



Further Education and Training in Ireland:
Eight Decades to a Unified Sector

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2019

Abbreviations

ACOT	Council for Development in Agriculture
AEOA	Adult Education Officers' Association
AEOs	Adult Education Officers
ALCES	Adult Literacy and Community Education Scheme
AnCO	An Chomhairle Oiliuna (The Irish Training Council)
AONTAS	The National Adult Learning Organisation
AVT	Accelerated Vocational Training for Adults
BIM	Bord Iascaigh Mhara – Irish Fisheries
BTEI	Back to Education Initiative
CAO	Central Applications Office
CE	Community Education Scheme
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CERT	Council for Education Recruitment and Training
CIE	Córas Iómpair Éireann - Ireland's National transport company
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CSF	Community Support Framework
CSO	Central Statistics Office
CTCs	Community Training Centres
CVET	Continuing Vocational Education and Training
DoES	Department of Education and Skills
DSP	Department of Social Protection
EEC	European Economic Community
EGF	Globalisation Adjustment Fund
EGFSN	Expert Group on Future Skills Needs
ESB	Electricity Supply Board
ESF	European Social Fund
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
ETBs	Education and Training Boards
EU	European Union

FÁS	Foras Áiseanna Saothair (Training and Employment Authority)
FET	Further Education and Training
FET	Further Education and Training
FETAC	Further Education and Training Awards Council
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HEI	Higher Education Institute
HETAC	Higher Education and Training Awards Council
IBEC	Irish Business and Employers' Confederation
IDA	Industrial Development Agency
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMI	Irish Management Institute
IoT	Institute of Technology
IPA	Institute of Public Administration
IVEA	Irish Vocational Education Association
LCA	Leaving Certificate Applied
LCVP	Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme
LEC	Local Education Councils
LLL	Lifelong Learning
LR	Live Register
NAPD	National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals
NCEA	National Council for Educational Awards
NCVA	National Council for Vocational Awards
NDP	National Development Plan
NEES	National Employment and Entitlements Service
NESC	National Economic and Social Council
NESF	National Economic and Social Forum
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
NMS	National Manpower Service
NQAI	National Qualifications Authority of Ireland
NTF	National Training Fund
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PLC	Post Leaving Certificate Course
RECs	Regional Education Councils

RTCs	Regional Technical Colleges
RTÉ	Raidió Teilifís Éireann – the national broadcaster
SBA	Standard Based Apprenticeship
SOLAS	An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna
STTC	Senior Traveller Training Centre
TCD	Trinity College Dublin
TUI	Teachers Union of Ireland
VEC	Vocational Education Committee
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VPTP	Vocational Preparation and Training Programme
VTOS	Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme

Abstract

The thesis is an examination of the evolution in both the shape and direction taken by further education and training (FET) in the Republic of Ireland over eight decades, from the 1930s through to the present day. For most of this period, responsibility for the education and training of young people and adults was divided between separate authorities and agencies, each with their own administrative arrangements and policy priorities. In 2013, for the first time, a unified sector and structure of further education and training was established, alongside higher education and school education. Based on a systematic reading and analysis of primary and secondary sources, three phases of development are identified prior to unification and will be examined and analysed. The use of Critical Policy Analysis: a trajectory perspective, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Documentary Analysis through a hermeneutic lens aims to systematically examine and illustrate the relationship between discursive practices, specific primary texts, events and the wider social and cultural structures relations and processes (the shape and direction of developments of FET historically) and the recent developments. It will analyse the historical development of the FET sectors to indicate how and why, for decades, they occupied separate spaces and what policies, strategies and legislation created the boundaries that became blurred over time and at other times would overlap. This study is an analysis of the space FET occupy and the policy discourse and legislation or lack thereof that shaped these sectors. It will conclude by presenting the structure and agencies that form the framework of the new FET structure and examine how these are emerging and forming this new sector.

Acknowledgements

This thesis has presented many challenges and opportunities as life and work were ongoing throughout the process. I have many people to thank for their support and assistance.

I want to thank most sincerely my supervisor at Sheffield University, Professor Gareth Parry, for his support, understanding and encouragement throughout this extended journey, and for his patience, humour and sharing of his wealth of knowledge. The staff and lecturers at Sheffield University involved in the EdD, thank you for the all-round education and for expanding my learning and knowledge.

To the friends and fellow scholars on the Sheffield University EdD: Dr T. Bruen, Dr P. Cremen, Dr A. Conway, K. Deevy, K. Doolan, Dr B. Gormley, L. Jennings (RIP), Dr E. Kelly-Blakeney (my critical friend), Dr F. Murphy, Dr C. Ó hAnnracháin (my critical friend), Dr T. O’Sullivan, D. McMahon (RIP), and our honorary member, Dr S. Warren. Thank you to Dr V. Papatsiba for her assistance in getting this over the last hurdle. It is a privilege to know you all; thank you for the fun in learning and the camaraderie. You have challenged my views and given me much food for thought – thank you.

To my colleagues and friends in KCETB and Carlow Vocational School/Institute of Further Education; a very special thank you to Dr P. Egan, Dr N. Quirke-Bolt, Mr D. Forde, Mr B. Mulchrone and Ms Cynthia Deane CE for your support, belief and encouragement.

My wonderful family – my fantastic husband Peter Kenny, my sons Jack Kenny & Jim Kenny, my brother Matt Mulvey– thank you for your love, patience and support. My parents Betty & Matt (Senior) no longer with us – who gave me the gift of learning – I thank you all.

Peter, Jack and Jim, this thesis is dedicated to you.

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Part I: Introducing the Thesis

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Ireland has a population of 4,757,976 and a small open economy that was primarily agricultural but has evolved into a services economy. In 2011 the Department of Education and Skills (DoES) announced the establishment of further education and training (FET) sector as the fourth pillar of education. Ireland's collapsed economy and the near bankruptcy of the banks led to this unique historical development and Ireland's programme of assistance was agreed with the European Union (EU), the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), this group was commonly referred to in Ireland as the 'Troika'. The government adopted the structural reform and introduced and agreed the strategy to reform FET as a response to the 'Troika's' plans for Ireland.

In Ireland, FET has been undergoing momentous change, triggered by the global financial crisis and its particular manifestation. In response, mergers and strategic amalgamations, disbanded agencies, adopted and adapted structures with underpinning legislation, including the establishment of regional education and training boards, the setting up of a new national managing body for FET, are the key components of the strategy to better position FET as a fourth pillar of education.

Several policy and strategic changes occurred since 2011 as part of the change process including the establishment of a new FET Authority - SOLAS - under the auspices of the DoES, with responsibility for funding, planning and coordinating training and further education programmes and policies; the passing into law the Further Education and Training Act (Department of Education and Skills, 2013). Also, a new structure of sixteen Education and Training Boards (ETBs) to manage the provision of FET Education and Training Boards Bill 2013 passed to establish these regional education boards (Department of Education and Skills, 2013). The SOLAS action plan was tasked with ensuring the provision of high-quality FET programmes that are responsive to the needs of learners and requirements of a changed and transforming economy (SOLAS 2014). Other structures established included – the National

Employment and Entitlements Services (NEES) and Qualifications and Quality Assurance Ireland (QQAI) (Statute Books, 2012). The establishment of this new sector raises questions regarding the amalgamation of here to fore two separate sectors namely ‘further education’ and that of ‘training’ and the reasons for this historical separation. After a long history of separation since the foundation of the Irish Free State, these two sectors would be amalgamated, and legislation passed to establish this distinct sector.

Focus of the Research

The focus and purpose of this study is to critically analyse the policies and strategies within a socio-historical and political context that shaped and influenced the evolution of FET in Ireland over eight decades. It will scrutinise the historical development of the FET sectors to indicate how and why, for decades, they occupied separate spaces and what policies, strategies and legislation or lack thereof created the boundaries that became blurred over time and at other times would overlap. It will conclude by presenting the structure and agencies that form the framework of the new FET structure and examine how these are emerging and forming the new sector.

The corpus of this study involves a selection of primary historical and recent documents of educational interest and includes policies, debates, government papers and official records at national and international level and the criteria for selection was pertinent and relevant to FET education policies and strategy. These texts will be examined and analysed using critical policy analysis: trajectory perspective, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and documentary analysis tools through a hermeneutic lens. It will evaluate the historical development and legacy of this long history of separation between FET and the factors that informed a government decision to establish a single FET sector in Ireland.

This is a complex historical study of the various interests shaping FET development over a long period of time. In examining and analysing the development of FET as a distinct and recognised sector of the Irish education system, this study addresses the following research questions and the following foci. Based on a review of the historical context, texts and dominant policy in Ireland and the EU from the perspective of FET, and guided by historical

and current debates, the following research questions have been devised to guide the main thesis proposal.

Research Questions

- **Why were further education and training separate responsibilities for such a long period in Ireland?**
- **What is the developmental history of further education and training in Ireland?**
- **What factors brought these two distinct sectors together to form one sector in recent years?**

Contribution to Knowledge

The establishment of FET as the fourth pillar of education in Ireland is an historic milestone and a seismic shift for education policy and strategy and therefore requires analysis and further research. Critical research and thesis examining FET are sparse and not many papers are available within an Irish educational context. The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI), in their report, *Further Education and Training in Ireland: Past, Present and Future* (ESRI, 2014), was the first piece of research to substantially map the provision across the FET sector in order to develop a sense of some of the main issues facing the sector in a systematic way, with the objective of identifying the principal features of the sector within both a national and international context. Their report set out the historical evolution of FET provision in Ireland and it examined current patterns of provision in terms of both the overall distribution of places and the balance between full-time labour market orientated programmes and part-time provision with a more community education focus. p. VII. The ESRI Report ESRI (2014) also emphasised the view in their research that:

There has never existed a clear definition of FET in Ireland, nor has any specific rationale underlying FET provision been articulated. Irish FET provision currently seeks to cater for the needs of school leavers, employees, firms, the unemployed and those on the margins of society without any clear mission objective relating to any particular component of provision.

(ESRI, 2014, p. 11)

The ESRI report provides an evidence base for the purpose of assisting SOLAS in the development of a five-year strategy and creates a context within which strategy can be developed and was the first major national report examining the sector (ESRI, 2014). In contrast this study is a reading of texts, documents, policy discourse and legislation with a focus of analysing and examining why it took an exceptional set of circumstances to establish the FET sector and why over eight decades the sectors were separated. This study also examines and analyses how government, politics, economics and cultural contexts evolved overtime and how the roles and relations of governance within that socio-historical and political context influenced the development of FET.

In general, it has been argued that little attention has been paid to the shaping of educational debate within the Irish policy-making community and that the process of policy decision making receives inadequate attention from scholars (O'Sullivan, 1992). This study will fill a gap and this thesis should be a stimulus to start valuable debates on the place and position of FET within the context of the Irish education system and its place in the EU context. This study and its processes will contribute to the body of knowledge in education and influence politics and policy making in the FET arena and more importantly education at national level. It provides an opportunity to evaluate policy discourse, legislation and strategies that form this new sector and to recognise FET as a new academic area of research in the Irish education field. It will highlight important new findings on the influences and contexts of FET in Ireland and what shaped and influenced the development and evolution of the component sectors.

This research will add to discourse about the policies and processes that form the structures of FET and the challenges this sector will encounter following amalgamation. This study will scrutinise how policy and legislation can effectively meet the sector's needs and support the sector. It will present a framework for future researchers to contextualise their work. In particular, it will allow research to focus on the place of FET teachers, tutors and students and the structures that support the sector. Therefore, this study will both seek to address the manner in which the policy debate is discursively structured as well as question the way FET has been/is constructed. It is hoped that it will build on and add to the literature base in the Irish educational context.

Structure of the Thesis

Part I -Introducing the Thesis

The focus of Part I is to provide an overview of the thesis. The main focus of the thesis ‘Further Education and Training in Ireland: Eight Decades to a Unified Sector’ and the research questions are summarised in the context of FET in Ireland. The research design and approach are outlined in Chapter 2, providing a review of critical policy analysis: a trajectory perspective, critical discourse analysis drawing on the work of Fairclough, Hyatt and Ball in particular. The approach to the critical discourse of FET is outlined, using documentary analysis with a hermeneutic lens.

Part II

Part II evaluates three historical phases; these three phases represent timelines outlined and presented in decades. The first phase evaluated is from the 1930s to the 1950s, where the study examines policy discourse and strategy within a socio-political context. The aim of chapter 3 is to analyse comprehensively the origins and development of vocational/technical education and training from the 1930s through to the 1950s, and to explore the educational and societal context within which vocational/technical education was established in Ireland. It will outline how the demarcations of the separate sectors of vocational and technical education and training were established and reinforced. It investigates how and why, in the early years of the Irish state’s formation, a division of education, trade, training and apprenticeship provision formed. It evaluates the development of vocational education up to the 1940s and, in particular, the significance of the Vocational Education Act 1930 and the Apprenticeship Training Act 1931, that established apprenticeship training as a separate entity to vocational/technical training. It analyses the development of vocational education up to the 1950s.

In the second phase, the 1960s through to the 1980s, policy discourse changes, legislation national and international are examined in the socio-political and economic context that Ireland was entering. The dynamic developments in education strategy and in turn the development and sustainability of vocational education in Ireland during the decades of the 1960s to 1980s are analysed. Ireland emerged in these two decades as a modern society influenced by the then

European Economic Community (EEC), OECD, funding and international ideology. Of relevance are the developments of PLCs and the emergence of further education colleges.

It evaluates the impact and influence on the fledgling sector of EU policy and, in particular, the Bologna and Lisbon treaties. This section of the study explores the separate shape and direction that training had taken within an Irish context, the legislation that established this sector, and the policy discourse and funding that underpinned an entire organisation. It evaluates the role of the training agencies and there is an analysis of FET within the context of adult education policy and strategy, both national and international.

Part III

1990s until 2013 – arrangements came under review, with some consequent restructuring. Part III considers and evaluates the changes that occurred to create two distinct and separate entities and what factors influenced the creation of the newly formed sector. The policies, strategies and socio-economic context that led to this change are presented. It examines the legislation that was enacted to establish the new FET sector and outlines the role and functions of the varying organisations and agencies in the new sector. It focuses and concludes by considering the implications of the findings for the new sector as well as the challenges that this newly formed sector might encounter.

Summary

This introductory chapter outlines the context and presents the structure of the thesis. In the current phase – 2013 onwards – rationalisation and integration are key goals of public policy alongside, for the first time, a national strategy for FET. SOLAS and the ETBs are charged with the responsibility to quickly establish a new FET sector and to meet the objectives and aims of public policy and strategy. The restructuring of FET and the establishment of new organisations is part of the IMF reform agenda. This was part of the ‘Structural Reform Agenda’ and on consultation of the European Economy Report 2013 as a primary document it stated:

Labour activation mechanisms are in place and the critical issue is now to fully implement them and deliver services universally, including to the long-term unemployed. The course for further education and training reforms is firmly set, but more work is still required to improve delivery

and the relevance of programmes, address the needs of the (long-term) unemployed and tackle skills mismatches

(European Commission, 2013, p. 31)

The main focus of these new organisations is to provide a skilled workforce for Ireland's position as a country with a highly skilled workforce in an open economy (SOLAS, 2014). The nature and scope of the 2013 reforms are outlined and a preliminary analysis is made of their potential change. The Irish Government strategy and primary policy shift in reforming FET was to better position it for greater efficiency, enhanced quality, improved competitiveness and clearer objectives for national economy and policy. The legislation and government strategy focused on the development of a new sector with new structures, amalgamated agencies, and new organisations. All of these were a mechanism by which government could meet the 'Troika's' structural reform agenda and the structures were necessary and highlight the importance of FET to the Irish economy in its development as a 'knowledge economy'.

CHAPTER 2

Research Design and Approach

Introduction

This chapter outlines the research design approach for this longitudinal study and outlines the analysis employed that informs the study. It also presents the overall approach and rationale for the research.

Approach to the Research

There are a multitude of theoretical perspectives drawn from various methodologies and foci of education that present the researcher with a choice of different angles and perspectives. In order to examine, analyse, understand and present research, there is a need to present it within a recognisable theoretical framework. Anyon (2009) suggests that ‘Without theory, our data on school experience or social phenomena do not go very far, and do not tell us very much that is not already obvious. Our data do not leave the ground on which they were found; our explanations do not soar; and they may fail to inspire’ (p. 3). The most difficult question is where to place your research, and what theoretical perspective will best present work, data, ontology and epistemology. However, for the research in this study, critical policy analysis: trajectory perspective, and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and documentary analysis through a hermeneutic lens best ‘fits’ and will be explored later in this chapter as the methodological approach.

The methodological approach adopted is particularly concerned with the analysis of official, political and authoritative policy documents and records in terms of their provenance and meaning. Epistemological development within the human sciences, like education, functions politically and is intimately imbricated in the practical management of social and political problems (Ball, 1997). This is an examination of the relationship between the texts, policies and commentaries; it is a deconstructing of information and data and a restructuring into a coherent format that puts shape onto unwieldy sectors. It examines what is overt and covert within the analysis. As the historical commentary may not have been written to directly document FET as it currently exists, it is through analysis of time frames and previous contexts that patterns appear, and interpretations and findings can emerge. Likewise, policies and

legislation, although not specifically connected to or associated with the component sectors, had an influence on their development, as had direct policy and legislation.

Therefore, these documents will be examined and analysed within a socio-historical and political context in order to determine how the FET sector developed. This study is conducted by desk research and any number of educational texts might have been selected for this study with many yielding an insight into the historical dynamics of educational policy and evolution of FET, but it was important to focus in on the main sector under research. Therefore, this study confined itself to examining government policy and reports and relevant education/ training legislation that specifically governed the development of FET either directly or indirectly. (See Appendix 2)

Education policy is regularly the focus of academic research however the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) identified a lack of appropriate data or a developed academic literature on Irish FET (ESRI, 2014). This is a key factor identified by the ESRI and the lack of academic and educational commentary on FET in Ireland is an important one, as other sectors of education within an Irish context have collections of literature. As part of their research the ESRI examined the historical evolution of FET provision in Ireland. There are cross overs as both studies use primary historical texts and secondary commentary on FET. Within both studies there is at times a reliance on secondary commentary as major research gaps and vacuums of data occur. When ensembles of uncoordinated or contradictory policies are in play then the resort to satisfying strategies and secondary accommodations may be the only reasonable and feasible response at certain points in time (Ball, 1997). This study is examining policy trajectory that encompasses legislation, reports, debates and secondary commentary to examine and analyse the ‘why’ and ‘contexts’ of the separation of FE and T and the ‘how’ they were shaped and ‘how’ the boundaries were created and remained a dominant feature and the external and internal influences on these developments over eight decades.

Critical Policy Analysis: a trajectory perspective

Critical Policy Analysis: a trajectory perspective approach constitutes part of the macro-level policy trajectory perspective that is concerned with the evolution of policies over time and space, how policies evolve, their dynamics and their influence on the official policy making

process. The trajectory perspective attends to the ways in which policy evolve, change and decay through time and space and their incoherence (Ball, 1997). While arguing some insights from the macro-level policy trajectory perspective, this study aims to provide some historical insights into the changing ideological platforms upon which FET policy has been shaped and developed and identify its evolutions (Ball, 1997). The different approaches of critical policy analysis in this research will be achieved by analysing various documents obtained through public archives. In examining the relevant texts and documents to investigate the influences on the FET sector it must be noted that this is a complex and multifaceted study. We understand policy as a complex, ongoing social practice of normative cultural production constituted by diverse actors across diverse contexts (Bradley, et al., 2009).

Although the ESRI report maps the historical FET provision, this study builds on their work by exploring the policy discourse and legislative influences within a socio-historical and political context on the development of FET. Ball (1997) argues that:

policy analysis needs to be accompanied by careful regional, local and organisational research if we are to understand the degrees of ‘play’ and ‘room for manoeuvre’ involved in the translation of policies into practices or in the differential ‘bite’ of the disciplines of reform

(Ball, 1997, p. 262)

There is a vacuum of research of policy analysis that shaped FET at all levels, local, regional, national and international. What is available to the policy analysis are disjointed and fragmented texts that exist as distinct and separate and require analysis. The ESRI research and this study highlight the lack of research of all aspects of FET within an Irish educational context. There is a knowledge gap in the field resulting in a lack of understanding of the structures, institutions organisations, language and relationships that formed the sector. This study provides an opportunity to examine primary sources and glean from them information on how policy and legislation was formed and how the sectors were formed and developed. Researchers must be aware of policy ensembles, policy relations and levels of policy (Ball, 1997). The socio-historical and political contexts are complex and how policy formed in an Irish and wider EU framework is paramount to this study.

Policy at times within a national context can develop and in a spontaneous and informal fashion, outside of the government agencies and or their offices. Policy can be documented and be official, or it exists informally and exists as part of organisational memory and practice (Bradley, et al., 2009). In analysing the transformation of education policy, it occurs within the context of local, regional community (ETBs), central government, the EU and the globalised economy. The interface that now exists between national and international policy drivers is a major element of policy development that impacts at all levels. Globalisation of national economies, particularly their financial markets, reduces the policy options of the national economies (Lingard, 1996).

Informal Policy

Policy that formed the FET sector directly or indirectly is examined and the absence of policy or legislation is also a factor examined in this study. Why a policy or strategy vacuum exists is the pertinent question. Why is there no policy discourse or underpinning legislation in the space? Levinson et al (2009) state that:

We make a crucial distinction between authorized policy and unauthorized, or informal policy, and argue that when nonauthorized policy actors—typically teachers and students, but possibly, too, building administrators—appropriate policy, they are in effect making new policy in situated locales and communities of practice (COP)

(Levinson, et al., 2009, p. 768)

The creation of informal policy to fill the vacuum that formed a sector external to the formal education structure is an important historical point in analysing the development of FET. The analysis of policy, legislation and secondary commentary assists this study and supports analysis of how the FET sector has reached its present destination. Hidden or indirect policy forms the structures and drivers that shape the sectors. Levinson et al (2009) argue:

Policy may also develop in more spontaneous and informal fashion, outside the agencies or offices that are constitutionally charged with making policy. In either case, policy may be documented and codified, or it may exist in unwritten form, through ongoing institutional memory and practice

Considering this absence of Policy (large P), i.e. national, EU or global policy, the vacuum is therefore replaced by policy (small p), i.e. localised, ad hoc, organic policy. Small policy is the precursor, and national follows local and regional and so forth. As further education provision existed in further education colleges and vocational schools prior to large ‘P’, we must assume therefore that localised policy existed and formed frameworks so that this aspect of education could function and create a sector for learners. In contrast, however, an examination of the training sector’s growth and development reveals that it was forged and shaped by the large ‘P’ national policy. This is a pertinent point when examining the differences in the two sectors; although many similarities exist, it is mainly in the area of policy that contrasts are defined.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is fundamentally a theory of discourse as an element or ‘moment’ of the social world. The object of evaluation and analysis for CDA is discourse that not only includes text and talk but also other forms of visual images. CDA is a tool that can assist the analysis of social phenomena focusing on the discursive moments. ‘the value of taking a CDA-based orientation to policy analysis is that it offers an approach to the social analysis of discourse particularly relevant to process of social transformation and change’ (Hyatt, 2013). As a research field it contains aspects with different methodological and theoretical emphasis. The CDA approach in this study primarily draws on the CDA developed by Fairclough (1993; 1995; and 2003). Language has become more important in a range of social processes related in particular to the emergence of the ‘knowledge-based economy’ and new communication technologies and can be referred to as ‘discourse driven’ social change (Fairclough, 2001). In this context it is necessary for CDA to redirect the focus from an ideological critique to what (Fairclough, 2010, p. 509) refers to as ‘Strategic Critique’, in the evaluation of the role of discourse in a process of transition. CDA approaches in general shared by varying versions is the investigation of texts to analyse the process of social change in a capitalist context, within this study it is social change through education in an emerging newly formed and relatively young country. The use of CDA in this study aims to explore the relationships between discursive practices, events and texts (the evolution and development of FET); and the wider social and cultural structures relations and process (the policies and

strategies that influenced the shape and boundaries of the FET sector the wider education and the ‘Knowledge-based Economy’), within the context of the emerging FET agenda.

CDA is centrally focused with the articulation of social, cultural, economic and language events and their contribution to general patterns of social transformation or reproduction. The interpretation of education policy requires an in-depth analysis of the discourse by which these initiatives are symbolised and framed in policy documents. Fairclough’s four criteria are used in this study as a practical analytical tool to examine elements of the texts from a ‘macro’ semantic and societal level and from the ‘micro’ level. Fairclough (2003) describes four modes through which legitimation is discursively accomplished:

1. Authorisation-reference to tradition, authority, custom, law, institutional authority or individuals as justification, with authority here seen as being unchallengeable;
2. Rationalisation – reference is made to the value and usefulness of a social action and the cognitive and face-validity of a particular action, which may or may not represent a ‘naturalised’ ideological position;
3. Moral Evaluation – an appeal to a value system around what is good or desirable-ideological and linked to discourses e.g. a neoliberal discourse that assert the desirability of educational measurement, comparison and the surveillance of teachers;
4. Mythopoesis or legitimation through narratives – moral and cautionary tales advising us as to the positive/negative outcomes of particular courses of action.

(Fairclough, 2003, pp. 98-100)

These four modes provide a useful analytical structure, of agency and text at several levels – the historical and political, the institutional, the disciplinary and the individual and will be used to provide a framework for investigation. For Fairclough (2003) it is:

an attempt to bring together three analytical tradition ... the tradition of close textual and linguistic analysis within linguistics, the macro-sociological tradition of analysing social practice in relation to social structures and the interpretivist or micro-sociological tradition of seeing social practice as something which people actively produce and make sense of on the basis of shared common-sense procedures

(Fairclough, 1995, p. 72)

Researching dissemination and recontextualisation requires the comparison of texts in different social fields on at different social scales. In this study CDA is concerned with the development and evolution of FET arising out of the historical, social and political structures over eight decades. Therefore, it is important that the researcher creates boundaries on the work and decides what to include and what to discard. Hyatt (2013) argues:

The process of representing and constructing such transformations is discursive, where discourses are viewed as socially and culturally formed, but historically changing ways of talking and writing about as well as acting with and towards, people and things

(Hyatt, 2013, p. 836)

In a sense, parameters of work are created and during this exercise the study will expand and contract the research as aspects are explored. At some stage, the study will ring-fence the work and may reject some data. In examining certain documents discourse within their social / political context, the study is fundamentally concerned with the relationship and the context. Administrative and official records therefore are not, and never were, merely neutral reports of events. They are shaped by the socio-political context in which they are produced and by the cultural and ideological assumptions that lie behind them (Scott, 1990). The documents examined are policy texts and the context are the socio-political relations and processes that governed education in Ireland and influenced FET.

EU and Irish Legislation are examined as part of this study to determine the extent to which legislation influenced the shape and direction FET has taken over the decades. (Finegan, 2012, p. 483) argues that ‘the phrases ‘language of the law’ and ‘legal discourse’ refer to (a) language that arises in statutory law; (b) the interpretation of statutory law in judicial opinions; (c) various forms of courtroom language, including opening statements and closing arguments, direct examination and cross-examination of witnesses, and jury instructions; (d) written contracts that create legal obligations, including rental agreements, insurance policies, wills and liability waivers’ and for the purposes of this study (a) above language that arises in statutory law will be the focus. Legal discourse is important to examine as a mechanism by which society is shaped and directed. In this study we examine how legislation shaped and directed education development and evolution as part of a government policy framework.

Documentary Analysis

Documentary analysis as a research method requires the researcher to remain critical and analytical and to take cognisance of the time, place and audience that texts are written for. Students need to be aware of the limits placed on the historical knowledge by the character of the sources and the working methods of historians (Tosh, 2002). In critiquing and analysing, it is imperative, to cull and weed, to include and exclude. Documents are social and historical constructs, and to examine them without considering this simply misses the point McCulloch (2004). The aim of the research enterprise, from a methodological perspective, is to use a procedurally objective set of methods in order to gain an ontologically objective understanding of the events and objects under study Eisner (2017). This study commences in the past, taking a historical perspective and working forward, capturing the varying nuances of the decades, taking into consideration policy discourse and strategy or the lack thereof, and economic, socio-political contexts. Within the methodological framework, epistemological features of education are clarified and evaluated. Methodology fundamentally gives understanding to educational outcomes and cultural processes through which conduits of knowledge flow.

In this study, the research analysis has a historical linear context including a cross referencing analytical framework using relevant documentation. This study specifically analyses and examines texts, articles, published reports, Oireachtas (also known as the Houses of the Oireachtas; composed of Dáil Éireann (House of Deputies) and Seanad Éireann (Senate) reports, and debates (see Appendix 2). The documents were sourced in written and electronic format. This study also examines government departments' roles, EU policies and EU legislation that influenced national policies and initiatives, guidelines, and documents produced by research agencies and (FET) based organisations. Also included were textbooks, historical and educational books and commentary, journals; press articles; organisations' position papers and vision documents; doctoral and master's theses; educational journals; relevant organisation magazines; editorials; Irish legislation; organisation website information; annual education and training reports; relevant Irish, EU and international policies and strategies. Records and reports of all kinds involve adaptation of the concepts and methods of information-gathering and analysis to the administrative routines of the department or organisation responsible for producing the documents (Scott, 1990).

The term 'Further Education and Training' (FET) is consistently used throughout the study to designate a form of post-compulsory provision of education and training that is neither second-level education nor higher education. However, it becomes apparent throughout all the texts, that although this education and training area has had many names and subtle sub-forms, it is frequently renamed and titled, and the names at times are used interchangeably. All these labels or variants have linked connotations, contexts, interpretations, explanations, approaches, overlaps, blurred boundaries and differences through a hermeneutic lens. Interpretation and understanding depends on the narrator, the historical time frame, their context, the legislation, the government department and the audience.

This study uses many forms of documents to cross reference and analyse the data gathered and analysed, to give this study credibility, it is important to take cognisance of criteria that can be applied to analysing this type of evidence and data. Scott (1990) describes and outlines the criteria for assessing any type of research evidence. He states that there are four criteria:

Authenticity Is the evidence genuine and of unquestionable origin?

Credibility Is the evidence free from error and distortion?

Representativeness Is the evidence typical of its kind, and if not, is the extent of its untypicality known?

Meaning Is the evidence clear and comprehensible?

(Scott, 1990, p. 6)

In documentary research, the researcher is reliant on the origins and sources of the documents they research. These criteria form a sounding board upon which texts, historical commentary, legislation and policy can be viewed, analysed and assessed. McCulloch (2004) argues that:

Documents can provide potent evidence of continuity and change in ideals and in practices, in private and in the public arena. They are a significant medium through which to understand the way in which our society has developed, and how it continues to develop

(McCulloch, 2004, p. 5)

There are some fundamental and well-established rules that apply in appraising and analysing documents, and these are generally in terms of authenticity, reliability, meaning and theorisation McCulloch (2004). Therefore, in documentary research, it is imperative to sift and sort the documents, using the above criteria in deciding on what to include and what to exclude. Using the criteria outlined above by McCulloch (2004) and Scott (1990) provides this study with a comprehensive and objective framework. To be objective is to experience a state of

affairs in a way that reveals its' actual features (Eisner, 2017). Analysis between different data collection and forms of texts, documentary and secondary commentary will enhance the validity of the claims made. McCulloch (2004) argues that

To understand documents is to read between the lines of our material world. We need to comprehend the words themselves to follow the plot, the basic storyline. But we need to get between the lines, to analyse their meaning and their deeper purpose, to develop a study that is based on document

(McCulloch, 2004, p. 1)

Although the researcher may be familiar with the area they are researching, the importance of a systematic and disciplined research method is of paramount importance; otherwise, the researcher may fall into making subjective assumptions. This is of relevance when sifting through historical texts that do not directly describe the area that is explored but which are relevant to time, place and historical origins. Cohen et al (2004) notes that:

Educational research is both modern and postmodern! Just as new knowledge crosses traditional epistemological boundaries and is at the frontiers of traditional disciplines and creates new ones, so research, in its endeavour to create new knowledge, need not be hidebound by tradition

(Cohen, et al., 2004, p. 382)

This too can be applied to all form of documents and texts, including historical commentary. This in turn allows for the development of a conceptual framework that supports the analysis of the place and space FET occupied and how, as an amalgamated sector, it fills that space allocated to it by policy and legislation within an Irish educational context and in turn in Ireland within an EU context.

Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is, the science of biblical interpretation and has its origins in biblical studies and in the classics (Crotty, 2007). Although the practice is ancient, the word ‘hermeneutics’ is relatively new – two to three centuries old. Hermeneutics focuses on interaction and language; it seeks to understand situations through the eyes of the participant’. Hermeneutics sciences involve the fusion of horizons between participants. The horizon of the present cannot be explained without the horizon of the past (Gadamer, 1975). Therefore, an important aspect of this study is presenting the historical context of FET and thus allowing the researcher scope to analyse the influences that will impact on the present and future of the sector. By researching the past, the researcher is enabled to critique and analyse contexts, place, time, influences and general educational and training expectations. Humes (2000) makes an important point that ‘Sensitivity to the nuances of language, to the relationship between speaker or writer and audience(s), and to the social and cultural dynamics of the institutions which generate and receive ‘texts’, is at the heart of the process’ (p. 3). This is an important optic when viewing and analysing documents: what is included; what is excluded; the time and context of the writer; and the time and context of the politician or government in writing legislation and making decisions.

The hermeneutic evaluation involves interpretative understanding of individual concepts, appreciation of the socio-cultural context through which the various concepts are related in a particular discourse, and a judgement on the meaning and significance of the text as a whole (Scott, 1990). When analysing texts, the meaning or the message – what the author hopes to convey – must also be taken in context and requires interpretation by the researcher. It is as much what is not said or included as what is. The researcher is therefore reliant on the facts, as the case or history is presented by the author, and who the recipient audience are. While the text might now be used to underpin educational research, it is necessary to identify its original audience as educational, political or other. Importantly Scott (1990) argues that:

The interpretation of a text cannot be separated from the questions of its production and its effects. The reading of a text is validated by relating it to the intentions of the author, and by taking account of the fact that its ‘objective meaning’ goes beyond these intentions, and also by relating the text to its audience

(Scott, 1990, p. 35)

However well prepared a researcher sets out to accomplish this, it must also be acknowledged that this is easier said than done and that although we intend as researchers to acknowledge the context, audience, time and place of our texts, we may still have got it wrong. Our judgements are part and parcel of the interpretation and they in turn are also set in time, place and context with a target audience. Textual analysis involves mediation between the frames of reference of the researcher and those who produced the text. The aim of this dialogue is to move within the 'hermeneutic circle' in which we comprehend a text by understanding the frame of reference from which it was produced and appreciate that frame of reference by understanding the text (Scott, 1990). The researcher is moving from the specific to the particular and using many reference points to create objective meaning from the texts and documents. Reference points can include and are not exclusive to the writer/author, the societal context, the political context, the audience and the reason why the text was written. Cross referencing and examining documents against one another are paramount in attaining this objective viewpoint. Crotty (2007) states:

Researchers looking to get a handle on people's perceptions, attitudes and feelings – or wanting to call these into question as endemic to a hegemonic society and inherited from a culture shaped by class, racial and sexual dominance – may be best placed to find useful insights if they look to the hermeneutics of the reading theorists and literary critics

(Crotty, 2007, p. 110)

Within the context of the hermeneutical lens, analysis of texts goes beyond merely reading and is placed firmly in the realm of interpretation and understanding. The process of analysis and critique takes cognisance of the language, writer, audience and the cultural, political and societal context. Each of the terms 'understanding,' 'interpretation,' and 'reading' needs to be broadened to include hermeneutical issues about understanding, knowledge, communications, and truth, as well as questions about the competency of the reader at the semiotic level (Thiselton, 1992).

The hermeneutic lens assists in observing the societal ideology and belief structures that formed and influenced the shaping and development of educational systems and structures and the texts within them. It highlights the extent of the power base within society and where major influences and authority emanated from organisations. The interpretative meaning of the document which the researcher aims to produce is a tentative and provisional judgement which

must be constantly reviewed as new discoveries and new problems force the researcher to reappraise the evidence (Scott, 1990).

Summary

This research is conducted by desk research, and it examines the types of sources and their selection, to include methods of working and analysis, reliability and the study's claim to knowledge. The use of Critical Policy Analysis: a trajectory perspective, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Documentary Analysis through a hermeneutic lens aims to explore the relationship between discursive practices, specific primary texts, events and the wider social and cultural structures relations and processes (the shape and direction of developments of FET historically) and the recent developments. The socio-political context both at national, EU and international level and influences that emanate from these contexts on policy and strategy are explored. An understanding of structural and systematic effects is an important focus that drives this study. However, the objective of this study is to go beyond a descriptive account of the historical development of FET and to evaluate and analyse what influenced and formed the sector's development. The lack in Ireland of a research culture into FET is a constant question throughout the study and shapes the design and approach.

Part II: An Historical Overview

CHAPTER 3

The First Phase: 1880s through to the 1950s

Introduction

This chapter spans the late 1880s through to the late 1950s chronicling, tracing and analysing the original impetus for developments in technical education and training in Ireland. In the early years of the Irish state's formation, strategy and policy drove the divide between technical education, trade, training and apprenticeship provision. Examined for this study are the adoption and adaptation in the trajectory of policies, legislation and strategies that were formed during this era within a socio-historical and disruptive political context and using CDA and a hermeneutic lens to do so.

Politically and economically Ireland was a colony of Britain up until it was declared a free state in 1922, this created an unstable economy that affected politics and society. This era was one of flux and uncertainty as Ireland had fought for Independence from the UK, had emerged from a war of Independence, a civil war, in 1937 ratified a new constitution and in 1949 was declared a republic. This socio-political context of an emerging new state with all its complexities and legacies is an important factor when assessing the origins and influences on education and training during these decades. Ireland's political and socio-economic context as a post-colonial state is an important hermeneutic perspective when examining the education and training developments of this early phase. The legacy of organisations and structures from British rule remained in place at local and national level i.e. local government councils and at national level government departments and legal systems and legislation. This was an era of unprecedented radical political and social change in Ireland and spans the Second World War and the post war years up to the 1960s.

In this chapter consulted were an array of primary historical documents spanning six decades, that assisted in examining and tracing the historical pattern of policy discourse and strategy developments. In analysing the various documents relating to this era; primary historical sources consulted and critically analysed for this study were transcripts of Dáil (Irish

Parliament) debates, original Department of Education (DoE) annual reports, relevant legislation, committee and commission reports.(See Appendix 2) Through analysis of strategic primary historical documents, we get a glimpse of the origins and policies that influenced the shaping of FET.

The introduction of legislation by the government of the day supported change and provides a lens by which we can evaluate and examine the past. Through examination of these historical documents using CDA, in tandem with transcripts of debate and secondary commentary the policy discourse and strategies that influenced the development of technical /vocational education and training during this era is examined. This chapter also evaluates the historical development of vocational education up to the 1960s and focuses on the precursors to this development and the significance of the legislation that underpinned the evolution and shaping of Vocational Education and Training. The CDA process will be used here as the basis for a new reading or interpretation of events when examining the evolution and development of FET and its historical origins.

Report and Recommendations of the Recess Committee 1896

An important milestone and corner stone for developments in education at the turn of the last century was The Report and Recommendations of the Recess Committee of 1896. Socio-politically at the close of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century Ireland was still under rule of the British empire. Ireland was primarily agrarian with absent landlords and tenant farmers eking out a living from their holdings. In the context of education development, the industrial revolution and growing urbanisation were factors which in other countries acted as a propelling force were not significant in an Irish context (Coolahan, 2017). The agricultural depression in the 1890s in the UK also spilled over into Ireland. (Beckett, 1971) notes ‘The depression fell with particular severity on Ireland, where agriculture formed such a large element in the total economy, and where so much of the land was held by small farmers, who had neither capital nor the skill necessary to adapt themselves to the new conditions’ p. 408. In the 1890s, as a response to this economic crisis in Ireland, politicians from numerous and diverse political parties and church representatives came together regarding the upgrade and improvement of technical education in Ireland (Coolahan, 2017).

This was the result of a public letter of invitation by a Unionist party member Horace Plunkett to establish technical education and support agricultural development (Clune, 1982). Unlike its near neighbour Britain, Ireland was not an industrialised nation and was dependent on agriculture. Against the backdrop of political division and derision, a committee was established. [T]he Recess Committee represented the coming together for a common cause of members of all political and religious outlooks. Such an event was rare if not unique in late nineteenth-century Ireland (Clune, 1982). This coming together by all parties and the unification of their outlook was the result of a massive survey that indicated that Ireland had been over taxed (Lyons, 1985). The committee was united in its vision to provide training provision for Ireland. It had thirty-seven members made up of Unionists, Parnellites, members of the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of Ireland, the Orange Order, owners of large commercial companies, a school inspector and the Dublin City Coroner. The committee members were all successful men in their chosen fields, they were well known to their own professions and of influence in the community (Clune, 1982). This committee provided many opportunities for Ireland, and in 1893, in response to their recommendations, the British government established the Technical Education Association, with oversight for the organisation of agriculture and practical industry education. This committee formed a space for educational policy discourse and became the change agents for socio-economic development and introduced an educational and training strategy for Ireland. From a socio-economic perspective agriculture would continue to be the most important industry in Ireland for the next two centuries. It would be decades before Ireland would become an open economy and be influenced by external factors. This context would impact on all government planning and influence education policy discourse and strategy and how it would evolve and develop.

The following legislation would underpin and direct education for the following decades when in 1899 ‘they won from the Government an Act creating a Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction’ (Lyons, 1985, p. 213). The Agriculture and Technical Instruction Act 1899 (Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland, 1899), gave the committee scope to plan for a new type of second-level school that included evening classes for workers; the committee thought that this would assist with Ireland’s economic growth.

Analysis of the legislation as a primary historical document the Act states ‘A Bill for Establishing a Department of Agriculture and other Industries and Technical Instruction in Ireland and for other purposes connected therewith’ (Department of Agriculture and

Technical Instruction for Ireland, 1899, p. 1) which resulted in the establishment of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction. This legislation would inaugurate a new model of education that included administration of grants for science, art and technical instruction, and subsumed all previous buildings, capital, and powers and duties of the former Department of Science and Art. The Act legislated for the place science, art and industry would play in education and in turn employment. In 1900 the legislation became operational and this new government department incorporated the Department of Science and Art schools under its remit.

The Act of 1899 had taken all definitions from a previous piece of legislation and examination of the 1899 Act refers to an earlier definition of technical instruction rather than spell it out. From a CDA perspective the definition was borrowed and was not developed within the socio-political context of the time. Consulted as a historical primary source Technical Instruction Act 1889 this earlier Act was to facilitate the provision of technical instruction and describes it as follows:

the expression technical instruction shall mean instruction in the principles of science and art applicable to industries, and in the application of special branches of science and art to specific industries and employment. It shall not include teaching the practice of any trade or industry or employment, but, save as aforesaid, shall include, and any other form of instruction (including de instruction in the branches of science and art with respect to which grants are for the time being made by the Department of Science and Art, and any other form of instruction (including modern languages and commercial and agricultural subjects)

(Act of Parliament, 1889, p. 387)

The Act also describes manual instruction, shall mean instruction in the use of tools, processes of agriculture, and modelling in clay, wood, or other material (Act of Parliament, 1889). This is the definition referred to in the Act of 1899, and it is an explicit outline of what technical education entailed at the end of the 1880s in Ireland and the curriculum that would commence in the Technical schools. The language is reflective of the economic state of Ireland during this era. As might be expected, the two Acts produced by parliament give some consideration to definitions and provide an interesting insight into how the discourse would evolve (or not) in the following decades.

As the precursor to the Vocational Education Act of 1930, the 1899 legislation also reinforced the governance by committee structure at county level; in examining the text of the 1899 Act it clearly outlined the structures of the committees and their membership, ‘For the purpose of assisting the Department in carrying out the objects of this Act there shall be established:

- (a) a Council of Agriculture
- (b) an Agriculture Board; and
- (c) a board of Technical Instruction

(Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland, 1899, p. 4).

The Act also included regulations for the appointment of members to these boards. On examination of the Act the membership of the committees and boards are also outlined; the Board of Technical Instruction consisted of twenty-three members appointed from counties and boroughs. The duties of the technical board were to advise the department with respect to all matters and questions pertaining to technical instruction (Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland, 1899). These local committees prepared schemes of technical instruction for their areas which, if approved by the Department, were put into operation subject to annual review (Coolahan, 1981). As a consequence of this legislation local and regional committees and boards overseeing agricultural education and training were established and the day technical schools emerged offering both day and evening classes.

Historically, this legislation and structures, with agriculture and technical education as a centre piece, would lay the foundations and influence the structure and shape of technical education and training for the coming decades. Fairclough’s (2003) four modes as an analytical context illustrates that ‘Rationalisation’, reference is made to the value and usefulness of a social action and the cognitive and face-validity of a particular action, which may or may not represent a ‘naturalised’ ideological position’, ‘Social action’ within this socio-political context sees the passing of legislation that has a basis in an ‘ideological position’ of education for the masses and consequently the establishment of structures and policy to drive forward this ideological strategy. This study will continue to examine how future policy makers and strategist built on this foundation and structure and how it was the guiding feature for decades to come.

The first annual general report of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction (Ireland) report for 1906 -07

From a historical and socio-political perspective this first annual general report of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction examines the implementation of the 1899 Act. In 1907 this first annual general report of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction (Ireland) report for 1906 -07 was commissioned by the Government 'to inquire and report whether the provision of the Agriculture and Technical Instruction Act (Ireland) 1899 constituting the Department and the methods which the Department has followed in carry out those provisions have been shown by experience to be well suited to the conditions of Ireland, whether any, and, if so, what changes are desirable in these provision and methods; to report also upon the relations of the Department to the Council of Agriculture, and the Agricultural Board, and to the Board of Technical Instruction, upon its relations to local statutory bodies; upon the funds at its disposal and the modes of employing them; and upon its position in regard to other Departments, especially those charged with educational functions' (Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, 1907) . Analysis of the report as a primary historical source sets out the reasons why particular structures were put in place i.e. the local committee structures, the functioning of the structures and the strategies that underpinned their development. This report is comprehensive and explicitly refers to the historical and the Irish political context at the time of introducing the Act, it highlights the fact that there was a distrust of central Government in Dublin by the Irish and referred to the government departments as a 'Castle Board' i.e. Dublin Castle regarded as the centre of the civil service and hence British rule. The report discusses this political context as 'not an easy one for an outsider to understand' and 'It is distrust of the Institution (central government) and if you put an archangel at the head of the Irish Government the distrust will be still there until the system has changed' (Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, 1907, p. 10). The report then gives this as the reason why the main thrust of the Act was to decentralise the governance of agricultural and technical education and according to the report 'The Recess Committee and Mr G Balfour were quite alive to the existence of this sentiment, and therefore it was the object of the Act to give the Department, so far as possible, an independent character' (Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, 1907, p. 10). These aspects of the report are illuminating and reveal the reasons why the agricultural board and the technical instruction boards and committees were linked to their locales and decentralised

from governance in Dublin. From a modern perspective the language is at times informal and lends itself to the emotive reasons of decentralisation as opposed to any clear political or economic driver. The Moral Evaluation (Fairclough, 2003) – an appeal to a value system around what is good or desirable-ideological and linked to discourses is evident here and asserts the desirability of setting up a system that is set within the desired socio-political context of the day. The discursive nature of the report highlights this explicitly.

This report as part of its investigation took evidence from the various committees and boards and states that ‘two hundred and fifteen local statutory bodies were thus addressed and from sixty- eight of whom they received written communication,’ ‘also the Vice President and principal officers on the staff of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction gave evidence on behalf of the local bodies named’ (Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, 1907, p. 11). It appears from the report that robust structures were in place across the country with local committees in a position to give feedback. On analysis, the significance of this was the structures for all future decentralised governance were positioned and would form the foundation of any future planning as policy trajectory. The report noted that ‘The Board of Technical Instruction thus occupies the same position as to technical instruction that the Agricultural Board holds to agriculture’ (Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, 1907, p. 122).The report was positive in its review of the implementation of the provisions of the Act as regards Agriculture and in particular agricultural education and recorded that

We believe the Department has been successful in stimulating throughout Ireland a sense that in various directions improved conditions of agriculture are within reach of the farmer, and desire to take advantage of the methods by which that improvement may be, in some measure, obtained. In this work the Department has been aided as we have shown in the memorandum attached to this Report, by the cordial cooperation of the Local Authorities throughout Ireland with very few exceptions

(Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, 1907, p. 124).

Agricultural education was succeeding and meeting the target group and from a political strategic point of view this was important as Ireland’s economy was largely dependent on

agriculture and this was an important development. This implicitly captured the socio-economic context and was reflected in the debate of the day.

On examination of the report it appears to have a clear strategy for technical education and states that ‘We believe that the work of technical instruction is now being carried on in Ireland on lines well adapted to meet both the temporary and the permanent necessities of the country in the matters for which the Act made the Department responsible. The ultimate tangible and financial results of successful technical education are valuable and lasting, but they cannot be produced in a few years. Much remains to be done in the development of this aspect of education in Ireland, but the keen appreciation of the advantages derived from what has already been accomplished, and the pervading interest in the subject, promise that the labours of the Department, and of the local Authorities who share responsibility with the Department, will produce results of permanent benefit to the country’ (Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, 1907, p. 125). The councils of county boroughs, urban districts and counties set up local statutory committees. These local committees prepared schemes of technical instruction for their respective areas which, and when approved by the Department, were put into operation and were subject to annual review (Coolahan, 1981). As a consequence of this Act Technical schools emerged offering both day and evening classes and the report recorded the success of introducing technical instruction and was very positive about the development of this area of education. The Act framed and introduced a very clear framework that from a socio-historical context influenced the development of local committees to manage agricultural education and technical training within the political context of the time. From examination of primary texts and secondary commentary one can deduce that the late 1800s into the new century witnessed a series of radical restructuring and introduction of technical education to drive the economy.

Post 1922

Following the Easter Rising of 1916, Ireland was declared a republic and in 1922 the Provisional Government of Ireland was established, as Ireland was struggled for Independence. These were turbulent years in an Irish political context that included the war of Independence and negotiations with Britain to establish the Republic (Beckett, 1971). In

June 1924 the Irish government began establishing their own structures and legislating for them and most importantly passed the Ministers and Secretaries Act into legislation. Consulted as a primary historical text the Act outlines the establishment of eleven separate government departments: President of the Executive, Finance, Post and Telegraphs, Education, Defence, External Affairs, Industry and Commerce, Lands and Agriculture, Fisheries, Local Government and Public Health, and finally Justice (Irish Government, 1924). This structure proposed a new policy shift by the Irish government in forming, shaping and developing new departments as a formal transfer of power between Britain and Ireland.

From the passing of the Agricultural and Technical Training Act 1899 to the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922, direct influence by the state on education was at a minimum due to the political uncertainty and turmoil. The Report of the DoE for The School Year 1924-25 examined as a primary historical source, gives a key insight into the workings of the education system of the time. It informs the reader that the newly established DoE took responsibility for primary, secondary and technical education and managed the curricula and the inspectorate of these three areas of education. The report also gives a comprehensive overview of developments in education; Up until 1922, the British authorities that governed education in Ireland were separate, independent and autonomous; the Department of Reformatory and Industrial Schools; and the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, governed and administered technical education, the Commission of National Education, governed and administered primary education; the Commissioners of Intermediate Education, governed and administered the secondary education system; the Commissioners of Education in Ireland, governed and administered the schemes for endowed schools. Primary, secondary and technical education would form the genesis of the fledging department. Primary schools were until this time called national schools and secondary schools were called intermediate schools (Department of Education, 1925, p. 5). In the DoE Report 1924 to 1925 Chapter VIII explicitly reports on 'Technical Education' reports that The Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction ceased to exist as an entity and the management and operation of schools and technical education moved to the newly established DoE. Under the new legislation, the Ministers and Secretaries Act of 1924 the DoE was established, and technical education was transferred from the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction.

1924 to 1925 was the first year in which the DoE functioned as a government department under the 1924 Ministers and Secretaries Act. The Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction became the Department of Agriculture and Lands, retaining agricultural training and agricultural education. The industrial function of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Training was transferred to the newly established Department of Industry and Commerce (Department of Education, 1925, p. 55). Different aspects of education and training were allocated to different government departments and this model of government, with departmental control over their field of training and education, made education and training provision fragmented and separated. Government Departments had responsibilities for their individual remits and functions and that included education and training.

Analysis of the DoE Annual Report 1926 as a primary historical source describes Technical Education as ‘the third educational branch now in operation’ and this annual report gives an insight into the education structure in Ireland. ‘The Technical Instruction Schemes taken over by the DoE are all under the management of local Statutory Committees constituted on a voluntary basis. These committees which are set up by the County Councils, County Boroughs and Urban District Councils fall into two main types: (1) purely Technical Committees and (2) combined Technical and Agricultural Committees. The purely Technical Committees may be sub-divided into three classes- County Borough, Urban and Joint County and Urban’ (Department of Education, 1926, p. 56). The report went on to enumerate the committees according to type; ‘There are at the present time 49 of these Statutory Committees in Saorstát Éireann of which 20 are Joint County and Urban Committees, 18 are Urban District Committees, 4 are County Borough Committees and 7 are Committees of Agriculture and Technical Instruction’ (Department of Education, 1926, p. 57). On examination of the Annual report it outlined ‘the operations of every Committee are laid down definitely in a scheme which must be approved annually by the Department before it can be put into effect’ (Department of Education, 1925, p. 57). The education and training provision were organised at local committee level and approved at central government level. The report also outlined how technical education was financed, again it had both a local and centralised aspect to it ‘The finance of each scheme is based on two sources of income (I) Local Contributions and (II) State Grants’ (Department of Education, 1926, p. 58). The local contributions came from locally paid rates. Each scheme was revised annually by the local committee with the help of a Department inspector, the Department had final authority with regard to a scheme and could

withhold their approval, likewise a local authority could withhold its contribution which resulted in ‘which act would immediately terminate the existence of the scheme in the area of that local authority’ (Department of Education, 1925). The DoE Annual report (Department of Education, 1925, p. 56) reported ‘the work in both the urban and rural centres was at first nearly all done at evening classes’, as the day programmes and courses expanded, evening classes would remain a feature of technical and vocational education.

The Commission on Technical Education

The Commission on Technical Education was the first ever commission formed by the independent Irish government to examine education and it would focus primarily on technical education and apprenticeships. The socio-economic context of Ireland during these years remained unchanged, as an island nation it stayed mainly rural and dependent on agriculture; the industrial revolution had not impacted on the Irish economy. ‘Agriculture despite all the efforts of an energetic Minister had not fundamentally changed its character and still remained in many ways underdeveloped. Industry, also, though it expanded somewhat, was still essentially small-scale and-save for a few long-established enterprises – quite unable to compete in the open market’ (Lyons, 1985, p. 609). Another socio-political factor affecting the economy at this time was emigration ‘Worst of all, the government had not succeeded in arresting the decline in population. From a total for the twenty-six counties of 3.1 million in 1911, it had fallen to 2.97 million in 1926 and this decline was to continue’ (Lyons, 1985, p. 609).

This report from the Commission on Technical Education was consulted and examined as a primary historical text and gives an insight into the government policy discourse on technical education. The terms of reference for the committee were ‘to inquire into and advise upon the system of technical education in Saorstát Eireann (Free State of Ireland) in relation to the requirements of Trade and Industry’ (Commission on Technical Education, 1927). It was a strategic process initiated at government level, and the DoE stated that ‘when this Commission reports it will be possible to see how both Technical Education proper and post – Primary continuation education will require to be developed in order to meet the needs of our industrial and commercial life’ (Department of Education, 1926). The report outlined the

membership of the Commission; employer representatives, labour representatives, teachers and representatives of government departments – Education, Industry and Commerce, and Agriculture – with two external experts (Commission on Technical Education, 1927). This gives an insight into the fledgling governments strategy for consultation with stakeholders.

The Commission reported that ‘the work of the schools in the more important districts bears too little relation to the local requirements of trade and industry and that a general change of outlook is required’ (Commission on Technical Education, 1927) . Local policy and national policy weren’t always working in tandem and perhaps this was as a consequence of decentralisation during the previous era. As part of the review, the commission examined apprenticeships and their link to trades and industry. The report, in agreement with employers and trade unions, concluded that the ‘existing system of apprenticeship had failed’ and, fundamentally, it endorsed and presented the need to fund and develop technical and vocational training in Ireland and a new apprenticeship model (Commission on Technical Education, 1927). Analysis of the DoE annual report 1925 highlights the fact that the commission examined and reviewed the only organised day apprenticeship school in the country at the time – Bolton Street – which was under the governance of the City of Dublin Technical Instruction Committee. The DoE Annual Report for the School Year 1924–25 (Department of Education, 1925) provides an insight into the activity of apprenticeship training at the time: apprenticeship training was over two years, with boys as young as fourteen who had passed the sixth class national school standard taking an entrance exam. Those who gained a scholarship got the training free and were awarded an allowance. An exam was held at the end of the course, in partnership with employers and trade associations, and students who passed the exams were allocated places in the trades. The trades in which apprenticeship training took place at the time were mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, carpentry, cabinet making, printing and plumbing (Department of Education, 1925, p. 63). Young women attended domestic science courses in their local technical / vocational schools, this was very much in keeping with the socio-economic outlook and context of the time. The language of the texts evaluated through a hermeneutic lens suggests an emphasis on education and trades for young men, however young women also have specific allocated training.

Higher technical education was reviewed by the commission, and recommendations made for the improved training of those seeking the more important posts in trade and industry. Other changes were recommended, with the control and financing of schemes of technical instruction as conducted by local authorities queried (Commission on Technical Education, 1927). The Commission concluded that ‘radical changes are necessary to meet the existing and probable requirements of traditional industry’ (Coolahan, 1981; p.95). This was a far reaching and extensive report and would link the power of education and training to the economic progress in Ireland. The commission report reflected the fact that education and economic needs were not working in tandem at this time in supporting the Irish state’s industrial and economic progress. Nor did the education system have schools and/or training in place to meet industry or trade requirements. Within this socio-economic context the commission would have examined the relationship between existing and probable requirements of trade and industry and had found gaps in the education provision required ‘to fuel’ an economy. Analysis of discourse highlights the importance of trade and industry and that the economy is at the forefront of government strategy and policy development.

This report would influence and underpin the development of the Vocational Education Act of 1930 and the Apprenticeship Act of 1931 respectively and the commission’s recommendations were primarily incorporated into both pieces of legislation. On examination of the DoE Annual report (Department of Education, 1927–28) as an historical primary text, with regard to the recommendations stated ‘that would require additional legislative powers to provide for a policy of educational development over a period of ten or twenty years’. ‘The report of the Technical Education Commission, published in 1927, had given a significant boost to technical education throughout the country and had set out a framework for technical education for the future. It led to substantial new increases in both provision and attendance each year. The Vocational Education Bill was considered in the 1930 parliamentary session and attention was focused on technical education, its schools and classes. The system was poised to make a giant leap forward’ (Cooke, 2009, p. 189).

For this study analysis of Dáil debates provide the level of insight required to fully understand the socio-political context in the lead up to the development of the Vocational Education Act of 1930. The debates focused on the different aspects of technical education, apprenticeship, the structure and geographical spread of VECs and how schools and committees would be

financed (Dáil Debate, 1930). Of particular interest to this study is the Dáil debate 14th of May 1930 when the Minister for Education Professor O' Sullivan explains that although the commission report recommended new legislation for apprenticeships, the Minister states 'it was found an extremely difficult Bill to draft' the Minister was referring to the fact 'that the report attached considerable importance to the legislation dealing with apprenticeship in connection with the subject of technical education. That is not legislated for in this Bill.' The Minister in addressing the Dáil would outline why and where apprenticeship provision would go 'I found that five-sixths of them were matters regulating not to the education of apprentices, but the whole question of apprenticeships. They belonged to the extent of five-sixths to another Department altogether – the Department of Industry and Commerce.' The minister went on to state that another Bill would be drafted under the other Department and that 'we did make provision to attune our Bill to the other Bill when the other Bill should be introduced' (Dail Debate, 1930). Thus, laying down the foundations of a complex system.

These early state documents as a primary historical source highlights a government strategy and policy discourse determined to educate young people for the trades, agriculture and commerce. Analysis of policy discourse highlights the importance of trade and industry and that the economy is at the forefront of government strategy and policy development. The emergence of the new state of Ireland saw a transformation towards a new identity and a conscious development by government to restructure relations between the economy, politics and the social domains and that included education.

Vocational Education Act 1930

The introduction and enactment of the 1930 Vocational Education Act was a historical milestone and watershed as the first education legislation enacted by the new Irish government. As outlined in the previous section the new government DoE would endorse and implement the recommendations made in the Report of the Commission on Technical Education. In examining transcripts of Dáil debate as primary historical source the Minister for Education, Professor O'Sullivan debating the new Vocational Education Act, stated that: 'Even the lapse of time itself would have been a sufficient reason for the introduction of a Bill of this kind. The system under which we are working at present stretches back, as far as its

legislative foundations are concerned, practically a generation' (Dail Debate, 1930). From a central government perspective, the perception was that a new structure for vocational education and training was required and that the one developed in the last century was no longer relevant or 'fit for purpose' for the economy. The transition from Technical Instruction Committees to Vocational Education Committees (VECs) all transpired in late autumn of 1930 and the era of Vocational Education would commence. The Dáil debates on the introduction of this new legislation (the Dáil) show an enthusiasm to build more schools, widen provision and fund the schemes (Dáil Debate, 1930). The VECs would manage the existing schools (technical schools) and their provision.

Under the 1930 legislation government policy included the management of these schools by local committee as heretofore. In the Dáil debate the Minister informed the sitting that

Control of vocational education and technical education will still as heretofore, be in the hands of local committees. There is no change introduced so far as the principle of control by committees is concerned – technically, that is. At present local education authorities are the county councils and the borough or urban councils. In future it will be the committees appointed by those bodies, that is the committees appointed by the county council and the borough council

(Dail Debate, 1930)

Under the 1930 Vocational Education Act, control of vocational education came under the auspices of the DoE and local authorities. Vocational Education was governed with a combination of national government funding and local finance, with the local finance being raised from the local rates system. This pattern of governance and financial support was maintained by the Vocational Education Act of 1930, which updated and revamped the earlier legislation but kept these essential features (Coolahan, 1981). The structures of vocational education mirrored structures from the previous British regime as set up under the Agricultural and Technical Instruction Act (1899) whereby managing technical / vocational education had been decentralised and was organised and funded at local and national level.

In consulting the legislation as a primary historical source, the Vocational Education Act 1930, the Act does not at any point within the Bill define Vocational Education but instead

describes the function of it. ‘An Act to make further and better provision in relation to continuation education and technical education’. The Act defines ‘continuation education’ as education to continue and supplement education provided in schools and includes general and practical training in preparation for employment in trades, manufactures, agriculture, commerce, and other industrial pursuits, and also general and practical training for young persons in the early stages of such employment’ (Department of Education , 1930). Continuation education would prepare students for trade and manual occupations. On the other hand, ‘technical education’ according to the Act is education pertaining to trades, manufactures, commerce, and other industrial pursuits (including the occupations of girls and women connected with the household) and in subjects bearing thereon or relating thereto and includes education in science and art (including, in the county boroughs of Dublin and Cork, music) and includes physical training. Technical education was provided for students who had finished school and wanted to acquire technical skills related to a particular craft or industry’ (Department of Education , 1930). This legislation positioned vocational education firmly on the agenda of the government’s strategy for education. At the most basic level, it could be argued that this inability to either articulate a clear definition for vocational education and its components raises the question as to how this would reflect in future policy development and articulation of strategy when a major area of education would remain without a definition. The lack of a clear definition as to what ‘Vocational Education’ actually represents would limit the potential of the sector to be understood when ‘policy makers ... appeal to this principle in formulating educational programmes and objectives’ (O’Sullivan, 1992, p. 407).

