

PRESS RELEASE



To: News Editors, Features Editors, Education Correspondents

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Date: 10 September 2017

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In a new book from the IPA entitled: *Towards the Era of Lifelong Learning*, John Coolahan (author), traces all facets of formal education as it developed over 200 years. However, unlike previous eras, the 1990s ushered in a new approach to educational policy, with two green papers and three white papers, all focused on policy reform.

Richard Bruton, TD. Minister for Education and Skills, will be the guest of honour at the launch of *Towards the Era of Lifelong Learning* by John Coolahan in the Davenport Hotel, Merrion Street Lr. Dublin 2, on 13 September 2017 at 5.30pm.

Towards the Era of Lifelong Learning traces all facets of formal education as it developed over a 200-year time span. However, unlike previous eras, the 1990s ushered in a new approach to educational policy, with two green papers and three white papers, all focused on policy reform. Various conventions were covered, including: National Education, Lifelong Learning, Early Childhood Education and the forum on School Patronage and Pluralism as well as reports commissioned on good practice in various areas, such as special education. The Universities Act (197) and Education Act (1998) were of landmark importance to the unprecedented sequence of statutory measures establishing a range of special agencies.

Thus, one can conclude that over a short period of years, in the recent past, through the agency of a consultative approach and informed planning guidelines the best education system has been transformed. It has adopted the paradigm shift as a lifelong learning system for the whole age spectrum from early childhood to old age.

The system has a rapidly growing student population at all levels. It is noteworthy that up to 60 per cent go on to higher education, which places it in the top third of 280 OECD countries. It is noteworthy that Irish people in the age group 25-34 who have completed higher education amount to 49 per cent, well ahead of the EU average of 37 percent and the OECD average of 39 per cent.

In conclusion one considers there has been an underestimation of the range, extent and quality of the reforms which have taken in Irish education in the recent past. There would also seem to be an under-valuation of the consultative and collaborative process within which the reform process was conducted. It is quite clear that so much significant reform could not have been achieved without the goodwill and the efforts of key stakeholders. So much sustained work was put in by the various sectors that, perhaps the broad picture has been somewhat missed as concentration was focussed and that the time is ripe for greater recognition of what has been achieved and how it has been achieved. One suggests that a sense of pride and ownership of the reforms in the public arena would not be out of place.

Towards an Era of Lifelong Learning is published by the Institute of Public Administration. It is available in paperback at €20.00 in all major bookshops and from the Sales Division of the IPA, Tel: (01) 240 3764 and sales@ipa.ie or online at www.ipa.ie. For review copies contact Carolyn Gormley, Tel: (01) 2403760, cgormley@ipa.ie.

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Members of the press are cordially invited to the launch.

John Coolahan is Professor Emeritus of Education at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth. He qualified as a national teacher in St Patrick's College, Drumcondra before obtaining a BA, HDE and MA from University College Dublin and an MEd and PhD from Trinity College Dublin. He was also awarded Honorary Doctorates by the NUI and Dublin City University. He taught at all levels of the Irish education system and has been heavily involved in major policy development initiatives sponsored by the Department of Education and Skills. He has also had extensive experience of educational policy internationally, particularly with the European Commission and the OECD.

