overcrowding dominated the implementation discussions in Australia. Both countries
would do well to heed Biesta’s (2013b, p. 694) call for ‘public deliberation about the means and, most importantly, the ends of education’ and his warning (Biesta, 2013b, p. 738) that the competitive global economy ‘is neither the be-all and end-all of education, nor the be-all and end-all of life’.

From the perspective of education structures there is a stark contrast between the respective approaches to stakeholder participation in curriculum decision making. The Irish NCCA is constituted on a representational partnership basis and this affords the main education partners, particularly the teacher unions, a very powerful voice in curriculum policymaking and development (Gleeson, 2010). While this model has been very effective in smoothing the way for top-down curriculum reform (Granville, 2004), it has failed to reach an acceptable compromise on the vexed issue of junior cycle student assessment. On the other hand, ACARA Board members, being appointees of the federal Minister, are rather remote from schools and teachers (Lingard, 2018).

It seems reasonable to assume that professionals closer to the ground would have been more alert to the dangers of curriculum overcrowding and the potential for ambiguity regarding what mandatory aspects of the AC.

The integral relationship between curriculum and teacher development underlines the relevance of the teacher professional bodies in both countries. Just like ACARA the members of the AITSL Board are appointed by the federal government. Apart from two school principals, most of the eleven members are academics or experienced administrators who are well removed from curriculum development and implementation issues. On the other hand, over half the members of the Irish Teaching Council are practicing primary and secondary teachers who are either elected or nominated by their unions. Given the teacher union attitude outlined above, it was never likely that the Teaching Council would promote school-based assessment as good professional practice.

The separation of national curriculum and teacher professional bodies in both countries constitutes a recipe for fragmentation. Gerrard and Farrell (2014, p. 642) express concerns regarding ‘the policy separation of teachers’ work from the curriculum’ (AITSL versus ACARA) on the grounds that ‘it demarcates the domain of curriculum reform from the development of professional standards’. They go on to suggest that, as a result, the AC was ‘developed without mention of teachers’ professional knowledge, authority or discretion [with] schools and school systems [being seen as] responsible for delivering curriculum programs [rather than] teachers’ (2014, p. 643). These observations are equally pertinent in the case of Ireland where curriculum continues to be understood in terms of a ‘document’ developed by the NCCA with curriculum implementation and assessment being the responsibility of the national responsibility. So while curriculum and teacher professionalism structures differ considerably in the two countries, the failure to adopt an integrated approach to curriculum and teacher professionalism is a shared problem.

Conclusion

What emerges clearly then is that both reforms are driven by globalization agendas such as ‘modernization’ and the promotion of ‘21st century skills’. While there is no evidence of curriculum policy borrowing between Australia and Ireland, our critical policy historiography has helped us identify a strong focus on ‘skills’ and student ‘learning’ in both countries as well as other global curriculum themes such as learner/teacher agency and curriculum flexibility. What is also apparent is that such globalized themes are being glocalized and refracted differently within their respective environments in the context of local political priorities and education structures.

The authors’ intention is that the current analysis will promote heightened levels of awareness of the complex relationship between global and local forces on curriculum policy and practice while increasing readers’ understanding of the difficulties and anomalies associated with this relationship. For example, notwithstanding the emphasis on generic capabilities/skills, it is rather paradoxical to find curriculum overload emerging as a dominant concern in both countries, particularly Australia. Again, although both reforms are tri-dimensional in design, there is considerable uncertainty
regarding the mandatory aspects of the Australian Curriculum while the Irish debate was dominated by student assessment and accreditation issues at a time when core curriculum was being radically redefined in terms of ‘statements of learning’ and key skills. Indeed it is particularly noteworthy that definition of the core curriculum has emerged as a major dilemma in both countries—whether it should be understood in terms of traditional school subjects or in terms of skills, capabilities and integrated topics?

As Gale (2001) might say, our analysis reveals both ‘public issues’ (global themes) and ‘private troubles’ (local issues/contention). Bearing Seymour Sarason’s (1990) salutary warning regarding the ‘predictable failure of educational reform’ in mind, it will be interesting to monitor how both reforms evolve over time.

Notes

1. According to the Australian Embassy in Dublin some 30% of Australian citizens claim Irish heritage.
2. ‘Joint Statement on Principles and Implementation’ issued by the Teachers’ Union of Ireland, the Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland, and the Department of Education and Skills in 2015—http://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0024_2016.pdf.
3. Both authors of that review were strong critics of the Australian Curriculum and of the work of ACARA.
4. See https://www.ncca.ie/media/2466/towards_aframework_juniorcycle.pdf https://www.education.ie/C/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/A-Framework-for-Junior-Cycle-Full-Report.pdf.
5. One of the independent reviewers who is critical of constructivist, inquiry-based learning is a frequent contributor.
6. Apart from the optional Transition Year programme (Jeffers, 2011) which is taken by approximately 50% of students on completion of junior cycle.
7. For example, see http://www.asti.ie/education/curriculum-assessment/assessment.
8. See http://www.acaca.edu.au/index.php/schooling/assessment-and-reporting/.

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