Technical education differed to that of continuation education in the vocational schools in that it was meeting the needs of local industry and courses were offered in the evening, during the day and, at times, on site at the factories. The ERSI (2014) states ‘These schools provided two year full-time ‘continuation education’ designed to prepare young people for the labour market, along with evening courses (‘technical education’) designed to improve the skills of the employed’ p. 10. In reviewing the Report of the DoE 1935–36 (Department of Education, 1936) provides an overview of the vocational education and training activities in the schools. The report lists a variety of industries that included boot making, aluminium manufacturing, sugar beet factory, printing, hairdressing, flour milling, shirt factory, electrical engineering, fishing industry, toy making, glove making, pottery and tannery. Education and training of

students took place in classroom situations in technical schools and the practical elements were completed in school workshops, with practical experience in work placements. This report reflects the central position of the schools to the industries and businesses in their locales. Technical education/ vocational education with an emphasis on trades would lay the foundation for later curricula in the vocational schools and subsequently the further education sector. In many towns and cities, the local 'tech' i.e. technical school, later called vocational school, was the main link to industry and manufacturing and in many cases trained young men and women for these jobs.

The 1930 Vocational Education Act paved the way for a new structure and provision of education in Ireland. On consultation of a Dáil debate transcripts (on the introduction of the Act) as a primary historical source on the legislation, one TD (Teachta Dála – member of parliament) stated that: 'Unfortunately, we have to admit, more particularly as regards the towns and cities, that the time of boys and girls – I mean those of the poorer classes whose parents cannot afford to send them to secondary school – is being wasted. From the period between 14 and 16 years they are almost running wild in our streets. I regret that the Minister has not accepted the recommendation of the Technical Commission in that respect, and that he would not insist on compulsory attendance for boys and girls between 14 and 16 years at the continuation schools' (Dáil Debate, 1930). Fundamentally, Vocational Education was viewed as education and training for the poor and a mechanism to upskill the population and have them ready to work in the industries and trades that required workers. Coolahan (1981) notes that 'There was a strong prejudice against technical education among the general public and many parents were anxious that their children should gain white collar employment and they tended to regard practical and manual, and the preparation of it, as inferior' p.92. From a CDA perspective, historically the Vocational schools would never leave behind the language of the past i.e. 'Techs' and the connotations of their status as schools for the poor and underprivileged.

Interestingly at official level the interchange of the names of the schools as technical schools/vocational schools was considered acceptable and perhaps reflects the educational vocabulary of the time. The two terms/words were used interchangeable at local, government and at Department levels (Cooke, 2009). In examination of the DoE Annual report 1930-30 Chapter V, Technical Education: it describes the session 1930-31 as one of transition and the

VECs providing an education that was referred to as both vocational and technical. In consulting the DoE Report of 1935–36 as a primary historical source (Department of Education, 1936), Section V deals exclusively with Vocational Education and the schools are still referred to interchangeably as technical schools and vocational schools ‘Today there is not a county in Saorstát in which a least one new Vocational School has not been erected’ p.69 and in the next subsection ‘...for training through the local Technical School ...’p. 71. Paragraph after paragraph has the author of the annual report using one or the other term without any explanation or consistency. This interchange of terminology would remain a feature officially at department level and in the vernacular of local communities in Ireland and all the connotations connected with it would remain.

Vocational Education Committees

The members of the Vocational Education Committees (VECs) were nominated by the local authority and for the term of the elected local authority; therefore, the VECs were populated in the main by local politicians who were local authority councillors and members of government. This makeup of the committees would allow a conduit for issues at local level to reach central government. Analysis of the 1930 Vocational Education Act as a primary historical source, provides an overview of the structure and it is important to note that the Act set out the appointment of Chief Executive Officer who would lead the administration of the scheme, this would set up the VECs on a trajectory that was underpinned by policy, structures and strategy. The Act stated ‘Subject to the provisions of this section, every vocational education committee shall appoint a chief executive officer and such other officers and servants as it shall from time to time think necessary for the due performance of its powers and duties under this Act’ 23 (1). Over time, every county and borough had a VEC and these committees were recognised for managing specific education and training. In time, every county town and the smaller towns would have a vocational school, offering a daytime curriculum and an evening class curriculum. Analysis of the DoE Report 1921–22 as a primary historical text (Department of Education, 1922) provides an overview of how the 1930 Act would be administered in practice with the structures and configurations of the VECs. The report stated that the new Saorstát Éireann (Free State of Ireland) now had twenty-six county schemes, three boroughs (Limerick being suspended) and nineteen urban district

schemes, with forty-five other urban districts participating in joint county schemes. This newly established governance structure, i.e. the VEC, would endure, expand provision and stand the test of time. Each town would have a vocational school offering daytime curriculum to second-level students, education for adults, daytime and evening programmes, and offering two components of the Act continuation education and technical education.

Teaching in the Vocational Education Schemes

The DoE Annual reports investigated as a primary historical source outlines the curriculum and teaching in VECs and their schools. These reports give a detailed insight into the educational activity of the VECs and their schools. The report shows that the instruction and teaching within the VEC schemes had the following broad areas of expertise: engineering subjects, building trades, subjects, domestic science subjects, commercial and literacy subjects, science subjects and art subjects. In the technical school at the time and in examining the DoE Report of 1930–31 (Department of Education, 1931). The report stated that the VECs sometimes employed part-time specialist teachers, though for the most part teachers were whole-time and taught a number of allied subjects. As evening classes were attended mostly by young people with day jobs, it was recommended that the teachers should not only be qualified in the general principles of the subject area but also use corresponding practical applications (p. 50). According to the report, teachers of engineering subjects, building trades subjects and domestic science subjects were usually recruited by the VECs from the special courses in these areas conducted by the DoE, with practical work at the forefront of their training. Teachers of commercial and literacy subjects were largely university graduates and had no experience of business or industry environments, a fact that was criticised by the department of the day as not sufficient in a technical school environment (Department of Education, 1932). Teachers of science subjects came from two sections – physical/chemical science and teachers with natural science/agriculture, the latter more popular in the rural technical schools than in the urban schools. No explanation in the report is given, but it can be assumed that the latter subject had more relevance to the rural communities that were mainly agrarian (Department of Education, 1931, pp. 50-55). While the Irish economy relied mainly on agriculture, over time different types of industry would emerge as part of the Irish

economy (Department of Education, 1931). The emphasis on vocational education, linked with industry would prove in time an important part of the government discourse and strategy.

Evening technical classes remained a part of vocational school provision, and on examination of the Annual report 1940-41 reported an increase in enrolments for the year 1940/41, particularly in the area of domestic economy. Other provision included public lectures, and the (Department of Education, 1940-41) noted that the vocational schools were again used by the Royal Dublin Society for its valuable series of lectures. It reported that Chief Executive Officers of VECs commented in their annual reports on the great appreciation that farmers had for that society's lectures on agricultural subjects (p. 25). This is reflective of the socio-economic context of Ireland as a mainly rural and agrarian society.

In all centres, there was a good attendance of adults. Barrington Lectures were given in counties Galway, Leitrim, Sligo and Waterford. Barrington lectures were initiated in 1849 at the bequest of a Dublin merchant, Mr John Barrington, for the purpose of enlightening the citizens. There were four lectures per year in Dublin and twenty-four per year in towns and villages. The theme of the Barrington lectures was 'Political Economy'. The VECs had begun providing education for adults in their local communities through visiting lecturers and evening classes, and, in particular, they promoted the Barrington lectures in their respective regions (Department of Education, 1940-41, p. 25). During the 1950s, the Department reported much activity by VECs in the area of adult education, and the Barrington lectures continued and proved popular: 'A series of lectures and classes on varying topics were held across the country and the greatest demand in the rural areas was for classes in Woodwork and Domestic Economy, and it was not possible to cater for this demand' (Cooke, 2009). The vocational schools and in turn local VECs were providing relevant evening classes in both urban and rural areas.

The Influence of the Christian Churches on Vocational Education

The influence of the Christian Churches on the development of education in Ireland has had over the years a multitude of commentary and research within an Irish context (Lyons, 1985; Coolahan, 1990; Hyland & Milne, 1992). In an Irish socio-historical context the development of all aspects of education in Ireland were influenced and at times controlled by the Christian

Churches. From the moment schooling began to be organised on a national scale during the nineteenth century it took on predominantly denominational character, both at the primary and the secondary – indeed at the university – level (Lyons, 1985). Ireland was a difficult case in that strong animosities and suspicions existed between the denominations. The Protestant church (the established church) thought it had a special position although a minority in the state, the Catholic Church emerging from a long period of oppression thought it was unfairly treated by the state in not getting financial support in its massive job of educating the Catholic population and the Presbyterians sought financial support for their schools in their tradition, Coolahan (2017). In examining the evolution and development of vocational education, it is imperative to explore the socio-historical context and the influence and power the Christian churches had on the vocational education sector in Ireland. This socio-historical factor of church dominance is a variable when examining any aspect of education in Ireland. With the establishment of the Free State in 1922, there was a willingness on the part of the new government to leave the management of both primary and second level to the religious orders and church hierarchy. Secondary schools were under the auspices of religious orders and the lands and buildings were under the ownership and management of the Catholic Church or Church of Ireland respectively; schools were usually single sex and the curricula were academic. The primary schools came under the patronage of the Christian churches and most often the ecclesiastical authority in a parish was either the Roman Catholic priest or the Church of Ireland minister. The schools usually answered to the bishop where the school was situated in a diocese. Within the Irish education second-level sector, religious provision and secular vocational education provision coexisted. However, Farry (1998) argues that ‘For over thirty years the vocational sector was severely restricted in its operation and did not develop its core activity, partly because of the compliant acceptance by successive Ministers of limitations on competing with the Church controlled second level schools’ (p. 13).

In the development the Vocational Education Act 1930, the Minister for Education following a deputation from the Catholic hierarchy made a guarantee to the Catholic bishops that the curriculum provided under the 1930 Vocational Education Act would be practical and vocational and not academic. The schools were under secular control and were non-denominational though committees were encouraged to make provision for religious instruction (Coolahan, 1981). The Catholic Church was not welcoming of state control of education and was at pains to influence any development of secular education. The Minister

and department's response was as a result of a campaign by the Roman Catholic Church against state education. Key figures in the Catholic hierarchy, such as Archbishop John Charles McQuaid and Rev Martin Brennan had instigated a campaign that heavily criticised vocational education (Clarke, 2012) . However, the VEC provision at second level was restricted and hampered at the time by the robust influence of the Roman Catholic Church on state affairs. (Titley, 1983) argues that 'The Roman Catholic Church had viewed education as a vital tool in expanding its future ranks of clergymen and fostering loyalty in the Irish people' p. 148. In the view of the church, this would produce the influencers in Irish society – politicians, priests, bishops and social leaders – with a commitment and allegiance to the Roman Catholic Church. It [the Roman Catholic Church] assisted in shaping the Vocational Education Act 1930 so as to protect the social standing and exclusiveness of Catholic academic secondary schools, by imposing a status of inferiority on vocational schools which blighted their development over succeeding decades (Fahey, 1998).

The demarcation of vocational schools as non-religious schools under the governance of VECs directly funded by the DoE would mark them out as different to their religiously run counterparts, the secondary schools. Over time, the bishops of the religious led schools would impose on the government the curricular provision of the vocational schools (Coolahan, 1981). This would reinforce in the public's mind the idea of the local vocational school as the schools offering the non-academic syllabus – the school for apprentices, industry, agriculture and trades, the school for the poor, as was the case at the time. As a result of this, a binary system of second level education developed. On one hand were the secondary schools, governed by religious orders, and on the other the vocational schools, state governed by the VECs. This binary system would remain a feature of second-level education in the subsequent decades. For more than two centuries educational provision in Ireland remained a source of tension between the Catholic Church and the government (Halton, 2003).

However, on examination of the DoE Annual Report (Department of Education, 1936, p. 68) as a primary historical source an entire introductory section called 'progress of vocational education' states that 'difficulties, associated with the introduction of a new system, have been overcome, and the majority of the schemes are now established on a sound foundation' and 'The development of Vocational Education necessitated the erection of many new schools. To-day there is not a county in the Saorstát in which at least one new Vocational School has not

been erected; in some counties as many as five new schools have been erected'. Interestingly the author of the report does not explain what the difficulties are that the report is referring to but it can be assumed within the socio-political context of the time that the reference is to the government's 'difficulties' in creating a secular education system and the opposition and power of the Christian churches in Irish society at the time.

Apprenticeship Act 1931

Following on quickly from the 1930 Vocational Education Act the Apprenticeship Act was another important historical milestone in the development of FET with the introduction of the Apprenticeship Act passed in 1931 (Department of Industry and Commerce, 1931) and came under the governance and remit of the Department of Industry and Commerce. In consulting Dáil debates and the Act itself as a primary historical text, a clear picture forms on how the early decisions of policy, strategy and structures were established. The Minister for Education, Professor O'Sullivan, in the Dáil debates on the Vocational Education Act 1930, stated that:

When several pages of the heads of sections dealing with apprenticeship were put before me, I found that five-sixths of them were matters regulating not the education of apprentices, but the whole question of apprenticeship. They belonged to the extent of five-sixths to another Department altogether – the Department of Industry and Commerce. Therefore, in fact, that is not a departure from the recommendations of the Commission. They only required legislation and they did not state by which Department it should be brought in. There is, as I have indicated, a Bill in the process of being drafted, promoted by the Department of Industry and Commerce, to lay down the general conditions of apprenticeship and to provide for the setting up of apprenticeship committees.

(Dáil Debate, 1930)

During this phase, therefore, apprenticeship training was legislated for in 1931 in isolation from and not encompassed as part of the 1930 Vocational Education Act. This occurred as a consequence of timing and poor communication at government level. The original Vocational Act had incorporated apprenticeship, and when the draft was submitted, so too was one from the Department of Industry and Commerce, with an entire Act dedicated to apprenticeships.

Hence apprenticeship training was not included in the Vocational Education Act of 1930 and under the auspices of the DoE but legislated for by the Department of Industry and Commerce. All that remained in the Vocational Education Act of 1930 was the proviso that VECs would make provision for the educational training of apprentices and ensure their compulsory attendance at their technical classes. Hence, in legislation the VECs would have a peripheral role in training apprentices. However, in reality, due to the failure of the Apprenticeship Act 1931, VECs provided apprenticeship training under their ‘continuation’ strand of education and worked in partnership at local level with industry and trades. This was not an element of central government policy discourse or strategy, but an aspect of informal policy whereby systems and structures within the VEC schools developed organically and at local level as the need would arise for training or apprenticeship courses for local industries.

On examination of the Apprenticeship Act 1931 as a primary historical text it was ‘An act to make better provision for the regulation of apprenticeship in certain trades’ it legislated for the establishment of apprenticeship committees for designated ‘trades’ and ‘the word trade includes any industry, occupation, or business, and also includes any distinct branch of trade’. The Act on examination outlined that the chairmen of the committees were appointed by the Minister of Industry and Commerce. Every apprenticeship committee was designated to draw up the ‘rules’ pertaining to their trade, to include: regulating the period of apprenticeship that included the probationary period; wages; hours of work; regulating the educational qualifications; age of entry; regulations governing the training; and the number of apprentices employed by a company or industry. The apprenticeship committees were required to report and make returns to the Minister of Industry and Commerce. Under this legislation, the role of the employer was to pay the designated wage and follow the rules of the trade committee and to keep records of wages paid and time worked by the apprentice. Under this legislation, employers could be fined or prosecuted for failure to adhere to the ‘rules’ (Department of Industry and Commerce, 1931).

On examination of Section 26 of the Act ‘Education of Apprenticeships’ the legislation included a section on the role of VECs in the education of apprentices. The VECs were required to provide vocational education when requested by a trade committee via the DoE, and apprentices were obliged to attend vocational schools ‘where a course of instruction in the nature of technical education provided by a vocational education committee is availablemake an order in prescribed form requiring such apprenticeship to attend such

course' (p.2). Analysis of the DoE Report 1935–1936 as primary historical source, reporting under the vocational education subsection on apprentices, outlined the development of apprenticeships and reported that an apprenticeship committee for hairdressing had completed the rules required for this trade; however, the report noted that conditions in the other trades were more complex and the framing of suitable rules necessarily involved considerable discussions and took a longer time (Department of Education, 1936). The onus and the power over apprenticeship strategy appears to lie with the trade organisations and not led by government policy or strategy. In the subsequent years, discussions on devising rules for new trades had taken place but were implemented very slowly.

The passing of the Apprenticeship Act of 1931 (Department of Industry and Commerce, 1931) created a division of governance, separating vocational education and training that would continue for decades and have a significant effect in shaping the sectors. In hindsight, this Act is now perceived as having been fundamentally unsuccessful, as it merely laid down ground rules for the coordination of the apprenticeship system (Coolahan, 2017). Perusal of the DoE annual reports spanning from 1935 through to 1948 as a primary historical source, reported that VECs provided education for the following trades: furniture, hairdressing, painting and decorating. However, apprenticeships progressed under the provision of the VECs, and the 'continuation' education strand had built up local partnerships with businesses and industry. The VECs were engaged in local partnerships and were upskilling and training workers required to work in industries. The main task of each Vocational Education Committee during this period was to organise a scheme of continuation education suited to local conditions (Department of Education, 1936). This was done through local networks and partnerships of teachers/principals of vocational schools liaising and working with local businesses and industries. On examination of the DoE Annual Report 1935-36 (Department of Education, 1936) stated that;

the main task of each Vocational Education Committee during this period was to organise a scheme of continuation education suited to local conditions. Gradually they evolved a variety of whole-time day courses extending over 20-25 hours per week and in which practical work occupied one-third to one-half of the available time. At present the main types of continuation courses in operation are:

- a) Trades (Building),
- b) Trades (Engineering),

- c) Commercial,
- d) Domestic,
- e) Rural,
- f) General Subjects,

(Department of Education, 1936, p. 68)

By 1936 the Report shows that all the first four were in operation in county boroughs and larger urban centres.

The Apprenticeship Act 1931 and its legislation had failed to make an impact on employers and unions. Very few trades had signed up for the cumbersome rules, and due to lack of clarity and structures the legislation was non-operational. The restructuring and legislation of apprenticeships had failed (Garavan, et al., 1995). In the early 1950s, the VECs reported a steady demand from employers in all areas for the services of students trained in the whole-time day courses. Chief Executive Officers (of VECs) reported that in addition to apprenticeships in the Electricity Supply Board (ESB) and Córas Iómpair Éireann (CIÉ, Ireland's national transport company), students secured many positions in the civil service and under local authorities (Department of Education Annual Report, 1951-52). The division of vocational education and that of training was underpinned by the legislation enacted and analysis highlights the fact that the governments initial strategy to divide in one sense the sectors and then confusingly overlap provision was having a negative impact on apprenticeships.

By 1959, the 1931 Apprenticeship Act was superseded by the Apprenticeship Act 1959 (Department of Industry and Commerce, 1959). This Act was informed by the 1943 Report of the Commission on Vocational Organisation (Government Report, 1943) and by the Report of the Commission on Youth Unemployment 1951 (Department of Industry and Commerce, 1951). On examination of Commission on Vocational Organisation Report 1943 as a primary historical source, the terms of reference as appointed by the Government of the day were to report on the practicality of developing functional or vocational organisation in the circumstances of this country; means best calculated to promote such a development; rights, powers duties which should be imposed on functional or vocational bodies; and the legislative and administrative measures required. At their first meeting the Taoiseach of the day Mr de

Valera, described vocational organisation as an organisation of society, ‘in which people who are engaged in similar callings or professions naturally gravitate together to promote the interests of those professions or callings’. The phraseology of the language here vocational organisation as an organisation of society, highlights the government ideology of work underpinning society and economy. On examination of the report it is a comprehensive overview of occupations in Ireland during this era, it gives a snapshot of occupations in 1936 and interestingly forty-eight point one per cent were in agriculture. It gave a synopsis of the history of occupational organisation in Ireland with a focus on guilds; it looked at vocational organisation in other countries. It examined Irish legislation; every profession in the country and their organisations; agriculture; industry; commerce; transport; finance; personal services; and public administration and social services. On examination of the report’s recommendations under Section 3 ‘The State and Vocational Organisation’ two interesting points on central government policy discourse and strategy are made; the report states that ‘the outstanding development over the past twenty years in social and economic life is the increase of government intervention. Our own country has not been an exception. The state has intervened to encourage employment, to improve working conditions and to establish social control in agriculture, industry and commerce. As a result, there has been a remarkable development of regulation by means of tariffs, quotas, import control, price control and departmental orders’ and the report went to call for ‘collaboration’ between state employer and worker (Government Report, 1943, pp. 316-317). The language contained in this report was a mirror of the policy developments and rhetoric at central government level whereby the importance of linking the state with industry, with business with employers was an emerging policy discourse.

The report gave a section under its recommendation to ‘education’ and stated that ‘certain main facts stand out: first, the need for better co-ordination of all authorities concerned with education; secondly the neglect of agricultural education in primary, secondary and vocational schools; thirdly the disproportionate between the expense of vocational education and the number of and skill of workers prepared by it for industry and commerce; fourthly the absence of differentiation between the curriculum for boys and that of girls’ (Government Report, 1943, p. 333). The report went on to comment about the overlap of educational provision in Ireland and how at this phase in time that this had commenced and was a highlighted issue; ‘There is the same lack of co-ordination between the education given in secondary schools and the continuation education now the principal feature of vocational schools, and between vocational schools themselves and the agricultural instruction provided by the Department of Agriculture

and County Committees of Agriculture’ (p. 333). The report went on to argue that ‘educational practice in this matter (referring to the above) calls for a review in the light of its social and economic consequences’ (p. 334). The report also recommended the establishment of a Council of Education as a permanent advisory institution to the Minister for Education and gave great detail of its structure and functions. On examination of the Report it included recommendations on ‘Industry’ ‘Moreover, organisation of industrialists is necessary for their full collaboration with the State in administrative action for the good of the industry and the nation. Finally, a large degree of constructive co-operation between the separate industries will be made possible in such matters as industrial research, technical education, information bureaux, all contributing to the maximum of industrial efficiency’ (p. 356). On ‘commerce’ the report recommended ‘joint commercial boards’ that would ‘regulate all questions dealing with apprenticeships and commercial training’ it went on to add that ‘The Board should as the representative of the trade, co-operate with vocational education authorities to ensure that a proper system of commercial training is provided and that openings are found for qualified candidates’ (p. 389). The main thrust of the report was the policy discourse of economics and commerce dependency on education.

Another government report of importance during this phase was The Report of the Commission on Youth Unemployment 1951 (Department of Industry and Commerce, 1951) set up by Mr Seán Lemass, then Minister at the Department of Industry and Commerce, and chaired by the Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid. ‘No churchman has exercised the enormous spiritual, let alone the almost unbounded temporal power which he exercised over three decades’ (Cooney, 1999, p. 23). Analysis of the report as a primary historical text, shows the commission was formed to examine and report on the extent and causes of unemployment amongst young persons of -leaving age and under twenty years, and, having regard to social, economic and financial considerations, to make recommendations as to the most practicable and desirable measures’ (p. 1). The commission examined the ‘training of young persons who have left school’ and in recommending ‘trade apprenticeships’ however the commission was critical of the implementation of the 1931 Apprenticeship Act and stated that ‘ The Act has, we understand, been found by experience to be difficult to operate successfully- only four trades are working it’ (p. 31) and the commission went a step further with their criticism and outlined the regulations of a new apprenticeship model as part of their recommendations. The recommendations outlined the structure, the governance, entrance rules, examinations and

payments for apprenticeships. This report was paving the way for the new Apprenticeship legislation that would be enacted in 1959.

The 1959 Apprenticeship Act describes its function: ‘An Act to make better provision for the regulation of apprenticeship in certain trades and for that purpose to establish a body to be known as An Cheard-Chomhairle (the Apprenticeship Board) under the auspices of the Department of Industry and Commerce, and to define its powers and duties, to repeal the Apprenticeship Act, 1931. The 1959 Apprenticeship Act was to correct all that the previous Act had not managed, and the new board would organise and govern the recruitment, training, education, examination and subsequently certification of apprentices. VECs had the remit to provide the education element of the courses for the apprentices. The Act of 1959 had not taken the opportunity to clarify the role of VECs. In examining the DoE Annual Report (Department of Education, 1959-60) under Vocational education subsection III Technical Education, the report describes wholetime technical education as lasting the ‘full school year’ and as ‘courses for trade apprentices in the army apprenticeship school in Co Kildare’ and courses in ‘hotel management at Shannon Airport’ all under the auspices of local VECs. The report continues with a report on ‘Day courses apprentices’ and reports as follows ‘These courses may be of two kinds: day release courses where the apprentices are allowed time off each week during normal working hours to attend technical school classes and block release courses where the time off is allowed as a continuous period of some portion of the year’ (p. 50). Interestingly the report refers to the schools as vocational schools. This is where a blurring of boundaries and the overlapping of provision would begin, and the vocational schools would continue to cater for state, semi-state and private industry apprentices.

Vocational/Technical Education 1947 to 1960

During what was known as the ‘Emergency’ (this was the state of emergency that existed in the state of Ireland during the Second World War), vocational education was maintained and reinforced as a system and saw the introduction of state exams for the sector. By 1947, a state exam called the ‘Group Certificate’ (1947–1991) was introduced for vocational education. This state examination was exclusive to the vocational schools and was introduced so that day students studying mostly practical subjects would reach a national standard of training and education and receive a national certificate. As a national certificate, it would lead to

employment, trades and jobs in industry; however, it did not allow students to access higher level education (Department of Education, 1946-47).

This 'Group Cert' was intended as an alternative to the existing secondary school provision and was popular as a gateway into the trades, training and apprenticeships. For a generation of students, usually from lower socio-economic backgrounds, it carried cache and gave access to work and blue-collar employment at entry level in industries and state organisations, e.g. forestry, fisheries and the ESB. The Group Cert allowed students, mainly from working class or small farming backgrounds, to access work and the labour market. In time it would allow students access to courses in Regional Technical Colleges. The introduction of the Group Cert was an important development for VECs, as they had a state certification for their students. The ESRI Report (ESRI, 2014, pp. 10-11), in describing this era states that the 1950s saw increasing criticism of vocational education, which centred on a number of reasons, in their view this was as a result of the vocational schools been viewed by society as taking the less academic students with the academic students attending the secondary schools. The vocational schools were viewed as having less qualified staff and limited numbers progressed to what we now refer to as higher education. (Coolahan, 1981) argues 'Irish social attitudes still tended to disparage manual and practical-type education and aspiring middle-class parents preferred the mores prestigious academic-type education which led to greater opportunities for further education and white-collar employment' (p. 103). Contrary to this Cooke (2009) argues that

The Vocational education system had survived well during the Emergency and by 1945, as the war was about to end, increased numbers of students were returning to the schools for both day Vocational and evening technical education. The War years showed the importance of technical education and the increase in technological invention, due to the War, increased the pace of technological activity in the world. The challenge now facing schools and the Vocational Education Committees was to meet the demands of reconstruction after the war and to adapt to the changed world of technical innovation

(Cooke, 2009, p. 292)

Economically, Ireland during the 1940s and into the 1950s had a poor economy, mainly agrarian, with mass emigration; 409,000 people emigrated from Ireland in the years 1950 to 1960 (Central Statistics Office, 1926-1991). The war years up to and including the early 1950s were not years of great change or development in education in Ireland. Successive ministers for education were unable to respond to the training and education needs of the country for a variety of reasons, but the major factor was a poor economy with little growth. A lack of finance

to support new educational initiatives and the influence of the Roman Catholic Church on education were all major factors during this era. [Ireland] still suffered from a shortage of private capital, it was still unable to develop any extensive range of competitive exports, it was still inhibited by the smallness and relative poverty of its domestic market. But in the 1950s, no more than in the 1930s, could these defects be separated from the most deep-seated problem of all – the condition of agriculture (Lyons, 1985).

In 1958 the Irish government published its first Programme for Economic Expansion covering the years 1959 to 1966 (Government of Ireland, 1958). This programme would impact on Irish society both at an economic and social level and is considered a historical milestone. The factors that led to this policy were that emigration had deprived the economy of a workforce to drive the economy forward, unemployment was high and living standards low and foreign trade was overly dependent on agriculture. Horgan (1997) notes that:

The economic indicators were certainly gloomy’ and ‘Between 1955 and 1957 Ireland was the only country in the western world where the total value of goods consumed had actually fallen. Between 1955 and 1958 two out of every five workers in the building industry lost their jobs. In 1957 unemployment had reached a record 78,000 and 54,000 men and women had emigrated
(Horgan, 1997, p. 176)

This government programme was the most important economic policy shift from protectionist policies to free market policies. Coolahan (1981) argues that ‘Educational change formed a part of significant changes of attitude which were occurring in Irish society generally. A notable landmark in this was the publication in 1958 of the Government White Paper on Economic Expansion which led to the first economic programme and changed attitudes to economic and industrial development’ (Government of Ireland, 1958, p. 131). On reviewing the government’s Programme for Economic Expansion as a primary source it stated that ‘the Programme should be read as an *outline* of the more important contributions, direct and indirect, which the Government propose to make to economic development in the years immediately ahead’ (p. 8). It examined agriculture, fisheries, forestry and forest products, industry and lastly capital cost and available resources. The section on industry (subsection on technical training) argued that ‘Special consideration will be given to the need for ensuring an adequate supply of personnel, with the requisite knowledge and skill, at all levels of industry. As the existing arrangement and training of

apprentices are unsatisfactory, new legislation has been introduced to replace the present apprenticeship legislation (p. 39). This is the only reference to education or training in the document as the Government perception at the time was the VECs were meeting the training needs of the country and Cooke (2009) * notes that;

As national economic development began to gain momentum, after 1958, the Vocational Schools and Colleges responded wholeheartedly to every request for skilled education and training provision for agriculture and industry. The Minister for Education, Mr. Jack Lynch T.D., had reiterated the special responsive democratic role of the VECs and this soon led to proposals to dispel the restrictions placed on the VEC system in 1930. There was no longer any tolerance of vested interests limiting the role of Vocational education

(Cooke, 2009, p. 381)

**Cooke, in reference to colleges above, is referring to teacher training colleges and the preparatory colleges students attended prior to gaining access to teacher training.*

New technology was developed during the war from the use of nylon, aeronautics and radar to name but a few. The world had entered a new era of technology, industry and manufacturing. Ireland, although neutral during the war, would find itself part of this new world order. Education in Ireland in the following decades including vocational education would be developed within the context of global influences.

Summary

Examination of strategy and policy development gives us dimensions of the local context, an insight into the complex experiences and evolution of the FET sector, during this early phase. The political influences and the socio-historical and political contexts whether localised or global are analysed. It is an examination of the relationship between the texts, policies and commentaries using CDA. CDA is suitable for critical policy analysis because it allows a detailed investigation of the relationship of language to other social processes (Taylor, 2004), and similarly, (Ball, 1990) outlines that in the context of policy analysis, an ability to deconstruct discourse is particularly important, as: ‘...discourses construct certain possibilities for thought. They order and combine words in particular ways and exclude or displace other combinations’ (Ball, 1990, p. 18). Furthermore, as suggested by (Hardy, et al., 2000) ‘Strategy discourse does not simply mirror social reality – it creates it’ (p. 1229). therefore, in the context

of the present study CDA is particularly relevant in examining historical policy documents, debates and legislation.

In order to investigate historical changes over a large period of time, the findings of the analysis were interpreted in relation to the wider social, economic and political conditions in which the texts were produced. To this end analysis is drawn from the literature of education history, public policy and general historical commentary. Understanding of the socio-political and historical context informs the interpretation of the data and generates a number of findings that are explored in the study. Rather than merely examining educational policy and strategy as a simple response to internal/ external economic, cultural and political forces, a political economic agenda is at play in shaping the trajectories of social change and thus the evolution of FET.

The establishment of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction in 1899 (when Ireland formed part of the British Empire) and the Vocational Education Act of 1930 were two milestones in the history of Irish education. They were the geneses of vocational/technical education and training, and an examination of these historical milestones is integral to understanding the structures within which FET developed. In analysing, and examining historical documents, debates and texts it is apparent that to establish the new systems, government built on the structures of the previous administration and incorporated the system initiated in the late 1800s as the bedrock of its plans. The socio-historical and political context of Ireland was one of a country in chaos, which had a poor economy, with many citizens living in poverty, with a high dependence on agriculture and mass emigration. Education and training development were planned within that context. The government of the day were determined to shape and develop a vocational education system and an apprenticeship system for the country. Legislation became the conduit and the foundation upon which the two separate sectors and sectoral divisions were established. Key pieces of legislation were passed during this era – the Vocational Education Act 1930, and the Apprenticeship Act (1931) (1959) Thus commenced a policy trajectory that would have implications over eight decades.

The Vocational Education Act 1930 (Department of Education , 1930) was for many decades the only legislation enacted in education and it incorporated adult, technical and vocational education. Organisational structures set up along county and city boundaries were the mainstay for the VEC structure, with VECs establishing vocational schools in most towns within their

boroughs and cities. These educational organisational structures were an important focus for trades and upskilling in their localities. The mode of connecting technical and vocational education to employment and economic requirements became and remained a feature of this branch of education and consequently an important feature of the VECs. The success of the VEC schemes was the fact that they provided education at local level linked to the educational and employment needs of an area and this local labour market and local educational knowledge would become part of the VEC bulwark. In many areas of the country, this emerged organically as a link between technical/vocational schools and local industry. The impact of the local education scheme and the provision of technical/vocational education at local level for second-level school students and provision for adults are important elements when examining how FET were established.

From the outset, apprenticeship training, vocational education and the training sector were all set up by the government of the day as separate entities. On examination of historical documents government policy discourse and debate of the day, highlight how the lines of demarcation were drawn up from the outset, and while the sectors overlapped and had shifting and ambiguous boundaries, they would ultimately remain separate for subsequent decades and create a complex landscape. This complexity was as a result of two separate government departments with their agencies providing the same educational and training provision to their local areas. This would add to the complexity of policy and legislative planning for successive governments and their officials. This separation per se and the ensuing development of these separate sectors would remain in place for decades and create silos of education and training within the Irish educational context.

During this era, however, apprenticeships did not become part of the structure of the VECs' main provision, but remained as a separate entity, catering for a variety of trades but not all trades and governed by the Department of Industry and Commerce. Apprenticeships during this era were not a success.

Examined is the role of the Christian Churches in Ireland and their influence on the development of education. Their dominance was historical, as they had provided land and buildings and their religious orders had initiated and developed schools. They would in time become the educators of the middle classes, with education aimed at students who would predominantly access university. The tension between church and state became a factor in the

state's development of vocational education, with ministers guaranteeing that vocational schools would not be in competition with the church run schools.

In the late 1950s, the Programme for Economic Expansion would be the impetus driving the economy forward and its vision and effects would be visible in the next decade. As part of its Economic Programme, the Irish government envisaged foreign investment as an important aspect of economic growth. This would open the Irish state not only on an economic front but also on an ideological front, offering governments and their officials' new ways of thinking and a lens through which to view education. Within a few decades, demarcations of governance, financial support and educational curricula were established and in time would be reinforced.

CHAPTER 4

The Second Phase: 1960s through to the 1980s

Introduction

Coolahan (1981) argues that ‘Compared with previous decades, the period 1960-80 witnessed a dramatic increase in government and public interest in education’ (p. 131). In a socio-historical and political context Ireland became conscious of itself as a state within a wider global community and found a new confidence as a country. Historical reports, legislation, texts and secondary commentary give an insight into how vocational education and training were viewed and developed during this era. These documents were selected because of their centrality as strategy and policy documents, and from a CDA perspective, they offer the opportunity to illustrate discursive developments within a development chain. A decade of transformation commenced and with it a paradigm shift in education and training policy. Based on analysis of key primary sources i.e. government department reports, and debates aligned with socio-political contexts focuses the investigation on why, during this phase, strategy and policy continued to divide vocational education, trade, and training and apprenticeship provision and argues how historically the demarcations of the separate sectors of vocational education and training were reinforced.

The 1960s to 1980s saw the modernisation of education in Ireland, with a deluge of reports, green papers, white papers and Acts, followed by restructuring. These published documents give a background context and provide knowledge of what was influencing and shaping education during this phase. The documents provide an important lens in analysing the developments that shaped the direction of FET. The rhetoric and focus of documents and texts would alter and begin to embrace external ideology and thinking on education. This era would witness a lot of change, upheaval and development in society and in turn in education and training. Ireland was experiencing the influence of global economic growth and expansion. The country experienced labour market growth, with unemployment decreasing. This era would witness the Irish governments shift away from highly protectionist policies in the 1960s and began to pursue export led strategy and growth (Considine & O Leary, 1999). During this era, the government reorganised the Health Boards, established the Regional Technical Colleges (RTCs), (under the governance of the VECs) and Raidió Teilifís Éireann (RTÉ), the national

television and radio station broadcaster, introduced child benefit and free second-level education. The government's Programme for Economic Expansion would influence all aspects of Irish society during this decade.

This chapter assesses the dynamic developments in education, the key legislation and the policy discourse on the developments that occurred. Analysis of vocational education in Ireland during these decades is a primary focus. Training during this phase was established as a separate and stand-alone state agency and the policy discourse and legislation are analysed. The reshaping, blurring and overlapping of boundaries between vocational schools and other second-level providers that occurred during this phase are also evaluated.

International Economic and Political Context

The Programme for Economic Expansion not only impacted on the economy but on Irish society and in the 1960s the Irish government's Programme for Economic Expansion created a vibrant and optimistic economy. Lyons (1985) on discussing the impact of the programme argues that:

In place of old orthodoxies and the old introspection, Ireland seemed at last to be moving towards participation in the world of the mid-twentieth century. The new emphasis on attracting foreign capital, developing a wider range of exports, modernising agriculture, were all designed to lift the country out of its nerveless dependence on external factors over which it had no control

(Lyons, 1985, p. 583)

In 1960 the Irish government made the decision to sign up to The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), thereby removing tariffs and opening up trade. In 1965 the government also signed the Anglo-Irish Free Trade Area Agreement (FTA) with the UK, ending all tariffs between Ireland and the UK and thereby moving from protectionist policies to free trade. Fitzgerald (2001) argues 'An FTA was chosen primarily because it was seen as a viable intermediate step in preparations for its ultimate aim, achieving a position of full European economic integration, but also because it would solve a more immediate economic problem as well, keeping Ireland a feasible trading entity' (p. 237).

As Ireland advanced as a young nation, outside influences were becoming a key factor in its development as an independent state. Ireland's membership of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) was a major step that had resounding influence on educational developments in the decades that followed. Ireland had links with the United Nations (UN) and published joint reports with the OECD (Garavan, et al., 1995), (Coolahan, 1981), (Lyons, 1985). In the 1970s Ireland joined the EEC and created an important link that would assist the state in finding a context at a global level and developing educational strategies in line with international research and standards. Murphy (1997) states 'Policy-makers however realised that the Irish economy could not survive in isolation and so were willing to attempt to gain entry to various trading blocs if these could provide a boost to the Irish economy' (p. 57). The final push and impetus for the Irish government's application to join the EEC came when it realised its nearest trading neighbour, Britain, had intentions of doing so.

Many external influences would find their way into policy discourse and strategies of the education sector in the decades to come. It is during this phase that funding streams from Europe became the stimulus for provision and policy and would have a major influence on the shaping of education in Ireland. Vocational/technical education was influenced by new funding streams underpinning the development of extra programmes in the VECs and the establishment of RTCs.

The Investment in Education Report 1965

From an historical educational perspective, the landmark report and the first major document during this phase on education in Ireland was the Investment in Education Report 1965 (Department of Education, 1965), a joint report between the DoE and the OECD. This therefore was not done in isolation; the publication of Investment in Education was published in co-operation with the OECD and this would have a profound effect on educational policy and the direction that education would take in Ireland in the coming decade. On consulting the report as a primary historical source, the terms of reference for the report were broad-scope, with a major analysis of the Irish education system including skilled manpower, educational facilities, future enrolments, curricula and resources to meet growth p. XXIX. Members of the steering committee were representatives from government departments – Education (Chair), Industry

and Commerce, Finance, and Agriculture and representatives from trade unions, industry, Bord Fáilte, the university sector and the Economic Research Institute p. XXX. This report outlines the failings of the education system at the time, and its publication heralded an era of change, whereby government was planning educational strategy and policy for the future of the state. The government had placed an important emphasis on analysing, assessing and reporting on the link between education and the economy. Part 1 of the report was a description of the existing system and presented a forecast of the numbers participating in education and the resources required for the years ahead. In part II an examination was made of the connection between the demand for persons in the labour force with various levels of education qualifications and the supply of such persons coming from the education sector. Part III was an examination of the efficiency of the educational system with reference to resources and finance.

Vocational Education and Training

On consulting the Investment in Education Report as a primary source for this study, it gave a very detailed description of the existing Vocational Education System, the schools and the education provided; ‘There are thirty eight vocational education committees...’ ; ‘the functions of the committees are to provide, or assist in the provision of, a system of continuation education and a system of technical education in its area..’ (Department of Education, 1965, p. 12). The report recognised the historical origins of vocational education in the earlier development of technical education ‘The impetus in the development of Technical education In Ireland dates from the establishment of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction in Ireland in 1899’ (Department of Education, 1965, p. 12). The report acknowledged that although there were three strands of education in vocational schools, it had only concentrated on some elements of education provision. The Investment in Education Report described the provision of vocational schools at the time in the following terms:

These (Vocational Schools) latter range from the provision of continuation courses for post-primary students through the varied field of technical education to adult education and even some general community services of an advisory character. Broadly, however, the activities of the vocational schools fall into two, or perhaps three parts. These are continuation education for young persons moving on from the national school. This is junior cycle post-primary education and technical education for apprentices and others in industry or preparing for employment. This is provided mainly at the second level with some third level courses in the colleges of technology. Adult education might perhaps be regarded as a third division, although it has a not inconsiderable technical and commercial content, which relates it closely to employment. In point of size and

consumption of resources, continuation education is the most significant activity of vocational schools.

(Department of Education, 1965, p. 282)

Perhaps a criticism of the report is that it limited its analysis of the vocational sector to the continuation cycle: 'We have, accordingly, limited our study almost exclusively to the continuation cycle. In the short term, of course, technical education is more relevant to economic growth and development. Regrettably, we were unable to apply appropriate analytical methods to this sector: time and problems of data collection effectively prevented this. Although restricted in coverage, technical education in the range of its activities, entry requirements and outputs is a highly diversified and complex field' DoE, (1965). Even at the outset of the 1960s, vocational education provision was viewed as complex and broad and it was difficult to capture the exact nature of what was being provided for students.

The following aspects identified in the report are specific to this study, in chapter four of the report the projected requirements and supply of teachers for vocational schools are considered and viewed as complicated 'as some categories are recruited from university graduates: others are trained by the Department; yet others are recruited, especially for technical posts, from professional and technical personnel and tradesmen' (p. 63), this is not unusual as the provision itself was viewed by this report as complicated. On financing the report highlighted the fact that the 'financing pattern of vocational schools differs from that of the other divisions. 'The bulk of their income is derived from public funds, the largest portion coming from central government and the remainder from local authorities' (p. 92). In chapter six of the report it examined 'the movement of pupils through and out of the education sector' (p. 109). Although Ireland had moved into a new decade and away from the economic bleakness of the 1950s, the report highlighted that vocational education was not progressive and students were disadvantaged and in relation to the vocational schools stated that 'The movement into other education is quite limited. This might be due among other things to institutional rigidity, specialised curricula etc. At present then a person who starts in a vocational school is very unlikely to enter another division or indeed, as we shall see, to reach the higher levels of technical education. Against that background it is unlikely that these schools attract their proper share of the better pupils and these handicaps must be borne in mind in any assessment of the

work of the vocational schools' (p. 133). The report also noted in relation to vocational schools that the main areas in which improvement might be sought were:

‘(III) The high rates of early leaving from vocational schools (continuation)

(IV) The apparently small proportion of continuation students (vocational schools) who reach third level courses’

(Department of Education, 1965, p. 176)

On examination of chapter fifteen of the report ‘Education and Economic Progress’ reads like a general monologue on economics, markets and education and the relationship between them. From a linguistic perspective it is worthy to note that that chapter fifteen critiqued how economists were discussing education in economic terms as ‘consumption’ ‘outputs’ ‘investment’ ‘input’ ‘economists were treating education like any other industry’ (p. 375). The report continued by arguing that some economists viewed education as ‘knowledge’ in its forms, including mass media (p. 376) and the report develops this argument by examining the relationship between ‘education and economic growth’ (p. 377). The report concluded that ‘conventional economic theory seems an inadequate basis for determining the pattern of educational activity’ (p. 386).

The only formal recommendation made by the report proposed the creation of an educational development unit designed to transform the Department into a development corporation. The report went on to state that ‘educational planning must be regarded as a continuous process which in its implementation must be open to revision and regular readaptation’ (p. 387). This was viewed by the report as an essential element in ‘that the aim here is to ensure that every decision concerning education can be informed by all relevant facts and by an understanding of the implications of these facts, not merely for the educational system but for the economy’ (p. 388). The report continued by stating that ‘We have been concerned to analyse the educational system in the context of the Irish economic development and with a clear awareness of the sociological significance of what the educational system does and does not do’ and so doing ‘to analyse the educational system with a view to helping towards decisions as to whether or not the human and material resources in Irish education are being employed in the most effective manner’ (p. 388).

The report evaluated the comparison between ‘manpower requirements’ and ‘the expected educational levels of the population. Such a comparison implies a ‘conversion’ of manpower requirements (expressed in terms of socio/economic groups) into educational terms—specifically, into the general level of educational qualifications ‘required’ for each occupational level’ (p. 197). In specifically evaluating ‘Technician Type’ courses offered in vocational schools and qualifications the report noted that:

Most of these courses are organised on a part-time basis. The examinations taken by students are mainly the Technical School Examinations (Technological) of the Department of Education and the examinations of the City and Guilds of London Institute. There are also more specialised examinations, of which the most important numerically seem to be the examinations of the Institute of Medical Laboratory Technologists.

(Department of Education, 1965, p. 212)

These examinations were provided in the following areas: mechanical engineering, motor-car engineering, electrical engineering, building, applied chemistry, flour-milling, radio service work and hairdressing. At elementary, intermediate and advanced stages, there were also examinations in commercial, domestic science and art subjects (p. 212). The report concluded on examining the manpower issues that ‘there may be a need on manpower grounds for providing more education and training, not only to persons in the educational sector, but also to those who are already in the labour force’ (p. 221).

This Investment in Education Report was a comprehensive and wide-ranging analysis of the Irish Education system scrutinised and examined by international standards. The report on examination of ‘manpower requirements’ ‘indicated that there would be scope for policies aimed at altering the qualificatory status of people leaving the educational sector’ (p. 315). The report noted that the ‘demand on the educational system may be thought of as two-fold, to cater for the numbers who seek education for any reason, and also to produce the qualified manpower required by an expanding economy’ (p. 315). In line with this, the report recommended the raising of the school leaving age, the report had also identified the students from semi and unskilled occupational groups as early school leavers; ‘An important aspect of the problem is the high percentage of pupils who ‘drop-out after a year or two in junior post-primary education’ (p. 316) and ‘To assess the feasibility of the second course of action – namely an attempt to reduce the ‘drop-out’ rate, it would be necessary to estimate what the response would be to various policy measures’ (p. 320).

Regarding apprenticeships, the Investment in Education Report (Department of Education, 1965) noted that:

In the field of technical education, an immediate and pressing problem is the provision of suitable courses for very small and scattered numbers of apprentices in certain trades. We understand that An Cheard-Chomhairle (The National Apprenticeship Board) are devising means of overcoming the problems involved, but similar difficulties exist in regard to technicians. In these areas also there are problems of training and qualification. There would seem to be a need for the establishment of nationally recognised certificates and diplomas and the strengthening and further development on a continuing basis of co-operation with industry.

(Department of Education, 1965, p. 282)

During this phase the Apprenticeship training had remained under the auspices of the Department of Industry and Commerce; therefore, this report did not go into detailed analysis of the apprenticeship system and acknowledged that its responsibility was with another government department. Likewise, the report referred to agricultural training:

It is appropriate to refer at this stage to the question of agricultural education. We were not able in the time at our disposal to examine this question in an analytical way but we had the benefit of discussion with officials of the Department of Agriculture on the crucial importance of this aspect of education in Irish conditions. Important questions here would seem to be at what stage and in what manner general education might best be attuned to the special needs of the agricultural community so that a firm basis might be provided for further technical education, and the development and strengthening of appropriate forms of technical education and training. There is clearly a fruitful field here for co-operation between the Departments of Education and Agriculture.

(Department of Education, 1965, p. 347)

This aspect of training was also referred to the appropriate government department and again it was omitted from evaluation and analysis. This illustrates the division of vocational education and training that had existed since the 1930s.

The Investment in Education Report was the first analytical piece of research that presented a large amount of statistical data on education in Ireland. Therefore, there can be little doubt but that the work of the OECD had a significant influence within all education sectors in Ireland (Conroy, 1998). This was the first comprehensive mapping and analysis of the education sector in Ireland. It also made recommendations and paved the way for further and future development

of education in Ireland for the decades that followed. Coolahan, (1981) stated that ‘The publication of Investment in Education caused a considerable stir in Irish education circles’ p. 168. The Investment in Education Report was a milestone in initiating the debate on the importance of education in Ireland. It provided a comprehensive analysis of the education system at all levels that predicted the future trends and resources required. It highlighted the inequalities that existed within the system. The report would create an impetus that would drive education policy discourse and strategy forward, however as it was not encompassing of all education provision and training in Ireland, it’s focus was narrow. This narrow focus would allow for policy development on a trajectory that would continue to keep aspects of education and training separate in the decades that followed. Clancy (1996) argues that the Lynch Report i.e. Investment in Education Report (Department of Education, 1965) signalled a strategic shift in paradigm: the older emphasis on education as a means of personal development being challenged if not replaced by a new emphasis on shaping an educational system to meet the now predictable needs of the labour market.

Free Secondary Education

The Investment in Education Report 1965 (Department of Education, 1965), emphasized education for the masses heretofore not experienced in Ireland. Education was no longer for the privileged classes but became a right for all; however, this was driven by both economic needs and that of equality. Coolahan (1981) notes that this in turn ‘led to the policy of the free education scheme introduced in 1967, which encouraged greater participation in post primary education, and writes that ‘coincident with the policy of increased participation was a changed conception of the appropriate form of post primary school’ (p. 134). These key changes in strategy and policy were to have a profound influence on the direction that vocational education would take in the decades that followed.

Hyland and Milne (1992) argue that ‘When Donogh O Malley, in his first speech as Minister for Education on 10th September 1966, announced to the National Union of Journalists that he proposed to introduce a scheme ‘whereby up to the completion of the Intermediate Certificate course, the opportunity for free post primary education will be available for all families’ there was widespread enthusiasm and excitement’ (p. 263). This key policy shift during this phase allowed students access secondary education when they completed their primary education.

Prior to this second-level education carried a fee. The poor could only access second-level education via scholarships. The landscape of education in the Ireland of the 1960s was laying down the structure and shape the sectors would take in the following decades and in turn would influence generations of students. Most importantly, free second-level education would form the bulwark of the secondary school system and free transport and additional accommodation would also follow (Seanad Eireann Debate, 1967).

Government Policy and Strategy

The VECs

During this era, successive Ministers for Education would introduce reports, Green Papers and legislation, and would establish education structures. It must be noted that during this phase the government began to take a more central role in managing and planning of education. From a historical perspective the 1960s appear to the observer as the most dynamic and important era of transformation in the Irish education system. Coolahan (1981) suggests that:

The period 1960–1980 was a remarkable one in the history of Irish education. The wide range of reports on so many aspects of educational provision reflected the amount of investigation and appraisal which was undertaken. The state adopted a much more active role in educational planning and many new institutions were established at second and third level

(Coolahan, 1981, p. 138)

Little would change in the structures of the VECs and how they were organised. From the 1960s and through the 1980s, the organisational structure of the VECs that was aligned along county and city boundaries would remain intact. The internal committee structures, with local councillors and a CEO at the helm, would remain as the governance structure of the VEC at organisational level (Cooke, 2009). Policy discourse, reports, committees, debates and green papers would suggest major changes for the VECs, and many Ministers for Education would propose these changes. Some of these strategies would be implemented, others were shelved, and proposed changes did not happen. The key ones are examined here for this study.

In 1973 the DoE proposed in a discussion document a broad system of county and regional structures for educational administration. The secretary to the DoE, Sean O'Connor, announced publicly to the Catholic Primary School Management Authority at their annual conference the proposal to establish nine regional councils that would manage all education in their locales

(Walshe, 1999). On examination of the 'Regionalisation Draft for Discussion' as a primary source this official document suggested the creation of 'Multi-county Committees' that would comprise teachers and school management (50 per cent) and elected representatives (50 per cent). It also suggested functions for these Committees (Department of Education, 1973). Although many consultation meetings took place between the Department of Education and seventeen separate education organisations, no agreement ever followed, and no regionalisation resulted. The timing of this proposal coincided with an international oil crisis.

The Government Programme for Action in Education 1984–1987 (Department of Education, 1984), was introduced by the Minister for Education Gemma Hussey TD (1982–86). The Programme for Action in Education 1984–87 started a debate on varying aspects of education, and although they were not implemented at the time, this document influenced thinking. Walsh (2011) argues that:

This was the first policy document of the modern era, in that it proposed to treat aspects of the system that have now become common currency in discussions about schooling in Ireland. The document's preamble emphasised the notion of 'access' for all and outlined the need to update the curriculum to make it 'relevant to the modern world . . . to developments in technology' and 'changing employment opportunities'. It introduced the notion of 'permanent and continuing education for all citizens' and 'equal opportunities for educational advancement', stressing that 'educational provision' should 'discriminate positively in favour of the educationally disadvantaged'

(Walsh, 2011, p. 58)

This form of rhetoric within government policy discourse introduced the concepts of curriculum as relevant for the modern world, the place of technology, access for students and equal opportunities. On consultation of the Government Programme as a primary source the Minister in the foreword stated that 'Never before have such detailed consultations been held with a wide range of educational interests'. Also stated was 'The Programme must be realistic and must take account of the financial and economic situation of the (p. 2). Of interest here is the juxtaposition of education and the economy as already reflected in the previous report Investment in Education. This policy discourse trajectory in the field of education would witness the juxta positioning of education with the needs of the economy.

The Minister for Education in the Government Programme viewed the VECs as the education organisation to run and manage many aspects of education for youth and adult education. Of

interest to this study is Chapter Five Second-Level Education where the document stated that ‘The Department of Education sees the VECs playing both a direct and co-ordinating role in this area of out-of-school educators, particularly in support of disadvantaged youth, in deprived areas, through the development of programmes such as Youth Leadership Courses, Summer Projects, second chance education for early school leavers and outdoor education programmes’ (p. 18). The Government Programme reported that ESF were funding several programmes for young people registered as job seekers. (The ESF was created in Europe in 1957 and is the main financial instrument of the EU (formerly the EEC) for helping people seeking employment through investment in education skills and employment support. It includes training for the unemployed, education and training for early school leavers, social inclusion programmes and employment programmes.) In addition, ESF is received for apprenticeship training jointly with AnCo and for training for the hotel and catering industry jointly with CERT’ (p. 38). Regional Technical Colleges and Technical Colleges were under the remit of the Department of Education, AnCo an Irish acronym for An Chomhairle Oiliuna, the Industrial Training Authority under the auspices of the Department of Labour and CERT was the State Training agency responsible for training the workforce for Hotel, Catering and Tourism Industry under the auspices of the Department of Industry, Commerce and Tourism. The Government Programme also highlighted that regulations on ESF was changing for young people under twenty-five and that they did not have to register as unemployed p.39. The Programme noted that ‘Responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the commitment in relation to the Social guarantee rests primarily with the Minister for Labour but the educational agencies have a substantial contribution to make in this area and it will be necessary to secure co-ordination of the activities of the agencies associated with the Department of Labour and Education’ (p. 39).

In 1985 Minister for Education Gemma Hussey TD also proposed abolition of the VECs and the establishment of thirteen Local Education Councils (LECs). In examination of Dáil debates as a primary historical source Minister Hussey outlined her vision in proposing local education councils ‘These would be councils for a specific geographical area. Side by side with the local education council there would be individual board of management for each post-primary school. There would be 13 local education committees based roughly on a combination of local authority areas’ (Dail Eireann Debate, 1987). These councils would exist throughout the country and their functions would include provision, planning and development of second-level education. These proposed councils would replace VECs. The recommendations were

published in a Green Paper on education structures, ‘Partners in Education Serving Community Needs’ (1985) (Department of Education, 1985). This Green Paper was badly timed by Minister Hussey, as teachers’ unions were engaged in industrial disputes over wages and the Minister’s proposals didn’t have traction. No action was ever taken on the Green Paper and it was never implemented. A government reshuffle saw Minister Hussey removed from the education portfolio and her replacement Minister Cooney did not pursue the green paper although Minister Hussey had cabinet backing (Coolahan, 2017). Consequently, the VEC structures remained intact. These recommendations of restructuring and the Green Paper itself were never implemented; the government was not able to finance changes and the restructuring costs. Hyland and Milne (1992) argues that:

The Green Paper received a mixed reception from the various educational interest groups throughout the country. The Council of Managers of catholic secondary schools were ‘disappointed and disenchanted with the proposals’ and they described the timing as ‘particularly inopportune’. Representatives of the Vocational Education Committees broadly supported the concept of regionalisation but urged county-based rather than a regional structure. The issuing of the Paper coincided with a series of financial cutbacks in education and the majority of the bodies who responded, reacted negatively to the proposals of the Green Paper. No action was taken to implement these proposals during the remainder of the term of office of the Coalition government, or subsequently.

(Hyland & Milne, 1992, p. 288)

Under Minister for Education Mary O Rourke’s (1987-91) brief tenure the Green paper of the previous opposition government was shelved (Cooke, 2009).

Government Youth Policy

Pre-employment Courses

Following the introduction of free secondary education that included vocational education in the 1960s, the numbers attending schools increased, and this increase continued into the 1970s (Coolahan, 1981). However, during the 1970s it was noted that early school leavers were not being catered for and the problem of students leaving school without formal training or education became an issue for government. Analysis a Dáil debate as a primary historical source states: There were 500,000 young people out of work in the EEC countries, as shown in statistics gathered in 1975. In 1977 the unemployment figure in Ireland was approximately 114,000 people. In that same year, 43,646 students from 900 schools would sit the Leaving Certificate examination. Of those, 10,000 would move on to higher level education. The other

approximately 33,000 had limited choices in a recession. In addition to these figures, 50,221 students would sit the Intermediate Certificate examination and 20,494 the Group Certificate. Approximately 8 per cent would leave school after these exams with no prospects. The figure for males was 16.4 per cent as against 7.6 per cent in the UK. For females, it was 13.1 per cent as against 7.8 per cent in the UK. In relation to under 20s unemployed in 1975, the figure of 21.5 per cent as against 9.1 per cent in the UK (Dáil Eireann Debate, 1977). These stark figures highlight the policies the government needed to introduce.

Formal education did not meet the needs of students who were academically challenged and of some students who were the first-generation attending school at this level. Government would note the gap in provision for this cohort of students (Hyland & Milne, 1992; European Commission, 2007). The two oil crises and recessions of the 1970s, spanning into the early 1980s, coupled with a rising youth population, saw youth unemployment increase and early school leavers become a national and European problem (Coolahan, 1981; European Commission, 2007).

In response to this the DoE introduced pre-employment courses in 1977 using ESF and gave this provision to the VECs and the programmes remained in place until 1983. They were introduced for a cohort of students who had returned to school, as they were unable to secure employment. These courses were on offer at vocational and comprehensive schools and were recognised by the government as part of the curricula of these schools (Hyland & Milne, 1992). The philosophy underpinning these programmes was to assist students in their transition from school to work. The curricula had three sections: general studies, work experience and technical modules. These programmes would prove popular and beneficial for students, bridging the gap between the world of school and the world of work. They were very much in keeping with the traditional vocational model of education found in vocational schools. These programmes were replaced in 1984 by the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme (VPTP), which this study will examine later.

In 1987 Minister Mary O'Rourke took the decision in principle to rationalise the VECs by amalgamating city and county VECs. Under this Minister's direction, the functions of the VEC were expanded as had been identified by Programme for Action in Education and included youth education and training. However, the strategy would include another Department in governing the provision. On examination of Dáil debates as a primary source the Minister

stated that ‘Youthreach is a joint programme with the Department of Labour, I have agreed that a senior representative of the VEC and of FAS should co-operate in the joint overall management of the programme at each local level’ (Dail Eireann, 1988). In 1988 the Minister established Youthreach under the auspices of the VECs, in partnership with the Department of Labour; this initiative targeted young people aged fifteen to eighteen and re-engaged them with education and training. This group had been identified in both previous reports Investment in Education and in the Government Programme. Youthreach centres were separate to formal secondary school and were established across the country in disadvantaged areas. In 1980, 9 per cent of students left second-level education without any qualifications (pre-Junior Certificate), while 31 per cent left after completing the Intermediate Certificate examination (ESRI, 2010). Also, during this phase, the Minister established the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) under the auspices of the VECs. This scheme was introduced with the objective of providing second-chance education and training opportunities for unemployed adults over the age of 21 and in receipt of unemployment payments. If eligible and accepted onto the scheme, students continued to get full social welfare entitlements, and course fees, books and some lunch and travel expenses were paid. Youthreach and VTOS would span across two government Departments, the Department of Education and The Department of Labour, and both managed by the VEC.

The Vocational Preparation and Training Programmes (VPTP)

In the 1980s, pre-employment courses were replaced by a new project that was introduced and funded from Europe – the Vocational Preparation and Training Programme (VPTP). Vocational, community and comprehensive schools began meeting the needs of this cohort of students by providing what were called ‘pre-employment’ courses aimed at early school leavers. Alternative education programmes were required to engage these young people, who might otherwise ultimately become disengaged from formal education. This policy of providing education for early school leavers would continue into the following decades and was funded centrally by government drawing down funds from Europe. The establishment of these alternative programmes would initially sit alongside the traditional Leaving Certificate in schools. Initially, the funding for these programmes came from Europe. The VPTP was introduced at an opportune time and would provide within the vocational schools an extra-curricular arm for learners to pursue. It became apparent that the Junior Certificate and Leaving

Certificate were not suitable for all learners in the sector and that an alternative was well overdue.

In Europe in the early 1980s, the concern to tackle widespread youth unemployment led to the funding of the Social Guarantee. As vocational schools appeared to have cohorts of students within this category, many schools availed of the European funding to provide alternative courses to that of the Leaving Certificate and introduced the VPTP at Level 1, commonly referred to as (VPTP1). For those who had completed their Leaving Certificate, vocational schools introduced the VPTP Level 2, with this latter qualification called a Post Leaving Certificate Programme, with courses commonly referred to as post Leaving Certificate courses or PLCs. The aim of these programmes was to provide a full-time, one- or two-year programme involving basic training and/or work experience to prepare early school leavers who had no qualifications for entry to an occupation. This was to be achieved by increased finance from the ESF.

The DoE had identified two distinct groups of learners that would benefit from VPTP, and according to the department circular, Section 2.2: There are broadly two groups of young people needing special attention. Firstly, there are those who drop out of school on completion of compulsory schooling and who have inadequate or no qualifications. Secondly there are those who continue at school but whose programme of study does not contain adequate vocational preparation. Section 4 of the circular states that: ‘Vocational Preparation are intended for young people of 15–18 years who, having completed their compulsory education, desire to prepare and equip themselves for employment (including especially the two groups described in 2.2 above’ (Department of Education Circular, 1984). These new funding initiatives were a key feature in structuring new programmes within this sector. VPTPs had their own separate curricula and the provision between the programmes did not overlap. Vocational schools, with their tradition and culture of technical/vocational education linked to industry and local employment, were in a prime position to embrace and promote these new programmes. As these programmes were open to all schools, many secondary, comprehensive and community schools offered them too as courses for their own students.

The new programmes were embraced by management and teaching staff at ground level, particularly in vocational schools. These programmes were introduced to meet a requirement within many schools for the educational and training needs of groups of students for whom the

Leaving Certificate was irrelevant. Programmes were developed to meet the needs of learners at school level. VPTP1 was the precursor to the Leaving Certificate Vocational Preparation (LCVP) and Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA), later variations and adaptations of the traditional academic orientated Leaving Certificate. The VPTP2, again a programme embraced and developed by staff in vocational schools, was one that gave scope to meet varying vocational requirements for students. It led to the provision of a vast array of vocational qualifications and was later referred to as Post Leaving Certificate (PLC). ‘In VPTP2 there is a greater emphasis on the development of vocational skills and work experience. In 1991/92 almost 6,000 students took VPTP1 and 16,000 completed VPTP2’ (Garavan, et al., 1995), and these programmes would shape and establish a new area in education.

Curricular boundaries of vocational schools and other second-level schools become increasingly blurred

As vocational/technical education began to shift during this era, so did the boundaries of the curriculum. This was in line with the policy of raising the school leaving age to sixteen. Coolahan (1981) contends ‘the policy now adopted was one of eroding the academic/technical division by raising the status of the vocational schools and encouraging a more comprehensive-type curriculum in both vocational and secondary schools’ (p. 134). The vocational school curriculum had shifted from wholly vocational/technical subjects to a situation where academic subjects were also introduced and offered as part of the curriculum. This policy shift was breaking new ground for the government, and vocational schools could offer an academic curriculum. Vocational education was meeting the labour market skills required for the Irish economy and became all encompassing, managing second-level education, adult education, traveller education, literacy programmes and back-to-education initiatives. Coolahan argues that ‘A highly influential factor here was the pressure for a closer alignment of school curricula with the needs of a more industrialised economy’ (p. 135)

By 1960, perusal of the DoE annual reports as a primary historical text, give an account of all aspects of education and on examination as a primary source it outlines the provision offered in the vocational education section:

Day courses

- Whole-time Continuation Education
- Continuation Education under Part V of the Act

- Whole-time Technical Education
- Technical Education for Apprentices
- Miscellaneous
- Evening Courses
- Technical Education and Miscellaneous
- Teacher Training Courses
- Miscellaneous

(Department of Education, 1960, p. 45)

In the report whole-time day courses were essentially described as post primary courses that included maths, Irish and science as well as practical subjects – manual training, rural science, domestic science, commerce (general) and commerce (secretarial) (pp. 47-48). Continuation under Part V of the VEC Act required that all young persons between the ages of fourteen and sixteen years who were not in full-time attendance at school should attend a compulsory course of instruction provided by a vocational education committee one day per week for thirty-six weeks in the year. These programmes were in operation in Cork, Limerick and Galway (p. 49). Whole-time Technical referred to the full-year whole-time courses for trade apprentices, e.g. the Army Apprentice School in Co. Kildare and the courses on hotel management in Shannon Airport. There were two types of day courses for apprentices: day release courses, which consisted of time off each week during the normal working week for apprentices to attend the vocational school; and block release, a continuous period for some portion of the year to attend the classes in the vocational school (p. 50).

The secondary school sector up to this era was a binary system, with the secondary schools offering an academic curriculum and vocational schools offering technical and trades training. On examination of DoE annual reports as a primary historical source during this phase the following was gleaned: The curriculum in the vocational schools had an emphasis on practical training in preparation for employment in the trades. The vocational and the secondary schools had their curriculum underpinned by the state examinations structure. The secondary schools had two state examinations – the Intermediate Certificate (1925 to 1991), taken after three years of study, and the Leaving Certificate, taken on completion of the secondary school cycle. These exams and their linked curricula were not available for students studying at vocational schools. Students at vocational schools studied for two years and sat the Group Certificate examination (1947 to 1991). In turn, this exam was not available to students studying in secondary schools.

In 1992 the Junior Certificate was introduced for all secondary and vocational schools and subsequently replaced the Intermediate Certificate and the Group Certificate.

At Intermediate Certificate level, there were twenty-six subjects in total to choose from and for the senior cycle Leaving Certificate there were thirty-three subjects. In 1969 metalwork was added as a subject to the Intermediate list of subjects. In 1971 the Leaving Certificate would include subjects that were traditionally taught in vocational schools; these included building construction, business organisation, engineering workshop, accounting and home economics. The junior cycle Intermediate Certificate, although available in both secondary and vocational schools, had different subject combinations on offer. The regulations for secondary schools stipulated four compulsory subjects – Irish, English, mathematics and history and geography combined. However, in vocational and comprehensive schools, students were allowed to substitute another subject for the combined history and geography. The curriculum of the Group Certificate consisted of Irish, English and civics, with a choice of one more from the following list of subjects on offer – commerce (general or secretarial), domestic science, manual training (woodwork, metalwork, mechanical drawing and art), rural science, German, Spanish, Italian, history and geography. Secondary schools began to offer traditional technical/vocational subjects and vocational schools academic ones, within the parameters described above, in line with DoE guidelines.

At an organisational level, secondary schools and vocational schools would in certain localities merge to form new entities called community schools and comprehensive schools. These schools were run by boards of management, with community schools having VEC representation on their boards of management. Comprehensive schools were planned by government for localities where either vocational or secondary schools did not exist. The building of comprehensive schools was not planned as a nationwide strategy and three in total opened in 1966 (Coolahan, 1981). In other towns and cities, secondary schools and vocational schools continued to coexist. These new community and comprehensive schools would form part of the school system that would provide comprehensive curricula that offered academic and vocational subjects and provided for all students in their catchment area. Like the vocational schools, these schools were coeducational, whereas the traditional secondary schools were predominately single sex (Coolahan, 1981). During this era, the boundaries between the varying school providers, community schools, secondary schools, comprehensive schools and vocational schools, were reshaped and began to blur. This blurring was found in

the curricula offered in these schools and in the reshaping and amalgamation of the schools at organisational level. It must be acknowledged that the majority of these schools offered a blend of traditional vocational and academic subjects as part of their curricula. At school organisational and curricular level, the education offered in these schools was similar. Conroy (1998) states that ‘The Government had developed a greater appreciation of the strategic importance of education in the planning of long-term public policy and as a result was becoming more interventionist in attempting to become the dominant partner within the education sphere’ (p. 5). This central role played by government would continue, with successive governments implementing and legislating for the sectors. Policy and legislation would shape the sector for the following decades. The influences of the planning during these decades would have resonance for the decades that followed.

National Policy on Adult Education

During this phase, an important development for VECs was the establishment in 1969 of AONTAS – the National Association of Adult Education. Coolahan (1981) stated that ‘It was an advisory and consultative body for the promotion and development of adult education as well as a general reference and promotional agency in the field of adult education’ (p. 274). This organisation gave credibility to the provision of adult education within VECs and placed emphasis on the VECs as the leading organisations in adult education in their geographical areas. AONTAS would also spearhead and influence many changes by advocating for the adult learner. The government also commissioned a report on adult education ‘National Adult Education Survey, Interim Report, 1973 commonly referred to as the Murphy Report (Murphy, 1973), and an interim report in 1970 called for the formation of a new section in the DoE to govern and finance adult education.

Analysis of the Murphy report 1973 as a primary historical source outlines the terms of reference: ‘to carry out a Survey of the needs of the community in the matter of Adult Education and to indicate the type of permanent organisation to be set up, in order to serve those needs’ (p. 7). The report noted the international ideological context of their survey ‘Any report on Adult Education must take into account the concept of ‘education permanente’ or lifelong education which is now becoming widely accepted on the Continent of Europe, in Great Britain, and in the United States’ (p. 11). The report also highlighted the fractured and

disjointed provision of adult education within an Irish context ‘we are well aware of the overlapping and lack of real co-operation amongst most of the services providing adult education in one form or another’ (p. 47). The report uses a plethora of adjectives in critically analysing the landscape of adult education at the time ‘We have observed petty jealousy and petty selfishness side by side with dedication and enthusiasm, and we blame Government Departments at the top for this state of affairs’ (p. 47). The report set out the following bodies that contributed to adult education service to the community -

Department of Education/Department of Agriculture and Fisheries/Department of Defence/
Department of Health/ Department of Labour/ Department of Local Government/ Department
of Social Welfare/ Vocational Education Committees/County Committees of
Agriculture/Radio and TV/Public Libraries/ Local Health Authorities/ The Churches/Voluntary
and Welfare Organisations/Trade Unions/Farming Organisations/Employers’ Organisations/
Sports Bodies e.g. G.A.A/Industry and Business in general/Successful people within areas or
groups/ Universities

(Murphy, 1973, p. 48)

This report was explicit in critiquing the government of the day on their absence of policy discourse, strategic planning and the disjointed landscape of adult education provision in Ireland. The report went on to reiterate that ‘co-ordination will be necessary’ and ‘co-ordination does not mean control’ and ‘for the sake of the country’s welfare’, ‘all those agencies named above’, and any others who availed of taxpayers money were asked to accept that ‘co-ordination is necessary’ and to accept the recommendations the report would make (p. 48). The Murphy report gave a very important analysis of the overlapping and fragmented landscape of adult education provision in Ireland.

The recommendations set out by the report and of interest to this study were at local level the ‘appointment of a County Officer’ answering to local councils of adult education and ‘for such an officer to be employed by the Vocational Education Committees’ (p. 48). Interestingly this officer is referred to in the report as ‘Mr Adult Education’ and ‘his function’ would be to coordinate adult education for ‘his’ county or area (p. 48). This use of the male gender was very much in keeping with the discursive language of official texts of the time. The report also recommended at national level ‘that there be established by the Government a permanent

Council of Adult Education’ and that governments departments would be represented on this council. The National Association of Education (AONTAS) was recognised by the report as having ‘an essential and important function in monitoring and auditing the performance of adult education programmes throughout the country, and in providing information to its members and the public at large’ (p. 49). The report also stated that ‘Research in Adult Education has been neglected in Ireland’ and recommended that ‘the Council of Adult Education be responsible for allocating research projects and money’ (p. 50).

The organisational structures recommended by the Murphy report weren’t implemented, however a recognition of the place of adult education in socio-political terms was emerging. The DoE and the then Minister for Education in 1973 appointed adult education officers (AEOs) within each VEC, who would oversee adult education in their VEC areas. As with many aspects of Irish educational thinking, restructuring and policy, the Murphy Report was influenced by Ireland’s membership of the EEC and by the education philosophy and thinking during this era. The Murphy Report proposed the development of structures that would promote the principle of lifelong learning.

In 1980 AONTAS developed a policy document, A Philosophy for Action in Irish Adult Education, and this would become the precursor to a Green Paper and subsequently a White Paper on adult education. The debate on adult education and lifelong learning at government level had commenced. By 1984 all VECs had a subcommittee with responsibility for adult education and AEOs to lead adult education provision.

Training

The Training Council and the Training Authority

Structure and Function of Training

An Chomhairle Oiliúna (the training council and training authority), commonly referred to by its Irish acronym as ‘AnCO’ (1967–86) was established, managed as an executive agency and grant funded by the Department of Labour and by the ESF and was legislated for under the Industrial Training Act 1967 (Department of Labour, 1967). In examining the Act as a primary historical source, it outlined the main objectives as:

An Act to make better provision for industrial and commercial training and for that purpose to establish a body to be known as an Chomhairle Oiliúna and to define its powers and duties, to provide for the imposition by an Chomhairle Oiliúna of levies for the promotion of industrial and commercial training, to repeal the Apprenticeship Act, 1959, and to provide for other matters connected with the matters aforesaid

(Department of Labour, 1967)

The Industrial Training Act of 1967 replaced and subsumed all the work of the previous apprenticeship board. This Act revoked the 1959 Apprenticeship Act, and the activities of an Cheard Chomhairle were absorbed into AnCO, with apprenticeship becoming a responsibility of that agency – the new training authority. Incidentally, the members of the previous apprenticeship board became members of the newly formed semi-state board of AnCO (Department of Industry and Commerce, 1965). AnCO was the main organisation in charge of training, training provision and training functions. AnCO became a byword for training, retraining and a one-stop shop for the unemployed. Ireland received direct funding from the EEC to support the retraining and training of the targeted unemployed. This became a major factor of social funding during the recession in the 1970s; the newly unemployed were targeted and year-on-year basis funding from Europe was to increase incrementally.

Apprenticeship was one facet of the much broader interest AnCO had in training. The council of AnCO governed, promoted and provided training for industry and commerce. This council was made up of representatives from employer organisations, trade unions, the educational sector and the Minister for Labour. It was appointed by the Minister for Labour and had responsibility for directing training policy in three main areas: training within industry, training centres and instruction training, and apprenticeship training (Department of Labour, 1967). AnCO administered training for seven trade groups: construction, engineering, electrical, motor industry, furniture, printing and dental technology (Garavan, et al., 1995). Traditionally, off-the-job apprenticeship education had taken place in vocational schools, with a block release system. In some areas of the country this would continue; in others training centres were opened and, as Regional Technical Colleges were established, off-the-job training would take place in them also. One-stop offices and training centres were established in the large towns across the country and there were fifteen centres in total (AnCO The Industrial Training Authority, 1970). Parallel to the establishment of AnCO, VECs continued their provision of technical/vocational education in their second-level schools and their provision of education for adults in the community and in the RTCs (Cooke, 2009).

AnCO council had decided an advisory curriculum committee under the joint auspices of AnCO and the Department of Education. Representatives of employers, trade unions and educational and training interests would formulate the syllabi of training and education and approve detailed curricula for each craft. A unit was established within AnCO to coordinate this with participation from the Department of Education, with a remit to set national standards of training and educational curricula for apprenticeships. The Minister for Education would approve the use of institutions under the department's control. AnCO were obliged under the Industrial Training Act 1967 to consult with the Department of Education for educational and other qualifications for entry to apprenticeships (Department of Labour, 1967). AnCO were to work closely with the VECs. This co-operation was historical and the theoretical and educational aspect of apprenticeship training had been provided by the vocational schools and/or the RTCs. Training occurring within a VEC context was dependent on whether an area had an AnCO training centre. This varied from one geographical area to another (Cooke, 2009). Examination of AnCo Annual Reports as a primary historical source, they report that on-the-job training remained a main feature of apprenticeship training, with the education element taking place in AnCO centres or at VEC centres/schools. Apprenticeships extended over four years and the onus was on the individuals taking an apprenticeship to source a company or industry to give them a place. The apprenticeship sector would remain the same in the following decades, with little change and without development. Hundreds of students going through the system during these decades were well trained and educated for their trades (AnCO The Industrial Training Authority, 1970).

Criticism was levied at AnCO on many levels by other agencies and organisations, particularly during the economic conditions of an oil crisis in the 1970s. These included scarcity of funding, duplication of functions, doubt about the quality of training as opposed to the numbers trained and an over emphasis on paperwork. AnCO access to ESF funding was also criticised by the IVEA as being too costly (Cooke, 2009). In addition, AnCO involvement in youth employment and their use of external consultants, costing an average of one million annually, gave rise for concerns. Agencies publicly critical of AnCO included the IVEA, the Irish Management Institute (IMI) and the Institute of Public Administration (IPA). Criticism also came from educational and training professionals (Garavan, et al., 1995).

The National Manpower Service (NMS)

In 1971, the National Manpower Service (NMS), was set up as an agency under the Department of Labour as a one-stop-shop for job seekers to get information about employment opportunities and vacancies. The NMS had two key functions, provision of work / job placement and occupational guidance service and the administration of a number of employment schemes, for example, work experience programmes, employer allowance scheme, and the social employment scheme. The organisation by 1986 had forty-four offices throughout the country (Garavan, et al., 1995). The manpower offices and AnCO training centres worked in unison under the auspices of the Department of Labour until such time as they were taken over by FÁS. Also subsumed under the FÁS umbrella was the Youth Employment Agency, which was created in 1981 in response to growing youth unemployment but was viewed as another agency targeting the same clients as AnCO, the VECs and the NMS.

An Foras Áiseanna Saothair (FÁS): Irish Training and Employment Authority

FÁS commonly referred to by its Irish acronym, was established as a response to the criticism of the activities of AnCO as highlighted above. The Department had reviewed all agencies involved in manpower policy and, following its recommendations, the government had decided to streamline and reform the training sector. The government had come under pressure from different stakeholders, industry, unions, employers and the general public over the cost of AnCO to the state and the amount of monies spent on private consultancies and reports (Garavan, et al., 1995). The Department of Labour published a White Paper – Manpower Policy in 1986 (Department of Labour, 1986). Analysis of the White Paper on Manpower Policy 1986 as a primary historical text state:

The purpose of the White Paper is to articulate now, in a coherent way, Government policies to improve the effectiveness of the labour force and to promote equity in the labour market. The White Paper also outlines our proposed organisational arrangements to achieve the objectives at minimum cost

(Department of Labour, 1986, p. 5)

This White Paper also outlines what the policy entails; the development of Manpower policy, the objectives of the programmes and services, the complementary roles of education and manpower policies in transition from school to working life, training, labour market measures, placement and guidance functions, organisational arrangements, and finance and funding (Department of Labour, 1986). Consequently, The Labour Services Act (1987) was enacted by the (Department of Labour, 1987).

In 1988 FÁS replaced AnCO and took over the functions of the manpower services as the government training authority. The Labour Services Act 1987 set out the principal functions of the agency and also provided that the Minister for Labour could confer such additional functions on it as the minister saw fit. On examination of the Act as a primary historical source it states:

An Act to make further provision in relation to the provision of training and re-training for employment, the provision of work experience and the establishment of employment schemes and job placement services, for those and other purposes to provide for the establishment of a body to be known as An Foras Áiseanna Saothair and to define its functions, to provide for the dissolution of An Chomhairle Oiliúna and the Youth Employment Agency and the winding up of the National Manpower Service of the Minister for Labour and the transfer of their functions to An Foras Áiseanna Saothair and to provide for connected matters

(Department of Labour, 1987)

FÁS operated under the aegis of the Department of Labour, and the role of the department in overseeing the activities of FÁS was also defined in the Act. FÁS became the chief state agency in Ireland with responsibility for those seeking work and was run by a board appointed by the Minister for Labour. FÁS was recognised as the leading exponent of training in the state and from 1988 had a statutory obligation to provide training. The establishment of AnCO, followed by FÁS, reinforced the boundaries between education and training. FÁS provided training for the unemployed and job seekers in its training centres and on-the-job programmes. The courses provided by contracted external providers of training, either state or private. However, not all training and education for the unemployed would remain under the remit of FÁS, and strands of provision for the unemployed would emerge under the remit of the VECs. As both VEC and FÁS evolved and developed, there were similarities and differences, and the boundaries of provision were blurring. However, the language used to describe this provision would be the defining factor of the VECs and FÁS, with VECs offering vocational education, adult education and further education and FÁS offering upskilling and training. In time, both would

offer the same qualifications, organised under different funding strategies and separate government departments. The vocabulary for both VECs and FÁS remained distinct as the former had an education focus and the later training.

On consultation of the FÁS Annual Report 1991, (FAS, 1991), it states:

The Principal functions of FÁS, as set out in the Labour Service Act 1987, to provide

- Training and retraining
- Employment schemes
- Placement and guidance services
- Assistance to community groups and workers' co-operatives towards the creation of jobs
- Assistance to persons seeking employment elsewhere in the European Community
- Consultancy and manpower related services, on a commercial basis outside the State

(FAS, 1991, p. 8)

By 2009 the language and the strategy were changing on consultation of the FÁS annual report of 2009 the eight high priority goals were described as follows

Goal 1: Entry to the Labour Market

Goal 2: Workforce Development

Goal 3: Labour Market Policy

Goal 4: National Human Resource and Skills Development

Goal 5: Service Excellence

Goal 6: Social Inclusion, Equality and Diversity

Goal 7: Organisational Excellence

Goal 8: Communications and Marketing

(FAS, 2009, p. 10)

In examining the language, particularly the FÁS goals in 2009 were very different from the discourse in 1991 as described above, by 2009 policy, quality and equality had become part of the training lexicon. Interestingly neither in 1991 and 2009 neither had apprenticeships to the fore. In describing their functions as an agency, FÁS (in annual reports) (FAS, 1992) (FAS,

1991) (FAS, 2009), used the following vocabulary: training and retraining, leading state agency for training, meeting labour market needs, upskilling, meeting the needs of unemployed and jobseekers, social inclusion, and apprenticeships. ‘Training’ was always to the fore when FÁS was describing the organisation and its functions.

Overview of Other Training Governed by Other Government Departments

Under the aegis of different government departments, training was organised and structured for their specific sectors. These included tourism, agriculture, defence, fisheries and forestry. During this phase, government departments structures continued training for their particular sectors. Other major bodies involved in the delivery of vocational education and training in CERT, (now Fáilte Ireland). This statutory body was and is responsible for training and recruitment in the tourism and hospitality industry and was established in 1963, under the auspices of the Minister for Labour. Like AnCO, CERT was funded by the Department of Labour at national level and sourced funding from the ESF. This training was provided across the country in partnership with VECs and provided training in all aspects of hotel work: management, reception, housekeeping, food sciences/chef, bar, and tourist guides (Garavan, et al., 1995).

In 1980 the Council for Development in Agriculture (ACOT) was established to govern, manage and advise on educational courses in agriculture. ACOT was under the remit of the Department of Agriculture. This council replaced the county committees in agriculture. ACOT governed and managed eleven agricultural colleges and six home economics training colleges (Coolahan, 1981). Also available during this era were farm apprenticeships, which consisted of one year in agricultural college and four years’ practical training. However, in 1987 agricultural education outside of the universities transferred to the Department of Education. This apprenticeship was under the auspices of the Farm Apprenticeship Board. It must be noted here that this was a separate board from that of AnCO.

Other government departments providing training to their own sectors included the Department of Fisheries and Forestry, which provided course theory and practical experience classes for students. On examination of an annual ‘Report of The Minister for Fisheries and Forestry’ on the Forest and Wildlife Service 1982 as a primary source (Forest and Wildlife Service, 1982), Chapter 6 Education and Training reports the following: Education: Public Education and

Information/Education of Forest and Wildlife Staff and on Training: Pre-entry training/Forest and Wildlife staff training and development (pp. 33-34), and this is the remit of said department. The Department of Defence provided apprenticeship training, the army school of music training and air corps training.

Although AnCO and in turn FÁS were legislated as the main training organisations in Ireland, they did not have responsibility for all training as outlined above. In later decades, these boundaries of training would overlap with provision provided by VECs and FÁS, and in turn they would overlap. This remit by government departments has remained a feature of training provision and funding in Ireland. Specific sectors had their own training, education centres and structures and were governed and funded by their own government departments. This is a legacy that has featured in training and the education structures in Ireland.

The Emergence of Regional Technical Colleges

During this phase, the planning and opening of the RTCs commenced as a major government initiative to support technical training. This was in response to the publication of the Investment in Education Report 1965 (Department of Education, 1965). In 1965 planning for four RTCs was announced by then Minister for Education, George Colley. It was under the tenure of a new Minister for Education, Donagh O'Malley, a decision to build eight RTCs was made. The following locations were identified: Athlone, Cork, Carlow, Dundalk, Galway, Sligo and Waterford. One in Letterkenny, Co. Donegal was also considered. Between 1969 and 1979, all these colleges would open their doors, and in 1979 a technological college in Tralee was promoted to RTC status (Coolahan, 2017).

Consultation of the Report to the Minister for Education on Regional Technical Colleges (Steering Committee on Technical Education, 1969) as a primary historical text, presented by the Steering Committee on Technical Education it sets out the role and functions of the RTCs. The terms of reference for the committee were 'To advise the Minister generally on technical education... to provide the Department of Education Building Consortium with a brief for technical colleges ... and that their brief will harmonise with any future thinking on third level technical education' (p. 5). With regards to function:

the environment for Irish industry will be changed radically by free trade conditions with Great Britain and by probable entry to the Common Market. If the demand for needed skills does not arise naturally, it must be stimulated artificially. We feel that regional Technical Colleges will provide one of the answers to this problem

(Steering Committee on Technical Education, 1969, p. 7)

The government's steering committee described the function of the RTCs as that of educating students for trade and industry in a broad spectrum of occupations that included craft, engineering, science, commerce and linguistics. The point was made that the more immediate concern of the RTCs was to fill industry gaps, particularly in the technician field. The committee also noted that 'The Regional Technical Colleges are in an area which spans both second and third level education and also covers adult education and training' (p. 29). In discussing the role of the RTCs, in their review of the curriculum, the steering committee establishing the RTCs discussed the range and levels of courses and agreed these with the Department officials (Steering Committee on Technical Education, 1969). They also outlined that RTCs would offer the following programmes: a Leaving Certificate; junior and senior trades certificates; apprenticeship programmes; technician qualifications; and retraining programmes for adults in partnership with AnCO (Steering Committee on Technical Education, 1969, p. 9).

It was during the decade of the 1960s that VECs were encouraged and provided with building grants from the DoE to build RTCs, and in 1970 the first RTC opened in Carlow, under the auspices of the local VEC. The government of the day was responding to a gap in education as identified in the OECD report. Government described it at the time as the 'missing rung' in education. This 'missing rung' was the gap the RTCs would fill in the educational ladder for technical vocational students, as these colleges would provide the progression to a higher level of education in technical/vocational areas (Cooke, 2009). The programmes offered in the RTCs were supported by the establishment of the National Council for Educational Awards (NCEA) in 1972, and by 1974 a proposal for the first RTC-based degree was submitted for approval (Coolahan, 1981). RTCs were governed by boards of management, which were subcommittees of the local VECs. The establishment of RTCs legitimised vocational and technical education to higher level, but on the other hand it created a blurring of boundaries whereby RTCs were also offering apprenticeship training alongside vocational schools either in competition with or on behalf of FÁS.

Summary

This chapter has shown how, as Ireland entered a new stage in history and worked within a global context, it became apparent that planning FET strategy, policy discourse and strategy had become even more complex. Coolahan (1990) asserts that ‘factors in modern Irish history such as the colonial past, the religious affiliations of the population, the cultural traditions of the people, the economic structure and the goals set for education have all shaped the unusual, interesting and complex structure of the present-day Irish education system’ (p. 141). The educational debate and discourse during these decades were triggered by international politics and international reviews and emerged as part of the rhetoric and vocabulary in the documents, texts, debates and secondary commentary evaluated and examined.

The OECD reports, EU funding, and EU educational strategies would impact on the ideology and policy discourse in Ireland. These dynamic developments and changes were framed within the context of economic development and Ireland’s repositioning and links with European and global organisations as it began to modernise and emerge as an open economy. This era saw the emergence of changing ideological platforms (Ball, 1997). On a national level, Ireland became part of a wider global community when it joined the EEC and was guided and influenced by European strategy and policies. The DoE policy discourse with EU funding as an impetus would drive many educational initiatives and developments in the decades that followed. The philosophy and policy that spawned future structures and the scope through which we viewed education in the 80s and 90s had its foundations in the Programme for Action in Education (1984–1987) that paid particular attention to disadvantaged students in schools and targeted students who were dropping out of school at an early age and students leaving without adequate qualifications to find work. Walsh (2011) argues that the government’s Programme for Action:

... had a significant impact on policy discourse. It set the tone and agenda for discussions in the early 1990s and was lauded for introducing issues that reflected contemporaneous concerns. It reflected shifts in thinking and couched them in a new vocabulary pointing to new directions for schooling. The success or otherwise of the programme, and others like it, should not simply be measured by the practical changes at ground level. Often, these changes take time, particularly when the plans are radical, controversial or costly. While actual change at ground level is the most obvious criteria, we should also be mindful that documents such as the Programme for

Action have the effect of introducing concepts into the wider discourse and only later are these acted upon

(Walsh, 2011, p. 59)

Of merit was the Investment in Education Report (Department of Education, 1965) that launched Ireland into a new era of planning for education and propelled the discourse in education. This was a busy phase and the changes and developments during this era came about as a result of changes happening at EU level, influencing and contextualising national debate and restructuring all aspects of education, adult education, and training and post Leaving Certificate programmes. Also investigated in this chapter were the key developments and sustainability of vocational education in Ireland during the decades of the 1960s to the 1980s. VECs moved into the mainstream of education. Vocational schools and other second-level curricular and organisational structures were reviewed, and the consequences led to a reshaping and blurring of boundaries with similar curricula offered.

AnCO and FÁS were established as the training authorities under the auspices of the Department of Labour, and this saw the expansion of a training centre network across the country. These organisations also managed apprenticeship training and all aspects of training for the unemployed. They were driven and expanded by both political and economic forces and as such were identified as an important element in the country's progress during economic recessions. This chapter presented the arrangement of apprenticeship training within the Irish educational and training context in all its complexity.

VECs during this era also led the planning and establishment of RTCs on behalf of the government in their respective areas. This would contribute to the evolution and development of vocational education and would shift this sector of education from the peripheries of education to centre stage. Vocational education was becoming mainstreamed while managing to retain its technical roots. It included curricula within the vocational schools and the RTCs. Also evident during this phase was the recognition of adult education, however underfunded, as an important provision within the VEC structure.

During this era strategic and policy planning became disjointed and fragmented, and implementation of the objectives was made more challenging due to environmental factors. Vocational education and training continued during this phase were governed by separate

government departments who did not engage in any joint reform and continued to perpetrate the policy trajectory that could be traced back to the 1880s. Although an era of great change and reform, it was plagued by global recessions, government instability, and with numerous general elections.

CHAPTER 5

The Third Phase: The 1990s and into the next decade

Introduction

In a socio-economic and political context, the Irish economy at the end of the 1990s was experiencing very rapid growth in output driven by rapidly rising export demand. This reflected the fact that the economy has grown and restructured over the 1980s and early 1990s and restored competitiveness (Walsh & Honohan, 2002).

In 2003, Ireland had the highest GDP per capita within the enlarged EU... almost one-third higher than the EU 25 average (Central Statistics Office, 2004). EU and Irish reports, policy discourse, legislation, debates, and green papers are analysed as primary sources. Secondary commentary gives an insight into how education and training developed during this phase. The economy evolved within the context of a global knowledge society and this provides a lens for evaluating the evolution of the sectors. Of importance during this era was the absence of policy discourse and strategy for PLCs and how that vacuum impacted on the evolution and development of the sectors.

This era would witness a lot of debate, proposals, rhetoric, policy exchange and enactment of legislation at national level, without aligning further education, adult education and training. During the 1990s, many government recommendations and policy discourse and strategic planning for FET occurred without affecting the major structures of the VECs or FÁS. The role of VECs expanded in adult and youth provision during this phase. Irish governments within a political context had short lifespans and ministers did not have time to embed policies and legislation, as snap elections happened quickly and often.

During this phase there was a series of specific EU education policy developments that resulted in implementations associated with restructuring aspects of Irish education. At national level this period witnessed policy discourse and strategic planning, with the development of Green Papers on varying aspects of education. The importance of lifelong learning, including training for the economic growth of the country, was paramount and influenced policy discourse and government strategy. Without the continuity of the same government party in power and the

erratic change of governments, policy and strategy were constantly changing and shifting and would take longer to implement. It must be noted that during this phase, Ireland went through rapid economic growth from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s. This was commonly referred to as the ‘Celtic Tiger’. However, by September 2008, Ireland officially declared that it was in a recession, facing bankruptcy and the worst austerity since the foundation of the state. This would have a profound impact on education and training.

EU Policy Context

The Bologna Process

From the time Ireland joined the EEC in 1976 Irish policy discourse was influenced by European policy discourse, strategy and legislation. The Bologna Process commenced in 1998 with the Sorbonne Declaration instigating education reform at EU level. ‘The European Higher Education Area’ (European Commission/ EACEA/ Eurydice, 2015), had a major bearing on education in Ireland. It addressed the challenges faced by education and in particular higher education and adult education across the EU and commonly referred to as the ‘Bologna Declaration’. It proposed a Europe-wide qualifications framework of easily readable and comparable degrees, with the establishment of a credits system, and it was signed and endorsed by twenty-nine European Ministers for Education.

In June 2001, Ireland as a member state enacted the Bologna Declaration and subsequent policies. The ministers responsible for the implementation of the Bologna Process in higher education reviewed progress and objectives in regard to the recognition of qualifications in each country and set this out in their Bergen Communiqué (European Union, 2005), adopted on 20 May 2005. Examination of the Declaration as a primary historical document , outlines the main aims of the declaration, as amended by subsequent Ministerial Communiqués, lie in two main areas: Firstly the adoption of a structure for higher education based on the Bachelors/ Masters/Doctorate progression, including the necessary adaptation of curricula and degrees; and secondly a series of measures to encourage mutual confidence between the higher education systems of signatory states: (university and student mobility); use of the ECTS credits system; establishment of Quality Assurance systems in higher education; support for mechanisms that facilitate recognition of qualifications obtained abroad. It also covers quality assurance whereby the Commission took the initiative to propose a wider system of QA in

European higher education, resulting in a first Council Recommendation in 1998. Also included are mobility (where the EU programme Erasmus is by far the biggest sponsor of student mobility in Europe) and the development of an education and training qualifications framework for the European Higher Education area, as called for by Ministers of Higher Education in the Berlin communiqué in September 2003 (European Union, 2005). Following deliberation, this was agreed to by ministers when they met in Bergen in May 2005, and Ireland signed all treaties and agreements.

The Lisbon European Council in March 2000 (Lisbon European Council, 2000) set the European Union a strategic goal, which was reaffirmed at the Stockholm European Council in March 2001 (European Council, 2001), and on consultation as a primary historical source states:

... of becoming the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based society in the world. Key elements of the strategy to achieve this were the adaptation of education and training to offer tailored learning opportunities to individual citizens at all stages of their lives; the promotion of employability and social inclusion through investment in citizens' knowledge and competencies; the creation of an information society for all; and the fostering of mobility.

(Communication from the EU Commission, 2001)

This policy discourse emanating from EU would influence and have a transformative impact on the educational framework and the establishment of a qualification's framework in Ireland. This was an important and significant influence on education in Ireland during this phase. The European Commission outlined a framework of development and identified a key number of objectives:

The objectives of a European area of lifelong learning must be both to empower citizens to meet the challenges of the knowledge-based society, moving freely between learning settings, jobs, regions and countries in pursuit of learning; and to meet the goals and ambitions of the European Union and the candidate countries to be more prosperous, inclusive, tolerant and democratic.

(Communication from the EU Commission, 2001, p. 8)

The view taken by member states was the development and implementation of coherent and comprehensive strategies for lifelong learning, and this required concerted action initiated at European level, in accordance with agreed priorities. On consultation of the EU policy Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality 2001 (Communication from the EU

Commission, 2001) defined lifelong learning as ‘all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competencies within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective’p.3. Lifelong learning activity would be undertaken in formal, non-formal and informal learning settings. The emphasis was also on social inclusion and cohesion, personal fulfilment and individual needs, active citizenship and adaptability to the changing learning and work environments (Communication from the EU Commission, 2001). Underlying these policies, strategies and reports at EU and national level were the economic benefits and drivers. There was a growing emphasis on education and training as a key resource and valued commodity perceived as the fundamental base of innovation and creation in driving an economy forward and the Communication from the EU Commission (2001) noted:

In economic terms, the employability and adaptability of citizens is vital for Europe to maintain its commitment to becoming the most competitive and dynamic knowledge based society in the world. Labour shortages and competence gaps risk limiting the capacity of the European Union for further growth, at any point in the economic cycle. Lifelong learning, therefore, has a key role to play in developing a coordinated strategy for employment and particularly for promoting a skilled, trained and adaptable workforce. This means removing the barriers that prevent people from entering the labour market and limit progression within it. Tackling inequality and social exclusion is part of this.

(European Commission, 2001, p. 6).

This premise for developing education and training would become a fundamental basis for all aspects of further education, adult education and training. The key to generating knowledge was the ability of society to keep pace with ever-changing developments in technologies and information communications. The European Commission (2001) stated ‘Lifelong learning is ... about much more than economics. It also promotes the goals and ambitions of European countries to become more inclusive, tolerant and democratic. And it promises a Europe in which citizens have the opportunity and ability to realise their ambitions and to participate in building a better society’ (p. 7). The Lisbon European Council confirmed lifelong learning as a basic component of the European social model.

During this phase, an age of new technology was emerging across the world; knowledge could move faster and be shared in local, national and global fora instantaneously; this too would influence government planning and strategy. Information and communication were contemporary influences on society and, with ever-advancing technologies, the rapid

transformation and shaping of society would occur. From a European and national perspective, society had changed and was termed ‘the knowledge-based economy’ (OECD, 1997). Giddens argues:

...a few years ago, there was some doubt, particularly on the left, about whether globalisation was a reality. The un-persuaded would write ‘globalisation’ in inverted commas, to demonstrate their essential scepticism about the idea. This controversy has moved on. Discussion continues about how best to conceptualise globalisation, but few would any longer deny its influence – as signalled by the role of the global financial markets, new developments in electronic communication and geopolitical transitions [...]. Discussion of globalisation is no longer concentrated in whether or not it exists, but on what its consequences are

(Giddens, 2001, p. 3)

The OECD wrote that developed countries ‘have entered an era where participation in modern society and in the labour market will be linked to the individuals’ and have a ‘capacity to accumulate and manipulate knowledge and to develop and maintain a broad range of skills’ (OECD, 1997). This view and the EU influence were reflected in the Report on the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning (Ireland) (2002), which acknowledged the EU context of lifelong learning: ‘Lifelong Learning forms a major plank of the EU employment strategy and associated Employment Guidelines. More recently, the emphasis on Lifelong Learning has been further strengthened by the drive to create a ‘Europe of Innovation and Knowledge’ launched at Lisbon European Council and built upon at subsequent Councils’ (Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment and Department of Education and Science, 2002, p. 5). Also contained in the European Commission 2001 Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality was the statement that:

The objectives of a European area of lifelong learning must be both to empower citizens to meet the challenges of the knowledge-based society, moving freely between learning settings, jobs, regions and countries in pursuit of learning; and to meet the goals and ambitions of the European Union and the candidate countries to be more prosperous, inclusive, tolerant and democratic. In concrete terms this means that Member states must develop and implement coherent and comprehensive strategies for lifelong learning and it requires concerted action initiated at European level, in accordance with agreed priorities.

(EU: Directorate General for Education and Culture, 2001, p. 8)

The EU policy discourse, of lifelong learning, and the socio-political context of the knowledge society would permeate Irish policy discourse and strategy. This suggests that a discursive shift had occurred during this phase and as such is indicative of a trend which points to a greater

prioritising of lifelong learning as an aspect of economic objectives and social democratic objectives within education policy. Within the context of European policy and funding initiatives, Ireland had managed successfully to place and link the Irish qualification structure to the European qualifications framework.

Key National Policy and Irish Government Debate that influenced and shaped Further Education and Training

National Policy Reviews and Reports

National Council for Vocational Awards

In her brief tenure as Minister for Education Mary O'Rourke (1987–91) in 1991 she established The National Council for Vocational Awards (NCVA), the council's remit was to structure courses in vocational, technical education and training and to provide assessment and certification for the courses (Coolahan, 2017). The introduction of the NCVA influenced the growth of large PLC colleges and smaller centres offering NCVA courses to specific targeted centres, e.g. VTOS centres. Colleges and centres were able to develop and offer new programmes and courses that were required by the local and national economy or as links to higher level courses in universities and Institutes of Technology. Cooke (2009) notes:

In April 1991, the Minister for Education indicated that there was a need for a new national certification system for the range of Vocational training programmes being provided within the second level system e.g. Youthreach, VPTP1, VPTP2, and VTOS. Overall, some 29,000 trainees were following such programmes, with the great majority attending one-year Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses under the VPTP2 programme.

(Cooke, 2009, p. 561)

The NCVA provided a national context for courses delivered by VECs, FÁS and other government agencies and was pivotal in developing national standards that were recognisable and carried a currency. This currency was recognised by students, employers and third level institutions. All stakeholders now had a benchmark by which to measure this education level. Hyland and Milne (1992) note:

At the launch of the council the Minister indicated that the setting up of the council would remove any uncertainty regarding course standards and would enable those institutions and bodies conforming to the national standards to obtain accreditation, thereby assisting those seeking employment and informing prospective employers.

(Hyland & Milne, 1992, p. 322)

The adult education centres within the VECs, the PLC colleges and the FÁS training centres began offering NCVA accredited courses. As NCVA qualifications gained traction as recognised qualifications for employment and progression to third level, the varying bodies began to offer identical accredited courses. The NCVA very quickly provided certification and replaced and subsumed all previous certification being offered at PLC level. Importantly, the establishment of the NCVA gave legitimisation and recognition to PLCs, and adult education and FÁS training qualifications, thus strengthening the status of the courses offered, particularly with employers and the general public. (NQAI - OECD / OCDE, 2003). The NCVA was in existence for ten years until new legislation on qualifications was enacted and it was subsumed into the new structures.

Education for a Changing World: Green Paper

Minister for Education Mary O'Rourke initiated discussions on the need for an Education Act. By 1991, *Education for a Changing World: Green Paper*, (Department of Education and Science, 1992), was prepared. Following a cabinet reshuffle in the same year, Seamus Brennan (1992–93) replaced Mary O'Rourke as Minister for Education; he maintained a lot of O'Rourke's Green Paper and added his own dimension to the paper. It was published in 1992, and thus began debates and discussions on education and educational reform.

On consultation of the Green Paper as primary historical text the discourse within this Green Paper was written with a myriad of reference to Ireland's EU socio-political context. Chapter 3 *Irish Education in the European Community* in the introduction states:

The prospect of increasing integration within the European Community and the developments towards economic, monetary and political union, which will take place in the 1990s, will have enormous significance for Irish society and for the education system, which must prepare young people for living and working environment that closer European integration will create. Irish education policy must seek to ensure that our young people acquire a keen awareness of their own heritage and identity, as well as a genuine sense of European citizenship.

(Department of Education and Science, 1992, p. 75)

Outlined by the Green Paper were the following topics; North-South co-operation in education; participation in the European Community structural funds and Ireland's approach to the

Structural Funds for the post 1993 period. The Green Paper set out six key aims: greater equity in education; equip students more effectively for life; to make the best use of education resources; train and develop teachers; system of effective quality assurance; and openness and accountability to maximise parental involvement (p. 5). From a VEC perspective, the Green Paper acknowledged the role of VECs in education, ‘they will play an important co-ordinating and support role at the local level in the proposed expansion of activities in such areas as adult education, including literacy and community education, youth and sport services and a range of other special services’ p. 158. This was an acknowledgement and recognition of the work the VECs were engaged in for decades and confirmed that they were to continue with this brief. The Green Paper also introduced the idea of broadening vocational and technical orientation in subject options in the post primary senior cycle curriculum (p. 102), and the development of Vocational Preparation and Training (VPTP) in line with German practice, particularly ‘on-the-job training’ (p. 113). The Green Paper proposed the following developments in vocational education and training:

to bring the various elements of vocational education and training together in a more cohesive, modularised and graduated system, which would include employer and trade union interests and which would provide the opportunity for all participants to develop progressively their vocational skills

(Department of Education and Science, 1992, p. 111)

The Green Paper proposed the setting up of a Government Action Group with representatives from the Departments of Education, Labour, FÁS, the vocational education sector, to define and clarify the requisite roles of FÁS and the VECs in relation to initial vocational education and training, including apprenticeship training p.11, this would not happen as we will see later. The Green Paper also recommended legislation for the ad hoc agency NCVA and participation and input by all the relevant educational interests: FÁS, CERT, employers and trade unions, in the establishment of a national certification system.

In the Green Paper, VECs were also charged with managing and strategically developing support for adult and second chance education by coordinating and building on the existing network of AEOs and structures within their organisation (p. 209). The Green Paper referred to courses within the schools catering for adult learners, community-based groups and literacy. VTOS was to continue as a means of supporting adult learners back into education and training.

The role of the VECs in providing training and education for the national prison service was acknowledged, and it was proposed that they continue this work (p. 211). Likewise, FÁS was to continue to provide vocational training for young adults in community training workshops. This Green Paper was outlining what already existed; it was by no means proposing the shaping of distinct boundaries but in fact endorsing the blurring of the boundaries that had overlapped in provision.

The National Education Convention

Following a general election in November 1992, a new coalition government was formed, and Niamh Bhreathnach was appointed Minister for Education (1993–97). This newly appointed Labour party Minister hosted the National Education Convention in Dublin Castle in 1993 that ran over eleven days and was the first open public debate on education in the Irish state since its foundation. The significance of education within an EU and Irish socio-economic context was an influencing factor on government strategy planning and formed a major aspect of public policy discourse during this phase. The backdrop and context to this education convention was the publication of the OECD Review of Irish Education, Paris (OECD, 1991). It emphasised that the Irish educational system was meeting neither the needs of students nor societal needs. It also criticised Irish educational policy as ad hoc. (OECD, 1991). The National Development Plan 1994–98 (Government of Ireland, 1994) was also published at the outset of the convention as another context highlighting the importance of education and the government's commitment to financing and supporting education. The other two reports of consequence were compiled by the National Economic and Social Council (NESC): firstly, Education and Training Policies for Economic and Social Development (National Economic and Social Council, 1993) and secondly A Strategy for Competitiveness, Growth and Employment (National Economic and Social Council, 1993). The first report had placed emphasis on the importance of technical and vocational education and had used examples of the success of the education system, in particular vocational education and training, in supporting the development and meeting the economic needs in other European countries, with Denmark and the UK given as examples. What these reports had in common was an emphasis on the close connection between education and employment opportunities in Ireland.

On consultation of the Report of the National Education Convention (Convention Secretariat, 1994) as a primary historical source it noted that all bodies, agencies and individuals interested or working in education were invited to attend. Forty-two interested organisations attended and discussed education policy and issues. These included educational bodies; social partners; the DoE; parents; teacher unions and other unions; national organisations in farming, youth affairs, equality and disabilities; awarding bodies; FÁS; higher education; and student unions (Convention Secretariat, 1994). The Report stated that:

It set to encourage participants to clarify viewpoints: to question, probe and analyse varying perspectives; to foster multi-lateral dialogue and improve mutual understanding between sectoral interests; to explore possibilities of new ways of doing things and to identify areas of actual or potential agreement between different interest groups.

(Convention Secretariat, 1994, p. 1)

The report compiled by Professor John Coolahan had in total seventeen sections and many subsections and although comprehensively stated by the Secretariat they were conscious that some important areas of education had not received significant attention in the report and identified the areas as; vocational training and youth affairs (Convention Secretariat, 1994). The Secretariat view of the Report was ‘to draw up an independent report on the work of the Convention, with a view to helping the policy-making process leading to the White Paper on Education’ (p. 3).

Charting our Education Future: White Paper on Education 1995

This education convention played an important part in influencing the policy discourse and strategic planning that formed the Charting our Education Future: 1995 Education White Paper, (Department of Education, 1995). Of interest to this study is that this was the first government White Paper with a strategy to establish a FET sector. Assessment of the White Paper as a primary historical source Part II – Provision of Education: Chapter 4: Further Education had the following subheadings; Vocational Education and Training; Adult and Continuing Education and Training; and Organisational Development. This chapter was positioned between a chapter on second-level education and one on higher education. The following is the first definition given of further education and its parameters in a policy text and it was the first official acknowledgement of FET in Ireland. In the introduction to further education, it states:

As well as the courses provided in third-level institutions, a wide range of vocational education and training courses are offered within the education sector for students who have completed second level. The principal programmes are Post-Leaving-Certificate courses. In addition, off-the-job training for apprentices is provided in the Regional Technical Colleges, at the Dublin Institute of Technology and in FÁS Training Centres.

(Department of Education, 1995, p. 77)

While it would take almost another two decades before this would emerge as a recognised, distinct sector, discussion and debate had commenced. The White Paper also recognised the development of Post Leaving Certificates (PLCs) and how vocational education and training had grown rapidly since the mid-1980s. The White Paper took cognisance of the fact that PLC development had occurred in an ad hoc fashion:

However, much of this development, particularly in relation to Post-Leaving-Certificate courses, has taken place in an ad hoc and unstructured manner. Accordingly, there is a need to ensure that the future development of vocational education and training, most of which is under the aegis of the Department of Education, takes place in a more cohesive and systematic manner and in a way which is responsive to the needs of students and society.

(Department of Education, 1995, p. 77)

The White Paper proposed the development of vocational education and training happening in a structured, cohesive and systematic manner while meeting the needs of students and society. It also referred to the role of FÁS and the Department of Enterprise and Employment (called the Department of Labour until 1993). It took the view that it was important for students and society that all agencies offering vocational education and training should have an integrated approach, close cohesion and clearly defined roles and responsibilities:

There is a need for a more cohesive approach to the development of all vocational education and training to maximise the benefit to students, society and the economy. Accordingly, an important part of the future framework for development will be a more integrated approach by the education and training agencies, involving close liaison between the various agencies and more clearly defined roles and responsibilities. This will take place in the context of the new organisational arrangements set out in this White Paper, including the establishment of the Further Education Authority and the clarification of the respective roles and responsibilities of the Department of Education and the Department of Enterprise and Employment.

(Department of Education, 1995, p. 77)

Although new structures of governance and management of further education were outlined explicitly and mooted in this White Paper, it would not emerge immediately as an important development for the agencies concerned. The White Paper set out the structure in explicit terms and recommended the establishment of a new framework and organisation for further education: a Further Education Authority and a certification authority: 'A Further Education Authority will be established to provide a coherent national developmental framework, appropriate to the importance of vocational education and training (outside the third level sector) and adult and continuing education' (p. 86). The principle functions of the new authority were outlined as follows: to advise the Minister in relation to general policy development for the sectors and on particular issues; the national coordination of all vocational education and training and adult and continuing education; the allocation of budgets to each education board for vocational education and training, adult and continuing education provision; and to ensure a balance of level, type and variety of programmes to meet student and community needs, including the appropriate location of courses (p. 86). The authority would include representatives of the providers of further education, the social partners, voluntary agencies, the education boards (to be established), the Department of Education and the Department of Enterprise and Employment. The need to clarify the respective roles and responsibilities of the Department of Education and the Department of Enterprise and Employment in relation to education and training to ensure a coordinated and focused approach at government level was acknowledged in the White Paper. With the level of resources involved, it was deemed essential that unnecessary overlap and duplication in provision were avoided and that policymaking was coordinated based on well-defined roles (Department of Education and Science, 1995, p. 77). The authority would be appointed by the Minister for Education and would discharge its functions within the policy framework set down by the Minister. It would carry out its work through a small expert secretariat (p. 87). The Further Education Authority would ensure that each education board had arrangements in place for the continuing identification of educational and training needs and for quality assurance, as well as for monitoring the effectiveness of the programmes in meeting identified needs. The authority would also be responsible for ensuring, through each education board, that learning, and teaching methodologies were developed, taking account of progress in the areas of open and distance learning. The authority would ensure, through the education boards, that systems and processes were in place in individual institutions and in the system as a whole that would facilitate public accountability and provide for the evaluation of cost effectiveness. The emergence of equality of access and participation was proposed, with all institutions providing vocational education and training expected to

operate policies that benefited students and the wider community (Department of Education, 1995).

The White Paper in a subsection Approach to Policy, set out that the future development of vocational education and training based on a number of principles, in short all skills levels to underpin the provision of quality vocational education and training to meet the needs of a growing economy, co-operation between providers, i.e. schools, institutions, teachers and employers, and the promotion of lifelong learning and the updating of skills (pp. 80-81).

Chapter 4: Adult Education, was recognised as another important element of the Education and Training strategy. The White Paper noted that one of the central problems of Adult Education until now, has been the lack of a coherent policy (p. 81). The White paper stated that:

Adult education and training will be an integral part of the framework for the future development of education. The objective will be to maximise access to suitable programmes for adults who wish or need to update their occupational skills and to continue their personal development irrespective of their educational and training attainments

(Department of Education, 1995, p. 81)

The White Paper described adult education provision as: general adult education; continuing education and training; second-chance education; the Adult Literacy Community Education Scheme (ALCES); Area Based Partnerships; the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS, which was deemed by this paper as a success in assisting adults in re-engaging with education), and all adult education functions within the VECs (p. 81). The White Paper recognised other programmes: hobby programmes, skill introduction programmes, parenting programmes provided in a number of second-level schools, and a range of programmes also provided through several agencies, including FÁS. The National Education Convention had a significant impact on policy discourse and the strategy contained in the White Paper, noting that adult education's strength was that it allowed a rich and varied provision, which attempted to fulfil the needs of a broad range of people, and that its weakness was having little long-term planning, no coherent policy for development, duplication of scarce resources, and constant tension and frustration as groups looked for access to limited resources (Convention Secretariat, 1994).

Chapter 14 of the White Paper: Establishment of Education Boards set out the role of Education Boards (The policy to establish regional education boards had come from discussions at the National Education Convention on the notion of Intermediate Educational Tiers (Convention Secretariat, 1994)) and the White Paper proposed that the government would establish and legislate for Regional Boards/Councils to subsume all functions and organisation of the VECs. It was proposed that new education structures would be formed and in 1994 the Minister published a position paper on the establishment of eight Regional Education Councils (RECs). In essence, the RECs would have a broader remit than that of the VECs and would govern all secondary, primary and adult education within their regions, with the exclusion of higher-level education. VECs would be subsumed under this new proposed structure (p. 177). The IVEA, representing all VEC schemes, did not welcome the proposals of establishing regional boards, and the department was not allowing permanent appointments to VECs while the new structures were being debated (Cooke, 2009). The President of the IVEA, at the organisation's annual conference in 1995, addressed the Minister, stating that:

The structure and sequence advanced in the White Paper is very different from IVEA policy. Effective response to local needs for education and training require an effective and strong local administration. This concept is missing from the White Paper. There is an existing local administration network on which to build the new structure. We envisaged phased re-organisation and adaptation of the existing administration network to cater for the needs of all primary and post-primary schools within a local area; we fear the that the White paper is more about dismantling the Vocational sector than it is about building a publicly accountable system of local education authorities.

(Cooke, 2009, p. 612)

In reality, there were too many partners around the table and too many vested interests. As VECs were made up of local politicians, this would have had a major influence on keeping the VEC sector as a local entity with a local power base. Politicians perceived the VECs as local entities, with local interests meeting local educational needs and the employment market. The IVEA established lobby groups based on political party affiliations and outlined the stages of transition to new local education authorities (Cooke, 2009, p. 614). In 1996 the IVEA had representation on a department commission and their remit was to exam existing VEC structures and make recommendations on rationalising the VECs. The commission was made up of various education representatives, with officials from the DoE and the Department of Finance. The report of the commission was not welcomed by the IVEA or by the VECs' Chief Executive Officers Association; representatives of both organisations promptly resigned, with

the IVEA advising all VECs that no further communication with the commission should issue from VECs on the matter of rationalisation (Cooke, 2009, p. 616).

Politicians, as members of the IVEA, recognised the platform that VECs gave them to influence education and its provision at local level whilst having a forum that influenced national and government policy. The church authorities were unwilling to relinquish the management and ownership of their schools to a state organisation (McGuinness, 1994). On this occasion the recommendations for change were not implemented.

The White Paper paved the way for future developments and legislation in education. It was also important from the point of view that it had highlighted the overlap, duplication of provision and lack of coordination in further education, adult education and training. The National Education Convention had emphasised equality in accessing education as an important theme, and the development and legislation that followed took cognisance of this and the importance of lifelong learning. The entire debate had highlighted the unnecessary overlap and waste of resources; it had also emphasised how resources could be managed. More importantly, it had given practical solutions to the problems by providing concrete examples of what the sector should look like and what structures could be put in place to develop and establish the sector in a uniform and planned way.

The proposals by successive governments to restructure the VECs had not happened and VECs would continue to maintain their role as educational organisations. However, this was the very first strategic attempt since the foundation of the state to establish an integrated approach for FET.

Key Legislation and Policy

In 1997 another general election led to a change of government and a new Minister for Education, Michael Martin (1997–2000) was appointed, following this election the DoE was renamed the Department of Education and Science. This Government enacted many bills during its tenure and its policy and strategic direction would endorse and underpin the work of the VECs. During this phase the following legislation was enacted that would impact on VECs: the Education Act 1998, the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999, the Education Welfare Act 2000, the Vocational Education (Amendment) Act 2001 and the Youth Work Act 2001.

An amended education bill published in 1998 The Education Act of 1998 (Department of Education and Science, 1998) did not include proposals for Further Education as set out in Charting our Education Future: 1995 Education White Paper. In the Education Bill of 1998, the role of VECs was upheld and did not include legislation to establish Regional Education Boards/Councils but recognised the VECs as local education statutory bodies. Examination of the Education Act 1998 (Department of Education and Science, 1998) as a primary historical text specified:

An Act to make provision in the interests of the common good for the education of every person in the state, including any person with a disability or who has other special educational needs, and to provide generally for primary, second-level, adult and continuing education and vocational education and training: To ensure that the education system is accountable to students, their parents and the state for the education provided, respects the diversity of values, beliefs, languages and traditions in Irish society and is conducted in a spirit of partnership between schools, patrons, students, parents, teachers and other school staff, the community served by the school and the state; to provide for the recognition and funding of schools and their management through boards of management; to provide for an inspectorate of schools; to provide for the role and responsibilities of principals and teachers; to establish the national council for curriculum and assessment and to make provision for it, and to provide for related matters.

(Department of Education and Science, 1998)

This Act recognised the role of the VECs, except for five town VECs that were amalgamated into their county schemes. The VECs were given responsibility on top of their existing roles for Senior Traveller Training Centres (STTCs) formerly under the FÁS remit, and in time would have responsibility for youth affairs legislated for under their management. Under the

governance of Minister Martin, a new era and function for the VEC sector would emerge and the change in government resulted in the retention of the VECs (Cooke, 2009).

By 2001, the same Minister had passed into law the Vocational Education (Amendment) Act (2001) (Department of Education and Science, 2001) and consultation of this Act as a primary historical source stated:

An Act to amend the law relating to the membership of vocational education committees, to make provision in relation to the performance by vocational education committees of their functions and in relation to expenditure by vocational education committees, to amend the Vocational Education, Act (1930), the Education Act, (1998), the Regional Technical Colleges Act, (1992), and the Dublin Institute of Technology Act, (1992), and to provide for matters connected herewith. The Minister may, by order, confer on a vocational education committee such additional functions connected with the functions for the time being of that committee as he or she thinks fit, subject to such conditions (if any) as may be specified in the order.

(Department of Education and Science, 2001)

This legislation endorsed the work of the VECs over the decades and placed them on a platform with a strongly identifiable role within the education system. As the focus for change was no longer on the VECs, this in turn would allow a confidence to build whereby VECs became better positioned to offer and develop programmes and courses under their remit. This Minister also recognised the role played by VECs in the development of adult education since their establishment in 1930 and the local impact and value of this network, and he acknowledged that the VEC function could be expanded to meet other local demands, in sport, youth work, community education, literacy and adult education (Cooke, 2009).

During this era, the Education Welfare Act (2000) (Department of Education and Science, 2000) was enacted. Although this Act did not expand the function of VECs directly, it did legislate for the attendance by students in formal education until 16 years of age. The Youth Work Act (2001) (Department of Education and Science, 2001) was also introduced, and this did in fact expand the functions of the VECs, this Bill would provide a statutory basis for the delivery of youth work courses and services, while designating the VEC's as the agencies at local level (Cooke, 2009). All of this newly enacted legislation would have a direct and indirect impact on the work of VECs in their localities. Their position as local organisations and structures was utilised and would shape the provision offered by the VECs.

The Establishment of a Qualifications Framework for Ireland

Historically, the most important policy shift and milestone during this phase was Ireland becoming the first European country to verify the compatibility of its National Framework of Qualifications with the Bologna Framework on the 8 November 2006. This development within an Irish educational context was significant and would impact on the development of FET. Because of Ireland's membership of the EU, the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999 (Department of Education and Science, 1999) was enacted and the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) was established under this legislation in 2001. On consultation of the Act as a primary source it stated; An Act to establish an administrative structure for the development, recognition and awarding of education and training qualifications in the state (Department of Education and Science, 1999). This legislation and policy trajectory were one of the major influences during this phase that emanated from the EU and had a direct effect on the establishment and growth of PLCs, adult education and training courses. This legislation and framework offered more potential than any previous policy action to progress the development of FET. The NQAI implemented the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). Under the NQAI two council were established the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) and the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC). The later was central and essential in underpinning and framing the qualifications provided outside of second-level schools and higher education. This qualifications framework created a context within which courses and programmes were developed. It gave these courses and programmes credibility at local, national and international level. From an educational policy and strategic perspective, Ireland had a vacuum in the arena of qualifications frameworks, and in adopting the European model, it had a very clear and strong framework within which it could develop a progressive educational and linked qualifications system that provided students and employers with a clear awarding system.

The establishment of the NFQ was the most fundamental and central development in education for the FET sector during this era and set in motion a policy trajectory that underpinned all aspects of the FET policy discourse. The Irish government enacted the Qualifications (Education and Training Act) 1999. In June 2001 FETAC was established and under this legislation subsumed the NCVA and all its functions. FETAC were responsible for making

awards for PLCs, adult education and training, and all awards and certificates that were previously made by CERT, FÁS, the NCVA and Teagasc (Agriculture and Food Development Authority). The government was streamlining the state's qualifications and certificates. VECs, PLC colleges, adult education centres, training agencies and training centres commenced applications to become registered quality assured centres providing FETAC programmes. This was another important step in the development and shaping of these separate sectors; all centres, whether state or private, were now obliged to have their centres quality assured prior to offering FETAC accredited courses and gaining certification for their students (FETAC, 2001 - 2012).

Although FET was still not officially recognised, the qualifications framework ensured that PLCs and adult education and FÁS training programmes carried a qualification and gained recognition for all stakeholders. These qualifications were recognised at national and EU level. As part of its legislative function, the framework had quality assurance agreements, with all centres offering awards for validation and therefore adding to the credibility of the standards of the awards at national level (Department of Education and Science, 1999).

FÁS centres and PLC colleges were offered the same courses, all within the same geographical areas, adult education centres also offered the Back to Education Initiative BTEI [The BTEI scheme was introduced in 2003 and was similar to the VTOS scheme, except that learners could take accredited or non-accredited courses on a part-time basis and over a longer period. There was no upper age limit on entry] and VTOS too would offer the same programmes. No national oversight body existed to streamline the programmes on offer. At times, VECs were competing internally for the same cohort of students, whilst parallel and externally the FÁS training centres also competed and had the same programmes on offer.

The Emergence of Post Leaving Certificate Courses (PLCs) and Colleges

The policy decisions and implementations of the 1980s would have bearing on subsequent policy developments during this era. In 1984 the restructuring of the Vocational Preparation and Training Programmes (VPTPs) when VPTP2 was merged with the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme and evolved into the Post Leaving Certificate Programmes (PLCs) (Coolahan, 2017) were the origins of PLCs. From the 1980s VPTP courses began to expand in variety and number across the country, they were run as either add-on courses for early school

leavers or follow-on courses for students who had completed their Leaving Certificate. They were run under the umbrella of the VPTP2 DoE ESF funding stream. During this phase, PLCs operated under the auspices of school provision, with ESF funding through the DoE, while governed by the VEC. In the early days of this phase, PLCs were ad hoc programmes offered by vocational/community schools. Prior to the establishment of the qualification's framework, courses were awarded certification by UK qualification companies i.e. City and Guilds and/or in-house college non-accredited certificates. The numbers of participants increased steadily over the years, doubling from 12,000 to over 24,000 between 1989/90 and 1999/20. Enrolment for the 2001/02 year was 26,700 (Department of Education and Science, 2003). PLC courses mushroomed around the country, and from school to school standards and quality varied. The growth during this period was enhanced and boosted by the establishment of the NCVA and its successor, FETAC.

During this phase, VECs were in a stronger position in Irish society as an educational sector, they were meeting the educational needs of their communities and would continue as an important educational organisation. Their role was acknowledged in government policy discourse, debate, strategy and in legislation. As VECs became confident of their place as an important educational organisation, one of the most important developments that would take place was the expansion and growth of PLCs, culminating in the establishment of PLC colleges. VECs allowed and supported school management and their school staff to develop programmes to meet the needs of their students (Cooke, 2009). At a local organisational level, VECs, in agreement with their local vocational school management, designated buildings and teaching staff to PLC provision. All of these developments were led locally by VECs and at school level. While government grappled with varying Green Papers and reports, the developments, policy and strategy were all happening at grassroots level. A great deal of freedom and discretion was allowed to local providers to design the programmes for their local students (Coolahan, 2017). In the absence of policy discourse and government strategy further education had grown out of the long tradition and expertise of vocational and technical education. It had emerged organically with the stimulus of EU funding and EU policy contexts and had in a sense moved ahead of policy or the policymakers. By meeting local and regional vocational and training needs, FET was evolving. There can be little doubt that the VPTP initiatives and funding stream had given the vocational sector an opportunity in which an entire sector grew organically and locally, filling a space in the education bulwark. As provision

within these PLC colleges grew, principals and their staff used initiative and began to offer suites of programmes.

This era would witness the structure and numbers of PLC programmes on offer expanding and the numbers availing of the programmes growing, while many vocational schools dropped their school provision and offered only PLC programmes in the newly named further education colleges/institutes. Some vocational schools had morphed into further education colleges, institutes of further education or, as was fashionable in the 1990s, senior colleges – all offering the same provision. Some vocational schools had taken on the title of further education, while other vocational schools managed to retain their school provision parallel with further education. Some vocational schools would have dual provision, offering PLC programmes and the secondary school curriculum, with alternative names for the provision. Other secondary schools outside the VEC structure would also offer PLCs, and this provision was scattered throughout the country (Department of Education and Science, 2003). Initially the majority of courses were offered within vocational schools. Other the secondary schools offered one or two courses as add on as opposed to thirty or more as was the norm in PLC colleges. Historically, further education colleges in Ireland emerged from the broader context of second-level vocational education. By 2003, to the McIver Report (Department of Education and Science, 2003) notes:

225 centres are providing PLC courses, 37 colleges with PLC enrolments ranging from 50+ to 2500+ account for 73% of the overall PLC enrolment

(Department of Education and Science, 2003, p. VII)

This development had taken place without a government strategy or planning of structures, staffing, administration or management and PLC were operating under a vocational school system. The historical links that vocational schools had with local employers and industry gave the emerging colleges credibility and were seen by second-chance non-traditional students as a means to access employment and/or third level education (Department of Education and Science, 2003). Within a VEC context, many of the courses developed at local and regional level for post leaving certificate students were developed to meet local/ regional industry and employment needs. VECs had traditionally worked closely with indigenous crafts and industry, and by this time relationships were well established, so that work experience formed a major part of the programmes. Initially, the PLC colleges offered secretarial, cookery and pre-

apprenticeship courses. As colleges grew in size and reputation, their PLC programmes expanded, and other vocational areas were developed and established to meet market needs (Department of Education and Science, 2003).

PLCs were to have three components: technical modules, general studies and work experience (Coolahan, 2017). The work experience component met local demand for jobs and assisted in giving small business extra personnel that they could train for future expansion of their company if this occurred. In an informal manner, PLC colleges were recruitment agencies for local employers and industry long before this concept became part of the employment setting in Ireland. Work experience as part of the PLC programmes had a ratio of time dependent on the programme; for example, the childcare course hours for work experience were higher than those for engineering. Students were expected to engage in work experience and on-the-job supervised training in order to gain a full certificate (FETAC, 2001 - 2012). The relationship between the PLC colleges and their local employers was important. Programmes were also provided at the behest of employers who required skilled and competent workers as businesses and industry grew. For many colleges, this became a crucial factor and an important symbiotic relationship that developed.

PLC colleges would form progression links with third level providers, with the IoTs, which recognised the PLC for entry to their diploma and degree programmes. PLCs became an important re-entry route for older adults wanting to return to education and learning, forty per cent of PLC students in 2000/01 were over twenty one years old (Department of Education and Science, 2003). The progression routes into higher level from PLC existed as local agreements between IoTs and PLC colleges and as a national agreement through the national Central Applications Office (CAO), with points given for PLC programmes and access opened to specific third level programmes. During this era, colleges gained a reputation for expertise in specific areas that were recognised by students, related industries and higher-level institutions (Department of Education and Science, 2003). During this phase the growth of PLCs was primarily driven at grassroots level with the support of local VECs in the absence of government strategy and policy.

Taskforce on Lifelong Learning

In 2002 the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment in collaboration with the Department of Education established a taskforce to report on lifelong learning in Ireland. The Report on the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning (Ireland) 2002 (Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment and Department of Education and Science, 2002) was published. Analysis of the report as a primary historical text the terms of reference state that they would map existing lifelong learning provision, identify gaps in that provision and propose gaps to fill that provision (p. 6). The report gave a statistical overview, it examined the National framework of Qualifications, basic skills, information and guidance, and the workplace. However the report states ‘it became apparent that the mandate to develop a strategic framework required more than the simple mapping and gap filling exercise envisioned in the terms of reference since many of the systematic and structural issues which would underpin the framework for Lifelong Learning cannot be captured by reductionist’ (Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment and Department of Education and Science, 2002, p. 6). Interestingly the Taskforce also highlighted ‘that the analysis presented here demonstrates that the traditional conceptual and organizational divide between education and training is anachronistic’ p.9. Although the report noted this, it did make recommendations.

The report noted that ‘In addition to the economic imperative, there are a number of social concerns which are driving the Lifelong Learning agenda. Foremost amongst these is the interrelationship between employability and social inclusion and the view that access to more and better jobs is a fundamental underpinning of an inclusive society, (p. 5). Ireland, as an EU member state, was implementing and applying EU policy and hence the Irish government was echoing all policy discourse emanating from a European context.

The link between education and training and the creation of a workforce that was socially inclusive became an important aspect of government planning and design. The ability to acquire and process information and thus create knowledge was a fundamental premise of the lifelong learning agenda. Future policy discourse and strategies for FET in Ireland would reflect this thinking and become part of the bulwark of Irish educational philosophy. Demographics in Ireland during this phase would reflect population growth, with a growing youth population, therefore making this development a significant one. These programmes would become an important facet of education in Ireland, and the government would be

compelled to commission a report on their development and expansion. The McIver Report, though viewed now as a non-runner, was, when first proposed by government, seen as the first step in setting up colleges of further education to replace the ad hoc structure that was PLC. It was narrow in its focus in that the review did not include FÁS training, private providers, adult education or other government department training. The review did not incorporate any of the frameworks or proposals that were contained in the White Paper of 1995.

McIver Report

During this era, the Department of Education and Science commissioned a review of PLCs. The Report of the Steering Group established by the Department of Education and Science and prepared by McIver Consulting in 2003 (Department of Education and Science, 2003), was commonly referred to as the McIver Report. From an educational perspective, the McIver Report was viewed as a core report and strategic document that would lead to the development and recognition of PLC/further education colleges. The main focus of the report was on PLC colleges and their provision. This report carried weight, as it had been requested and commissioned by the Department of Education and Science. The McIver report was consulted as a primary historical text and the terms of reference state that it was established to:

examine and make recommendations as necessary regarding the organisational, support, development, technical and administrative structures and resources required in schools and colleges with large scale PLC provision having regard to good practice in related areas across the system and in other countries

(Department of Education and Science, 2003, p. VIII)

The commissioning of this report was welcomed and considered timely. The report's main point of legislative reference was the recommendation contained in Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education 2000 (Department for Education and Science, 2000) whereby the Department of Education and Science committed to a review of the PLC sector (p. 107). In the McIver report terms of reference, PLC was referred to as a sector. This McIver report paid attention to schools and colleges where the number of PLC students enrolled was more than a 150 (p. 2). To the reader please note this study will examine Learning for Life: White paper on Adult Education 2000 in the following section.

The report contained twenty-one over-arching recommendations, incorporating ninety-one sub-recommendations. The report proposed that colleges with over 150 students would gain recognition and would be funded and resourced as colleges of further education. The language of further education was now firmly part of the lexicon of education in Ireland. At the time of its publication and in subsequent years, discussions of its implementation were rife, and meetings and debates between the interested parties were to the fore. The report's first recommendation was:

Separate Identity and Status of the Sector: FE as a Distinct Sector of Education; Separation of FE from 2nd Level in Colleges. The Department of Education and Science should establish further education formally as a distinct sector of education with a key element of that sector being post second level provision in a number of settings made up of: Colleges providing FE courses only; FE centres within schools with mixed FE and 2nd level provision and other centres providing post-second level education, which could include core VTOS training centres among others.

(Department of Education and Science, 2003, p. 27)

This was considered the most crucial and pivotal report published about PLC courses and colleges of further education and led many to believe that further education would gain recognition and funding, with specific funding for buildings and infrastructure. Although the PLC programme had been established in 1985 and was funded by the EU and the DoE, the PLCs were viewed as an add-on to second-level education, and it was not until the publication of this report that this area of education was given recognition and viewed as an important player in education. This report contained recommendations to establish structures and frameworks similar to those that existed in third level institutions with 'the appointment of heads of departments, registrars, reduction in teaching time, the appointment of specialists, sports officers, computer support staff, lab technicians, and librarians' (pp. 36-37). The report foresaw the establishment of a further education college structure, in line with practice in other EU states, with its own regulation, staffing and internal structures (pp. 42-45).

Following the publication of the McIver Report in 2003, the government in 2004 brought all the interested parties to table to form a joint committee. Consultation of the Dáil debate as a primary historical document (Dáil Eireann, 2004) -recorded that this joint committee included seven TDs and two senators (members of the Seanad, the higher house of the Irish parliament). Invited guests were the IVEA; Mr Michael Moriarty, general secretary; Mr John Ryan, CEO of Dún Laoghaire VEC; Mr Larry Kavanagh, CEO of Co Carlow VEC; and Mr Tony Breen,

from City of Dublin VEC. The Teachers Union of Ireland (TUI) representatives were Mr Jim Dorney, General Secretary; Ms Annette Dolan, Assistant General Secretary, and Mr Don Ryan, a member of the executive. The Department of Education and Science representatives were Ms Pauline Gildea, Principal Officer and Mr Peter Kelly. This joint committee on education and science, chaired by T. Killeen TD, discussed the McIver report and made references to further education as a sector. The IVEA and the TUI in these discussions stated that:

Further education embraces mainstream PLC provision, the vocational training opportunities scheme, Youthreach, adult literacy programmes, adult guidance and counselling, community education programmes and a range of formal and informal part-time programmes for adults which are supported by funding from the Department of Education and Science or are self-financing programmes. PLC provision is one aspect of this provision

(Dáil Eireann, 2004)

This comprehensive description of further education was given at the meeting by Michael Moriarty, and best described all aspects of further education within the VEC sectors at the time and not solely PLCs. In time, this description would come to encompass further education and reflect the description of the earlier White Paper definition. The debate that ensued, described the quality system of further education built by VEC staff ‘which now seeks recognition as a sector in its own right in the educational system (Dáil Eireann, 2004). Throughout the debate of this joint committee meeting, it was clear that all the presentations given by the stakeholders presented an argument that further education looked for recognition as a distinct sector in the Irish education system. These stakeholders were arguing for the immediate implementation of the McIver Report, and this was two years after its publication ‘the McIver report should be implemented immediately...’ ‘...implement in full the recommendations in the McIver report’ ‘the plan needs to be acted upon, which has not been the case to date’ (Dáil Eireann, 2004). Indeed, the discourse and nature of the report would seem to imply that the PLC college was about to become a recognised entity in the Irish education system.

Though welcomed by all parties, the recommendations of the McIver Report would never be implemented. The implementation cost of the recommendations made in the McIver Report was estimated in the region of €48 million in 2006/07. In late July 2008, the Department of Education and Science was making final plans to announce the implementation of the report and establish colleges of further education. Within a forty-eight-hour time frame the country was in the throes of the worst banking and economic crisis in history. The McIver report and

its recommendations were shelved. PLCs would continue as a funding stream of second-level education and were not on this occasion recognised as a separate sector. This aspect of further education would remain within the boundaries of second-level education and within the structure of the VECs.

Adult Education Policy

Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education

During this era, as a direct influence from the EU policy discourse, lifelong learning and adult education formed part of the Irish government policy discourse. For decades, AONTAS had promoted and championed the adult education agenda and the governments Green Paper on adult education: *Adult Education in an Era of Learning*, was published in 1998 (Department of Education and Science, 1998), and was the first specific policy published on adult education since the foundation of the state. This green paper was consulted for this study as a primary historical source. The definition in the green paper of adult education was the same as the one found in the Report of the Kenny Commission on Adult Education in 1984, *Lifelong Learning* Kenny (1983) read:

Adult Education includes all systematic learning by adults which contributes to their development as individuals and as members of the community and of society, apart from full-time instruction received by persons as part of their uninterrupted initial education and training. It may be formal education which takes place in institutions e.g. training centres, schools, colleges, institutes and universities, or non-formal education which is any other systematic form of learning including self-directed learning.

And the Green Paper, the definition included:

... provision for adults in the further education sector e.g. mature students on PLC courses, in VTOS and Senior Traveller Training Centres, literacy/numeracy, adult and community education programmes (further education being that which occurs between second level and third level); continuing education and training for adults (i.e. professional or vocational development regardless of the level); other systematic and deliberate learning undertaken by adults in a wide variety of settings and contexts both formal and non-formal. As such, Adult Education was not synonymous with lifelong learning, but is a key component within an overarching system of education and training which addresses needs from childhood through to and throughout adulthood. Neither is it confined to formal study, but can take place in a variety of settings – going on a training course, taking an evening class, in the workplace, in youth groups, community associations, sports clubs, and reading, television, on the internet or through other distance learning systems.

(Department of Education and Science, 1998, p. 16)

The green paper was quickly followed by the publication in 2000 of Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education (Department of Education and Science, 2000) and this White Paper was consulted as a primary historical document for this study. Historically this was Ireland's first white paper on adult education and 'marked the adoption of lifelong learning as the governing principle of educational policy' p.12. The publication of the Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education 2000 saw the adoption of lifelong learning as an important principle of educational policy and marked a paradigm and official shift of recognition by the government to a lifelong learning strategy (Barry, 2007; Coolahan, 2017). Irish policy discourse on adult education and lifelong learning would reflect the ideology and thinking in an EU context :

The conclusions of the Lisbon European Council confirm that the move towards lifelong learning must accompany a successful transition to a knowledge-based economy and society. Therefore, Europe's education and training systems are at the heart of the coming changes. They too, must adapt. The conclusions of the Feira European Council invite the 'Member States, the Council and the Commission ... within their areas of competence, to identify coherent strategies and practical measures with a view to fostering lifelong learning for all. This Memorandum takes up the Lisbon and Feira European Councils' mandate to implement lifelong learning. Its purpose is to launch a European-wide debate on a comprehensive strategy for implementing lifelong learning at individual and institutional levels, and in all spheres of public and private life.

(Commission of the European Communities, 2000)

Adult education in this white paper was defined as 'systematic learning undertaken by adults who return to learning having concluded initial education or training' (p. 12). and included re-entry by adults to further education or re-entry to higher education. The paper's focus was very broad and extensive and included: Adult Education definition and vision; The Policy Context; The Consultation Process; Second Chance and Further Education; Community Education; Work Place Education; Higher Education; Support Services; Co-operation with Northern Ireland and Structures. The White Paper states explicitly that it does not aim to provide a policy blueprint for the training sector given that this work is being advanced through the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment and its agencies (p. 12). The White Paper recommended that adult education should be underpinned by three core principles: a systematic approach;

equality and inter-culturalism (p. 12). The government's main proposal was outlined in this White Paper:

Large scale increases in adult literacy investment, expansion of capital provision, implementation of an ICT programme for adults, specific equality initiatives to improve participation of marginalised groups, and structural developments are also needed. In addition, the number of adults in the population with low levels of education is simply too large for a general free access policy to be feasible. Given the scale of change needed, the Government's priority is to expand the flexibility and supply of core programmes and services for adults, and to concentrate fee relief on those most at risk. The impact of this policy will be monitored to assess the take-up by different target groups, particularly those with less than upper second-level education

(Department for Education and Science, 2000, p. 14)

In Chapter 4: Second Chance and Further Education this chapter stated recognition for the contribution to-date and the further potential of the existing infrastructure for second chance and further education, namely: Adult Literacy, Basic and Community Education provision, Youthreach, Senior Traveller Training Centres, Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS), Post Leaving Certificate (PLC), Self-funded night-class provision in second-level schools and other centres.⁸⁵

The White Paper recommended the development, through increased investment in adult literacy, of a comprehensive framework for second-chance education for those with less than upper secondary education. A Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) was proposed providing a major expansion of part-time options under PLC, Youthreach and VTOS programmes aimed at young people and adults in the population with less than upper secondary education. Also proposed was a review of PLC management and organisational, administrative and technical support arrangements to assess the appropriateness of existing structures in meeting changing adult education needs. [As already discussed, The McIver Report resulted from this recommendation]. Throughout the paper, further education was referred to as school-based and also as out-of-school provision, with reference in particular to PLC Colleges. Interestingly further education is not defined in this White Paper. The top priorities for Adult Education identified in this White paper were set out as follows:

to allocate priority resources to addressing adult literacy needs; to systematically increase opportunities for adult learners within the system, prioritising the needs of those with less than upper secondary White Paper on Adult Education, to develop supporting services such as adult guidance and counselling and childcare; o enhance the responsiveness, relevance and flexibility of education and training provision to meet the needs of young people and adults alike, optimising participation of and benefit to, those at risk; to promote and develop a co-ordinated integrated role for adult education and training as a vital component within an over-arching framework for lifelong learning.

(Department for Education and Science, 2000, p. 22)

The government through this policy discourse were aware that adult education was the last area of mass education that remained to be developed in Ireland, and it would require significantly increased investment on a phased basis if adult learning opportunities were to reach a stage of parity with those in other countries (p. 22).

Adult Education Provision in the VECs

Policy discourse on Lifelong Learning had introduced ideas of change, flexibility and continuous learning and were changing the concepts of adult education that had formally existed. The Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education (Department for Education and Science, 2000) would act as a stimulus for debate and implementation in the years that followed. During this phase, adult education formed an important and significant aspect of provision and funding within the VECs. When adult education was discussed within the context of VECs, it did not include PLCs, as they were perceived as a separate entity. Both the BTEI and the VTOS were introduced by government to support the unemployed and non-traditional students in accessing education. These schemes were offered exclusively by VECs, while parallel to this provision FÁS, the national training organisation, was also offering the same programmes and courses to the unemployed. The funding streams for BTEI and VTOS were managed through the DoE and subsequently the newly named Department of Education and Skills (DoES). The two major national schemes, VTOS and BTEI, were marketed to create channels through which the disadvantaged could return to education. Government initiatives like VTOS and BTEI were a gateway into the education system for many marginalised groups;

however, observers would argue that these initiatives at local level were merely targeting the same pool of people.

VECs had three main adult education funding streams that were available for students: PLCs, VTOS and BTEI. How the provision was organised varied from one VEC to another. Some VECs offered all three as part of their provision within their further education colleges, or they offered two out of three. Others created separate centres within urban areas for each of the funding streams. Some of the curriculum provision also overlapped, with VTOS and BTEI centres offering the same qualifications as their local further education colleges. In other VECs, curriculum was restricted in VTOS and BTEI centres, and colleges were restricted from offering these programmes. Many variations existed, and a blurring of boundaries and overlapping of parameters existed. This, in essence, created silos in organisation and provision within the VECs. Programmes were offered in VTOS and BTEI centres under the remit of the Adult Education Organisers (AEOs) and also offered by PLC colleges under the remit of school principals, all managed under the VEC.

Each VEC had an appointed senior officer to manage and organise adult education within their city/county. The educational remit of AEOs within each VEC incorporated an array of provision. General adult education (including self-financing certified and non-certified provision) was simultaneously delivered by the Adult and Community Education strands of the VECs. The larger vocational schools and further education colleges appointed Directors of Adult Education, whose role was to manage the evening/night school provision while reporting directly to the principal of the school/college and also reporting to the AEO of the VEC. This evening/night provision was a mix of non-accredited (hobby courses in art, photography and cookery, for example) and accredited programmes, and this provision assisted students in acquiring further education or third level qualifications over a period of months, semesters or years.

AEOs managed adult literacy programmes, community programmes, Youthreach programmes, overall planning for BTEIs and in some VEC schemes VTOS centres. Adult education provision within the VEC sector spanned levels 1 to 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). This provision incorporated further education at Levels 5 and 6, targeting non-traditional learners; however, further education colleges also enrolled marginalised students, with many colleges offering access and support services to students in

difficulty. Within the one county, and within a VEC and adult and further education was interchangeable and, depending on the VEC, interlinked with overlapping provision, similar titles of awards and, for the student looking for accreditation, a spectrum of choice. As the VECs continued their provision of education for lifelong learning and adults, the training was meeting the training needs of similar if not the same cohort and pool of students.

During this phase VEC evening school provision had extended to include part-time PLCs/FE programmes and the traditional hobby type courses, and also third level degrees, which VECs hosted on behalf of third level institutions. Further education colleges became outreach centres for third level institutions and also hosted third level degree courses for private third level colleges. This became a source of rental revenue for the VECs and also assisted with their marketing and public relations in offering third level diplomas and degrees. In essence, vocational schools and/or further education colleges provided full-time and part-time programmes for students.

Training

Irish Training and Employment Authority – FÁS

During this phase, government debate and policy discourse specific to the training sector and FÁS formed part of the national debate. FÁS during this era was a well-recognised brand and, as a national and regional organisation, provided training courses and programmes that were funded directly by the EU under the auspices of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. FÁS had twenty training centres and also delivered training through subcontracting to private training providers. As the national training authority, it provided initial vocational training, training for unemployed people and continuing vocational training. FÁS had a national network of offices and training centres. Boyle (2005) argues that:

FÁS was a hierarchical institution. Its control over programmes (whether run in-house or outsourced) meant it was able to respond quickly to political demands. This explains why a disproportionate number of policy problems faced by the Irish state were addressed through FÁS. It provided low-cost, high-impact policy that met the political and administrative requirements of funding sources. It provided cheap, flexible solutions that avoided long-term commitments.

(Boyle, 2005, p. 112)

FÁS main focus during these decades were Standard Based Apprenticeship (SBA) introduced in 1993 and Community Employment Scheme (CE) introduced in 1994. The EU funding was set out in the Community Support Framework documents for development and structural adjustments to regions lagging behind (Delors, 1989). As FÁS evolved out of AnCO in the late 1980s and early 1990s, it revolved around a labour market programming paradigm that addressed mass long-term unemployed and addressed skills shortages through apprenticeship and training courses (Boyle, 2005). In this section, a description of the functions, policy discourse, locations and provision of FÁS (the Irish training agency until 2013 October) are examined.

In 1992 *A Time for Change: Industrial Policy for the 1990s*; Report of the Industrial Policy Review Group (Industrial Policy Review Group, 1992), commonly called the Culliton Report was published. Analysis of this report as a primary historical text outlines the terms of reference:

To review and make recommendations on industrial policy in Ireland and on public policy generally as it affects industrial development. The Review should address, particularly, the internationally trading indigenous industrial sector and, where possible, identify policies and measures to be adopted which would form the basis for the development of this sector over the medium to the long term, with a view to increasing employment and wealth creation. For this purpose, industry includes internationally traded services

(Industrial Policy Review Group, 1992, p. 17)

The review group was responding to its remit to make recommendations on how Government policies should be adapted to meet the challenges of improving industrial performance and in the group's view an extensive range of policies were relevant, and included overall macroeconomic and fiscal policy, the level and structure of taxation, the effectiveness of education and training and the provision of adequate infrastructure (p. 22). In Chapter 6: Education Enterprise and Technology; the report states:

Education and training are a most critical element of policy affecting not just industry but overall economic welfare. In an increasingly integrated and competitive world, skills and knowledge constitute one of the few areas where an economy can command a differential

competitive advantage. It would be a great mistake to take a narrow view of the contribution of education and training to society

(Industrial Policy Review Group, 1992, p. 53)

The ideology of Ireland as part of a globalised context and the knowledge-based economy were coming to the fore in economic discourse and debate. The role of education and training were viewed as paramount to government strategy and policy development. As the members of the review group were predominantly made up of industrialists, academics and business people, they would have an objective view of the role of government and the report noted that:

It has been widely remarked that the Irish administrative system, in general, is weak in policy formulation. Either as cause or effect, it has become preoccupied with administration and crisis management. This requires change. The key role for the Department of Industry and Commerce is the development of industrial policy and the monitoring of the internal and external environment to allow policy be updated. Good policy formulation is a continuing process, requiring constant adjustment to a changing world. At a minimum, the Department's 3-yearly Review of Industrial Performance should be widened in scope to include a review of industrial policy

(Industrial Policy Review Group, 1992, p. 79)

The Group invited submissions from interested parties, with the government inter departmental taskforce (established to review and implement the recommendations of the report), recommended splitting FÁS into separate elements, namely unemployment and training. The report outlined these recommendations as follows:

Detailed plans for a new approach are beyond the scope of this report. What is clear is that an institutional reorganisation of FÁS is needed, to recognise the sharp distinction between support activities for the unemployed and industry-relevant training. Retaining the status quo has little to recommend it. Four options for change have been identified in the report of the consultants commissioned by the Group: 1. Keep industry-related training in FAS and transfer other schemes to the Department of Social Welfare. 2. Transfer industry-related training to the proposed new agency for the promotion of indigenous industry and keep FÁS as an agency for unemployment support. 3. Have two divisions in FÁS: one for industrial training and one for employment support. 4. Abolish FÁS and transfer (a) employment schemes to the Department

of Social Welfare; (b) industrial training to the proposed new agency for the promotion of indigenous industry; (c) remedial training to the education system; and (d) training centres to the Vocational Education Committees. In the Group's view it is necessary to proceed as a minimum with option 3, separating the activities into two distinct divisions. This would provide at least a provisional improvement

(Industrial Policy Review Group, 1992, p. 56)

The report argued that the multi-faceted emphasis of FÁS activity was impeding the efforts to focus on training for industry and the economy.

In 1997 the Department of Enterprise and Employment published, Human Resource Development: White Paper. This White Paper was reflective of the issues raised by the Culliton Report and represented a policy shift by the government of leading and driving the labour market policy. This White Paper is examined as a primary historical document and sets out and acknowledges the national policy and labour market paradigm within the context of policy discourse and debate. At European level, education and training had emerged as important means for the development of employment, growth and increased competitiveness, and successive European Councils since December 1994 had attested to this conviction. The White Paper stated:

The EU Commission has published a White Paper on the Learning Society, which provides a framework for action by Member States in the fields of education and training so as to address the major changes - technological and other - occurring in society. The Paper builds on the previous Commission strategy document Growth, Competitiveness and Employment, which stressed the importance for Europe of intangible investment, particularly in education and research. The White Paper perspective is necessarily very broad, since it takes a European-wide view, yet its analysis - in terms of increasing economic globalisation, technological change, the emergence of the knowledge- and information-based society and the consequential changing nature of work - reflects the challenges which the analysis in this White Paper shows to be facing the Irish economy and society. The imperative to increase investment in education and vocational training, and to view this as a lifelong process - whether as a means to secure increased competitiveness or to assist those in danger of being marginalised - is well articulated

(Department of Enterprise and Employment, 1997, p. 29)

This policy discourse was reflected throughout the national White Paper and in the introduction the White Paper argued:

This represents a radical shift in the States approach. The old approach was based on programme-led interventions. The new emphasis will be on clear objective driven solutions to the real, and changing, needs of our people and businesses. It is geared to meeting these needs so that Ireland can become a better and more prosperous society; ready, willing and able to surmount the challenges of today and the opportunities of the 21st Century 11

(Department of Enterprise and Employment, 1997, p. 11)

The White Paper set out nine objectives: Promoting an Increase in the Level, Relevance and Quality of Training undertaken by Enterprise to Achieve Best International Practice; Assisting Small Enterprise to Overcome the Skill Barriers to Development; Improving the level of management training and development; Helping young people to become more employable through development of their skills; Reintegrating Unemployed People into the National Workforce; Promoting Equal Opportunities; Strengthening Commitment to Lifelong Learning and Training; Developing Quality Assurance; and Ensuring the efficiency, effectiveness and net economic benefit of State Expenditure on Human Resource Development (Department of Enterprise and Employment, 1997).

This White Paper emphasised the centrality of policy in stimulating skills development for industry and businesses. It also outlined ways of helping the unemployed, with the proposal of increased investment in training and support of enterprise and indigenous business. It was highly critical of FÁS and proposed that the training for industry activities of FÁS should be transferred to Forbairt (the state's industrial development body for Irish industry).

Structural reform is required to achieve the delivery of the new approach being adopted. The White Paper proposes that responsibility for training in enterprise will be assumed by Forbairt, The establishment of a new revitalised National Employment Service that will assimilate FAS' current Employment Service and take charge of developing the Local Employment Service, and that FAS' mission of delivering quality training leu individuals entering or reentering the labour market will be clear-cut

(Department of Enterprise and Employment, 1997, p. 13)

However, the proposals in this White Paper and that of the reports did not transform or reorganise FÁS and its functions at the time. FÁS would continue to operate without much external evaluation of its function or role in Irish society. Following a general election, aspects of this paper were shelved, including proposals to reform FÁS. The highly criticised CE schemes remained a major component of the FÁS function and continued as a large programme within the organisation.

This paper in its conclusion also stated that the state had an obligation to make sure that its activities were effective and delivered efficiently. It must develop more and better critical tools to effectively monitor and evaluate those activities, to ensure that the goals it had set itself were being attained, to root out inefficiencies, develop new work practices and enhance its professionalism.

Apprenticeships

In 1991 the Minister for Labour following a review and consultation introduced a new system for apprentices that were fully implemented by 1993. In 1994, under the Industry Training (Apprenticeship Levy) Act, the new apprenticeship system introduced in 1991 was now called the Standards Based System (SBA). This scheme was legislated for and the apprenticeship scheme was managed by FÁS with the support of the national Apprenticeship Advisory Committee, which consisted of the social partners (employers, trade unions, college representatives and industry), FÁS and the Department of Education and Science. Within an Irish training paradigm criticism and reviewing of apprenticeship models was not new. Two decades earlier in the 1970 the ‘Time-served system’ was the structure in place for apprentices Harper (2003) describes the process:

It was established and implemented for designated apprentices in construction and other specified industrial trades. This reduced the training period to four years and established a first year ‘off-the-job’ of full-time training which was generally provided in FÁS Training Centres throughout the country. Apprentices then went on to day block release to education colleges during the later years of their apprenticeship and took the Junior and Senior Trades examinations

The new a standards-based apprenticeship (SBA) system culminated in the National Craft Certificate for those who passed the stipulated tests and envisaged that in future full craft status would only be afforded to those holding this certificate. Those interested in becoming an apprentice had to first check that they had the stipulated basic minimum educational qualifications at Group or Intermediate Certificate levels. They would then seek out a suitable employer having a vacancy for an apprentice in the trade chosen. While the responsibility for securing an apprenticeship rested with the individual or with his/her parents, FÁS was able to assist, and those interested would register at the nearest FÁS office. Courses for apprentices were conducted on a day-release or block-release basis, during which the apprentices were released from their employment on full pay to attend RTCs (later IoTs), FÁS training centres or PLC colleges. FÁS made arrangements with education/training centres to provide facilities for selected apprentices during their first year. The ‘off-the-job’ theory and practical element was available in many types of centres, and centres were registered with FÁS to complete this aspect of the course. This was in line with historical arrangements that had existed with education institutions heretofore in providing the theory elements of apprenticeship training (Garavan, et al., 1995; Boyle, 2005).

The qualification was awarded by the national awarding body FETAC. The curricula for the many apprenticeships were based on specified standards that were agreed with and approved by industry. They were written by experts nominated by employers, trade unions, the Department of Education and Science and FÁS (Garavan, et al., 1995). On an international stage, this structure of apprenticeship was commended and viewed as a workable structure. It had also managed to bring all partners together to agree and support the apprenticeship scheme. The OECD (2010) notes that

‘The clear structure of the Irish apprenticeship system is easy to follow for both students and employers since the entry requirements and duration of apprenticeships in all occupations are the same. The social partners participate in the design and delivery of apprenticeships, which ensures their support for the programme and develops their sense of ownership. These are undeniably strong points of the apprenticeship scheme in Ireland. However, the downside of this arrangement is that it may be inflexible and difficult to amend in response to emerging demands or to the varying requirements of different occupations. The review team was told that the procedure to create an apprenticeship in a new trade is extremely lengthy and difficult as it requires the agreement of all relevant stakeholders.’

(OECD, 2010, p. 20)

In 2010 FÁS reported the number of people entering apprenticeship in 2009 was 1,535, which was 59% less than the 2008 level of registrations and 77% less than the level in 2007. This arose mainly in the construction and related trades, but reductions were also recorded in the electrical, engineering and motor trades which reflected the lower level of work across the wider economy. The number of apprentices training in Ireland was 17,578 and the new apprentice registrations by trade for that year numbered 1,204. Apprenticeship trades were agricultural and aircraft mechanics, brick and stone laying, cabinet making, carpentry and joinery, construction, plant fitting, electrical, electrical instrumentation, electronic security systems, farriery, floor and wall tiling, heavy vehicle mechanics, industrial insulation, instrumentation, mechanical automation and maintenance fitting, metal fabrication, motor mechanics, painting and decorating, plastering, plumbing, print media, refrigeration and air conditioning, sheet metalworking, tool making, vehicle body repairs, wood machinery, wood manufacturing and finishing. Electrical and motor mechanics were the most popular. Also provided for employees wishing to further their training and improve their knowledge, skills base and competence was employee training in a range of industries from clothing to transport (FÁS, 2010).

Although the apprenticeship scheme was commended, it still had the difficulty of inflexibility in meeting economic needs and the capacity to respond quickly when Ireland had a skills shortage in a particular area or trade. However, due to the economic crisis that Ireland became embroiled in in 2008 and the collapse of the construction industry, the demand for apprenticeship in construction related trades declined. Although fundamentally the structure and framework of apprenticeship training hadn't changed over the decades, students still availed of this training, and during the Celtic Tiger era, many opted for trades and apprenticeships related to the building boom. Building developers were in a position to pay and support apprentices. However, the collapse of the economy also coincided with the limit of places available for apprentices, as on-the-job training had formed an intrinsic element of the training. The OECD (2010) noted that:

The economic crisis is making intense demands on the Irish VET system. The apprenticeship system is particularly affected – it is limited to a narrow set of occupations, many of which have been hit by the crisis. In addition, those looking after VET students may sometimes lack appropriate pedagogical training and there are literacy and numeracy problems among VET students. The lack of data and limited use of evaluation evidence also remains a challenge.

The OECD, when referring to the vocational education and training system highlighted the effects of the economic crisis and lack of research. The apprenticeship system had become embroiled in the building boom that crashed, and apprentices began to emigrate to find suitable work and training.

FÁS – Organisational Structures

FÁS had a regional structure and the locations were: the Dublin Area (Dublin City, Dun Laoghaire, Rathdown, Fingal, South County Dublin); the Midlands Area (Kildare, Laois, Longford, Offaly and Westmeath); the Mid-west Area (Clare, Limerick, Tipperary North, Cavan, Louth, Meath and Monaghan); the North-west Area (Donegal, Leitrim, and Sligo); the South-east Area (Carlow, Kilkenny, Tipperary South, Waterford, Wicklow, and Wexford); the South-west Area (Cork and Kerry); and the West Area (Galway, Mayo and Roscommon) (FÁS, 2010, p. 13).

FÁS training centres and services were found in towns and cities where VECs also had provision for adult learners, the unemployed and vocational training. Both had separate reporting lines within their organisations, with FÁS reporting to the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment and VECs reporting to the Department of Education and Science. The subtle difference was that FÁS offered a choice of training programmes for jobseekers looking for employment and had a national responsibility to cater for the unemployed. FÁS offered training courses suited to the needs of both jobseekers looking for employment (FÁS, Jobs Ireland) and employers wishing to improve their employees' skills. Part-time, full-time, day and evening courses for jobseekers were all part of the FÁS training provision. In addition, specific skills training for industry and the traineeship programme, which combined formal training with workplace coaching, were also available. During this phase, specially designed training programmes allowed apprentices to qualify as craftspeople, and eCollege (FÁS online distance learning programmes) facilitated self-paced distance learning through the internet. FÁS provided education in the workplace and the improvement of skills for work, or upskilling, through its 'One Step Up' initiative. This type of training was not part of the provision in the

VECs and the VECs did not receive funding to provide this type of on-the-job training (FÁS, 2010).

The Demise of FÁS

Following the collapse of the Irish economy in 2008 and the end of economic growth, the work of FÁS as an agency for the unemployed came under scrutiny and the Comptroller and Auditor General Special Report: Internal Control and Governance in FÁS (Comptroller and Auditor General, 2009), would be of historical importance in prompting the changes that would occur to training in Ireland and to the national training organisation FÁS. On perusal of the original report as a primary historical source the auditor general found that FÁS had a governance structure that was in line with its governing legislation and with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies. It acknowledged that FÁS had a plan of internal control, which, if fully implemented, would have provided an adequate guarantee that the transactions were handled in a safe and consistent way (p. 9). However, the report found that failure to fully implement the plan of control exposed FÁS to the risk of losses and the risk of failing to achieve best value for money. The report stated that this happened because:

- authorisation limits were breached when certain transactions were being initiated
 - there were deficiencies in the conduct of tender processes when goods and services were being acquired
 - payments were made in the absence of supporting documentation
 - confirmation orders for purchases already effected were issued in many instances
 - the system of risk management adopted by the Board in 2005 did not function effectively
- key units failed to detect or react appropriately to non-compliance with internal

(Comptroller and Auditor General, 2009, p. 9).

These reports and the reaction of the public during a time of severe recession and job losses did not bode well for FÁS as an organisation. The over spending by the organisation on what were deemed to be luxury goods and the reports that exposed this spending would lead to new policy and organisation by government. Although as an organisation FÁS could show that the apprenticeship and training they had supported for decades and the qualifications achieved by learners were successful, this was not enough for the organisation to survive.

In examining FÁS, however, the Comptroller and Auditor General concluded that although there was a general cognisance among the staff at FÁS regarding the rules governing foreign travel, certain staff within the organisation did not comply. The investigation found that one-third of business was outside the agreed rules and regulations. It was the amount spent on spouses' business class flights that came to the attention of the general public. In a year of economic recession, with businesses collapsing and emigration on the rise, the report on the budgets confirmed that approximately €32,000 was charged to the accounts of FÁS in respect of travel costs of spouses of senior management. Some expenses on luxury items were again regarded as not within the rules and regulations of spending for government budgets. €35,000 was spent on sports tickets, concert tickets and hospitality at sporting events and concerts, the use of limousine services and the payment of high levels of gratuities. A high percentage of the spending on certain lunch bills was accounted for by alcohol. Also identified was the use of credit cards where the use for business purposes was scarce, particularly in the case of meals and hospitality. Following this exposure, FÁS strengthened its policies and procedures by adopting a set of foreign travel procedures and a credit card policy in 2009 (pp. 13-14).

However, when these reports became public, public outrage and high-level resignations followed. Change was to follow, and on 1 May 2010, responsibility for FÁS and all its functions transferred to the Department of Education and Skills. Responsibility for employment services and employment programmes and their budget and policy transferred to the Department of Social Protection (DSP) from 1 January 2011.

Regional Technical Colleges become Institutes of Technology

During this phase, legislation would change the space the RTCs occupied in the education landscape in Ireland. RTCs were established under the Regional Technical Colleges Act (1992) (Irish Government, 1992) and under the remit of their local VEC. From the eighties and into the nineties, participation in Higher Education in Ireland increased, with the Regional Technology College (RTC) sector recording the major expansion in student numbers (Clancy, 1989; 2008). The RTCs were viewed as the mechanism for increasing participation and upskilling the nation in line with the national economic strategy at the time (Clancy, 1989; 2008; White, 2001).

In 2006 new legislation was introduced, namely that of the Institute of Technology Act (2006). Institutes of Technology (IoTs) were no longer governed by their local VECs and became part of the higher-level education landscape. They have autonomous governing bodies and offer higher level awards at diploma and degree level.

Private Providers of Further Education and Training

Private Providers

Also sharing the FET space were private providers. These were private companies that bid to provide courses to businesses and co-operatives. These companies in the past also formed part of the FÁS provision by tendering for work with the state agency. Independent of FÁS and the vocational education sector were Skillnet (employer-led training supported by the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC)) and the Chamber of Commerce. Skillnet accounted for two per cent of FETAC awards. It was established in 1999 and financed by the National Training Fund (NTF). It was a training network where companies got together to decide what training they wanted, with Skillnet supporting the training requirement with training resources and expertise. These statutory agencies and private organisations provided courses at FETAC levels 5 and 6, the same level as those offered at VECs or FÁS training centres.

Other agencies and government departments that provide further education and training

During this phase, other government departments continued to provide training in their particular areas and these statutory agencies continued providing further education and training. Harper and Fox (2003) state that:

Outside the third level education sector, the principal providers of vocational education are the Vocational Education Committees (VECs) which are statutory bodies at county level, charged with responsibility for vocational and continuing education, and FÁS, the National Training and Employment Authority. Other statutory providers include CERT (tourism training) and Teagasc (agricultural training). These bodies are funded from the exchequer and some programmes receive assistance from the European Social Fund.

(Harper & Fox, 2003, p. 12)

Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) has responsibility for training in the fishing industry and is the national state fisheries board. This agency provides training for those who want to pursue a career in fishing or fish processing. Teagasc is the state agency that has responsibility for training and research for the agricultural industry that also includes the forestry industry. It provides training for those who want a career in agriculture and who want to train on programmes in the areas of agriculture, forestry, horticulture or equine studies. Coillte, the state forestry agency that manages the forests of Ireland, also provides training programmes in forestry. CERT (now Fáilte Ireland) provides training and recruitment in the tourism industry. This is offered in partnership with ITs.

The 1998 Industrial Development (Enterprise Ireland) Act (Irish Government, 1998) created Enterprise Ireland with the amalgamation of Forbairt, the Irish Trade Board and the in-company training section of FÁS. Each one was developed as an aspect and under the remit of the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment White Papers, The Human Resource Development and Growing and Sharing Our Employment but developed as independent initiatives. These organisations were formed as a response to skills shortages in the economy.

The National Learning Network part of the Rehab Ireland Group, a not-for-profit organisation established over sixty-five years ago, provides training programmes and support services in fifty centres across Ireland for people who require specialist support and for jobseekers and unemployed people with disability or illness. As previously discussed government departments would continue to provide their own training and education in areas under their particular remit.

Summary

The availability of primary texts, reports, legislation and secondary commentary were readily available and provided a focus by which to analyse policy discourse and strategy for this phase. Key developments during this era were the Bologna Process, and the EU policy discourse and ideology of lifelong learning. Ideologies relating to adult education and lifelong learning became paramount and permeated all aspects of national discourse and dialogue in education. Examination of the historical documents during this phase gives an explicit and visible context within which the sectors developed and highlights where further education had its origins and grew organically without a national strategy but with the assistance of EU funding. EU funding stimulated developments within vocational education and training and reshaped the sector's structures. Government policies, restructuring and legislation were influenced by external factors and this would remain a major feature of development in the next phase of shaping the Irish FET sector.

During this phase successive governments and Ministers were attempting to put structure on the different facets of education and training. All of this was happening within the socio-political context of the EU, changing economic circumstances and changes of national governments. The government proposals and strategies, if implemented, would have built up a firm and stable sector of FET for the Irish education sector. From a VEC organisational stance, discussions on reforming VECs continued as a government agenda. This era witnessed the review of PLCs, VECs, further education, adult education and training organisational structures, with many proposals to realign and restructure provision, organisation and governance.

However, many of these proposals were shelved and, in some instances, following lengthy debate, ideas to reform were discarded. The recommendations from the National Education Convention were ahead of their time and many of these are now echoed in the present structure and organisation of further education and training. Against a backdrop of many elections and changes of Ministers in the department responsible for education, policy and strategy would constantly shift and change, with ministers for education developing their own unique proposals for change.

ESF funding from Europe would finance and commence the provision of VPTP, the precursor to the PLCs, as a curriculum stream in vocational schools, and during this era further education colleges / institutes became part of the lexicon of education. Further education developed organically by second-level schools – in the main by vocational school principals and their teaching staff. From a CDA perspective the micro-sociological tradition of observing social practice as something which people actively produce and make sense of on the basis of shared common-sense procedures would have relevance within this educational context (Fairclough, 2003) It was developed to meet local economic and educational demands where a gap in the market was identified and many additional factors made it the perfect climate to do so. The McIver Report, although published and accepted as a solid plan and on the brink of implementation, was shelved and has not been revisited. This report gave an insight into the direction policy and strategy was taking with regards to PLC colleges. As in previous eras there was no joined up thinking or any plans to amalgamate the sectors.

The milestone development was the establishment of a national qualifications framework that would impact positively on the development of FET. The National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) Policy was established, as well as the National Council for Vocational Awards (NCVA), which was subsequently replaced by the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC), thus giving the further education and training sectors recognition and legitimacy, by providing a legislative qualifications framework. Undoubtedly, the passing into law of several pieces of legislation at the latter part of the nineties kept a renewed focus on the issue of FET and created an impetus for its future evolution. Also, of note was the recognition of adult education as an important provision within the VEC structure. The influence of the lifelong learning philosophy, rhetoric and funding assisted in the expansion and development of adult education. The VEC sector saw its role in education expand and develop, with adult education becoming one of the main areas of their provision.

Also, of significance during this phase was the role of FÁS as the national training provider. By the end of this era FÁS were in decline, not as a result of the provision of training programmes but because of issues of governance, misuse of funding and mismanagement of budgets. FÁS, akin to the VECs, had throughout its history near misses in been disestablished and reformed. Boyle (2005) outlines previous occasions when FÁS faced disbanding:

The durability of FÁS and its programmes is not only intellectual it is also institutional. The three most significant political initiatives that might have resulted in FÁS being dismembered were the 1992 Culliton Report, the DETE White Paper in 1997 and Mary Harney's 2001 reform initiative. FÁS successfully resisted the White Paper's proposals and with the others, turned what might have been an externally driven mandate into an internal opportunity to reorganize, accomplishing in-house what might otherwise have meant splitting the organisation.

(Boyle, 2005, p. 114)

Analysis of texts indicates explicitly that government was keenly aware that reform was required, the demarcations, boundaries and developments had become even more complex than heretofore. Silos of provision would emerge as part of the FET landscape, with duplication of courses and programmes. The government departments and their agencies in particular VECs and FÁS had blurred lines, overlapping provision and a streamlined infrastructure and interconnected sector were required. During this phase there was a lack of forward planning by government and government agencies.

Part III: The Newly Established Further Education and Training Sector

CHAPTER 6

A New Further Education and Training Sector

Introduction

This chapter presents a comprehensive evaluation of the origins, parameters, boundaries, shape and organisations of the new FET sector in Ireland. Focusing on reports, legislation, texts and secondary commentary, this chapter presents a context of how FET was established and how the new organisations that were established or realigned to form the sector. Through examination of these strategic documents in tandem with evaluative reports we get a clear picture of the progress and development of FET.

The government and subsequently government agencies have put in place legislation, governing bodies, structures and strategies to facilitate and establish the amalgamation of a new Irish FET sector. Policy documents and reports at national and EU level provide an ideological framework or point of reference for the FET sector in Ireland and its development. Many factors and variables need to be considered at macro and micro level when amalgamating well established sectors. The proposal to merge FET emerged from Ireland's programme of assistance as agreed with the 'Troika'. In November 2011 the Troika also committed Ireland to a structural reform agenda. The structural reform agenda included the establishment with new legislation of a FET sector, provided through adopted and adapted structures. This reform proposed the dissolution of FÁS and the establishment of a new FET Authority –SOLAS – under the auspices of the DoES. The establishment of an Irish FET sector was a significant and important development in education in Ireland. The socio-political and economic context of this development is important. As the main impetus for amalgamating the FET sectors and creating the fourth pillar of education was the economic necessity for a money-saving exercise by the government that was part of the 'Troika's' agreement with Ireland. FET is for the first time in Irish history recognised as a distinct sector in education and 'FET' entered official discourse for the first time with legislation enacted to underpin the establishment of this fourth pillar. The establishment of a FET sector, although economically driven, was a historical milestone in education in Ireland.

FET had been up to this point operated and managed under separate agencies and under separate government departments. The establishment of this new sector raises questions about the potential of the new sector to achieve the goals set for it and the successful amalgamation of two sectors with distinctive histories. Prior to the amalgamation of the further education and training sectors, the DoES commissioned a review, *A Strategic Review of Further Education and Training and the Unemployed*, undertaken for the Department by Dr John Sweeney, Senior Policy Analyst, National Economic and Social Council (NESC) in 2013 (Sweeney, 2013). Perusal of this review provides an overview:

Both Intreo and SOLAS (and the ETBs under SOLAS) will need to co-operate on a continual basis on the delivery and development of courses that help activate the unemployed (particularly those out of work for a long time). Clear protocols need to be established between local Intreo offices and the ETBs governing the referral of individuals from the Live Register (LR) to education and training. More intensive engagement and assistance, before during and after the course, may be required in specific cases to ensure completion and progression to either employment or more specialised FET. Given the need for proper guidance and support highlighted in the review, there is a reason to believe that some additional investment in these areas could be cost effective in delivering greater returns on the programme investment in FET and activation.

(Sweeney, 2013, p. 7)

During this era, the influence coming from the EU through policy and structural reform shaped and guided the changes in Irish FET. Ireland's post Celtic Tiger coalition government of Fine Gael and Labour was conscious of getting the economy back to work, and the government viewed the establishment of a new FET sector as a main instrument to structure and drive this growth. Over a decade ago, Harper (2003) noted 'Vocational education and training in Ireland is seen both in policy and structural terms as being one of the main pillars essential to the building and maintaining of a highly skilled workforce operating within a knowledge society' p. 8. Although this was the viewpoint over a decade ago, further education, adult education, training, apprenticeship and other training agencies have remained separate entities up to the present time. Policy discourse at national and EU level contained visions and ideals for the future of further education as part of the educational landscape of lifelong learning as explored in previous chapters.

In 2013, the Irish government passed legislation and focused a strategy on establishing a sector-wide set of developments and structural reform to establish this new sector. Rationalisation and integration were key goals of public policy alongside, for the first time, a national strategy for FET. Complex legislation was enacted to establish this new sector, with dissolution of state

organisations, amalgamations of organisations and the realigning of agencies within government departments.

Key Organisations Legislation and Policy of FET

Further Education and Training Authority – SOLAS

An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna (Further Education and Training Authority), called by its Irish acronym ‘SOLAS’, is the newly established organisation with responsibility for funding, planning and coordinating FET in Ireland, under the remit of the DoES. It was established under the Further Education and Training Act 2013 (Department of Education and Skills, 2013). On 27 October 2013, SOLAS was formally established by Ruairí Quinn TD, Minister for Education and Skills: ‘SOLAS will be tasked with ensuring the provision of 21st century high quality FET programmes which are responsive to the needs of learners and the requirements of a changed and changing economy’ (Minister for Education and Skills Mr R. Quinn TD). The Further Education and Training Act 2013 repealed the Labour Services Act 1987. This legislation enacted the dissolution of FÁS and the establishment of SOLAS. SOLAS is charged with managing the National Apprenticeship System, the MOMENTUM programme (this funds the provision of free education and training to allow jobseekers who were unemployed for twelve months or more gain skills to access work opportunities), EGF (Globalisation Adjustment Fund) for EU members made redundant from work, eCollege, Safepass and the Construction Skills Certification Scheme. SOLAS also has the function to promote an appreciation of the value of FET; link with ETBs; advance moneys to education and training boards and other bodies engaged in the provision of FET programmes; and assess whether or not education and training boards and other bodies engaged in the provision of FET programmes, to whom moneys have been advanced, perform their functions in an economic, efficient and effective manner. This legislation had set out clear checks and balances for the sector and all functions, and accountability and lines of management are clear and ring-fenced. SOLAS coordinates and funds the wide range of training and further education programmes that exist in Ireland. It coordinates the provision of FET programmes, providing jobseekers and other learners with the new skills needed for the new jobs in Ireland’s 21st century labour market (SOLAS, 2014).

Analysis of the SOLAS FET strategy (SOLAS, 2014) outlines that there are a number of objectives identified in the establishment of the FET sector, and SOLAS's main remit is to build the identity and values of a world-class integrated FET sector. SOLAS commissioned the ESRI to provide evidence-based reports to inform the five-year strategy for the sector and this would assist SOLAS in the development of a five-year strategic plan for the Irish FET sector. On consultation of the ESRI Report, Further Education and Training in Ireland: Past, Present and Future (ESRI, 2014), as a primary text the report outlines:

The study is unique as it represents the first attempt to map FET provision in Ireland in a systematic way, with the objective of identifying the principal features of the sector within both a national and international context. The report sets out the historical evolution of FET provision in Ireland. It examines current patterns of provision in terms of both the overall distribution of places and the balance between full-time labour market orientated programmes and part-time provision with a more community education focus. The pattern and rates of accreditation are examined, and the connectivity between labour market orientated programmes and the structure of the vocational labour market is also assessed. Qualitative evidence is analysed on a range of issues, including the role of FET, the quality and relevance of awards and the qualification of staff. From all of this, a series of policy implications emerging from the evidence are developed.

(ESRI, 2014, p. 1)

Significantly this report was the first report that would research and map the place of further education within an Irish context in a systematic way. This report would pave the way for SOLAS and would inform SOLAS policy and strategic developments for the new FET sector. In amalgamating the FET sectors, SOLAS was given the remit, authority and legal rights (in partnership with the ETBs) by government to plan strategically for the newly established sector.

The SOLAS FET Strategy (SOLAS, 2014) the first national policy that legally recognises, outlines and describes the FET, the sector and also defines what the FET sector is. Consultation of the SOLAS FET Strategy (SOLAS, 2014) as a primary text gave the following definition of FET:

FET provides education and training and related supports to assist individuals to gain a range of employment, career, personal social skills and qualifications at Levels 1-6 on the NQF or equivalent, and is aimed at jobseekers, school leavers, labour market returners, employees, those interested in new career direction, those wishing to access 'second chance education', those wishing to re-engage in learning and to prepare school leavers and others for higher

education. FET also plays an important role in helping people to lead fulfilling lives, supporting some of the hard-to-reach individuals and groups to achieve their potential and reducing the costs to society of exclusion

(SOLAS, 2014, p. 21)

The language and phraseology in this definition has put the learner at the heart of the definition and the agencies and organisations do not feature. This is a new development and approach in policy discourse and strategy. The strategy also recognises the part FET will play in advancing and leading economic development. Outlined in the SOLAS strategy five high-level strategic goals: Skills for the Economy, Active Inclusion, Quality Provision; Integrated Planning and Funding; Standing of FET (SOLAS, 2014). This strategy is part of a four-strand integrated FET strategic framework with the first strand includes the aforementioned FET strategic plan and also includes the ESRI report Further Education and Training in Ireland: Past, Present and Future (ESRI, 2014), the second strand is the Annual Services Plan, the third is the SOLAS Corporate Plan and the fourth includes individual five year Strategy statements and annual service plans relating to the sixteen ETBS.

However novel and innovative this strategy may appear, aspects of this strategy are not new, as the contents could be viewed as a mapping of what the sectors provision was prior to amalgamation. Part of the legislative function of SOLAS is to prepare and submit to the Minister a strategy in respect of the provision of further education and training. The SOLAS strategy (2014–2019) outlined and described FET provision and activity:

The full extent of the FET provision in the state is very broad-ranging and includes many actors in addition to the former VEC and FÁS. In excess of 200,000 people will enrol in DES-funded FET in 2014. In terms of the annual budget of the FET sector, excluding allowances in lieu of eligible DSP income supports, in 2012 the Department for Education and Skills (DES) spent €309.5m on a range of programmes primarily delivered through the former VECs. In the region of €117.0m million was spent on FÁS training, while €50m was spent on a range of adult literacy and community development programmes (including the Adult Literacy and Community Education Scheme) with a further €50m of funding provision to Pobal. In 2014, the Department of Education and Skills will provide €826m to support further education and training provision, €640m will be funded through SOLAS.

(SOLAS Strategy 2014–2019, p. 21)

Many areas of the strategy read like a list of an amalgam between FÁS and VEC adult education/PLC provision. Importantly, SOLAS is developing the sector as a whole and moving away from ‘silos’ of learning and fragmented provision. As part of this development SOLAS

is commissioning reviews of the varying aspects of provision within FET. The first of these reviews was commissioned and published the National Post Leaving Certificate Programme PLCs in November 2017 (SOLAS, 2017). Youthreach, VTOS, BTEI will also be reviewed and from these reviews SOLAS will devise improvement plans for implementation including performance indicators and timelines. This now places all aspects of FET provision within a strategic framework; this is a new direction and context for varying aspects of further education.

The 2014 Further Education and Training Services Plan, (SOLAS, 2014): outlined that during 2014 the state would invest €826m in FET, thus giving the sector credibility and status. This plan provided information on the full range of FET provision and budget allocations that would be funded through SOLAS. As part of its strategy, SOLAS is also charged with reviewing all funding streams and provision within FET. The SOLAS CORPORATE PLAN 2014–2016 (SOLAS , 2014–2016) outlined the membership of the SOLAS board and the governance of the organisation.

Education and Training Boards (ETBs)

A major legislative and structural change in establishing and developing the new FET sector was the introduction of the newly formed Education and Training Boards (ETBs), formerly VECs, and with SOLAS are primarily responsible for the FET sector. Annually, ETBs are required to agree and sign Service Legal Agreements with SOLAS indicating their levels of provision and targets for FET on a yearly basis.

On 1 July 2013, the DoES enacted the Education and Training Boards Act 2013 (Department of Education and Skills, 2013). Examination of this legislation as a primary text outlines the expanded the responsibility and functions of the newly established ETBs. Former FÁS centres were transferred within their boards; the newly formed ETBs would continue to maintain schools, adult education centres, further education colleges/institutes and adult literacy, and would be responsible for the establishment of new community primary schools in their locales. The Act provided for the establishment of sixteen new education and training boards to replace the dissolved thirty-three VECs. Historically, the VECs have responded quickly to government

interventions and public economic and social demands, and their remit as ETBs is to continue to respond to all aspects of education as requested by the Minister for Education and Skills. This forms an integral aspect of the ETB 2013 legislation policy. Coolahan (2017) notes:

As well as an extensive role in second-level schooling, the ETBs would have extended powers in relation to further and adult education and would liaise with the new agency SOLAS in relation to apprenticeships and associated matters. The ETBs as new statutory bodies are likely to be major players in Irish education in the years ahead.

(Coolahan, 2017, p. 228)

Greater accountability and efficiency through the new regional structures should see programmes streamlined, better management of resources and less duplication. This legislation replaced the existing Vocational Education Acts with one piece of legislation and this legislation covered the repeals and revocations of the Vocational Education Acts. It legislated for the functions of the education and training boards and the role of their chief executives, and the legislation also outlined the membership and composition of the boards. Finally, it legislated for regulation, finance of the new boards and the dissolution of the VECs (Department of Education and Skills, 2012). The newly established ETBs have greater functions than VECs and also take on the training functions of FÁS, as the sixteen FÁS training centres were transferred to the sixteen ETBs (Coolahan, 2017). All the existing provision of adult education and PLCs within VECs will now become a feature of the FET sector administered and organised by the ETBs.

Qualifications Structure

The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 was passed under the remit of the DoES, establishing a new qualifications structure, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), as a newly integrated agency replacing the Further Education and Training Council (FETAC), the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) and the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI), and incorporating the functions of the Irish Universities Quality Board (Coolahan, 2017). This was the amalgamation and streamlining of qualifications under the qualification's framework. QQI has responsibility for the external quality assurance of further and higher education and training, validates programmes and makes awards within the education sector. QQI has responsibility for the maintenance, development and review of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

Consultation of the Quality and Qualifications Ireland Strategy Statement 2014–2016 (QQI, 2014), as a primary text the QQI's key roles were identified as:

- assuring providers of further and higher education and training and their research and related services (quality assurance)
- promoting, developing and maintaining the National Framework of Qualifications
- validating programmes and making awards inform the public about the quality of education and training programmes and qualifications
- advising the minister in relation to national policy on quality assurance and enhancement in education and training.

The setting up of QQI by the DoES was intended to streamline education and have one agency governing qualifications in Ireland.

FÁS, the National Training Agency, Was Disbanded

The governance and functions of FÁS were dismantled, redistributed and transferred to other government departments. In May 2010 responsibility for FÁS as the state training agency and its funding transferred from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation to the DoES. On 1 January 2012, the FÁS Employment Services were transferred to the DSP as part of the establishment of NEES. The role of NEES is to integrate all employment and benefits services into a single delivery unit to be managed by the Department of Social Protection (DSP) The training function of FÁS was amalgamated into the ETBs. The employment services of FÁS were transferred into the DSP. The DSP is linked to FET through Intreo (a service from the Department of Social Protection that is a single point of contact for all employment and income supports). Jobpath (an initiative aimed specifically at the long-term unemployed) and the Youth Guarantee (delivery of opportunities for young people through education and training) are managed by the DSP and target young unemployed citizens.

National Employment and Entitlement Service

The Programme for Government decided that NEES, under the remit of the DSP, would replace FÁS functions with a new National Employment and Entitlements Service so that all employment and benefit support services would be integrated into a single delivery unit managed by the DSP. This integrated service would provide a one-stop-shop for people seeking to establish their benefit entitlements, looking for a job and seeking advice about their training options. This service would also offer personalised employment advice. NEES will advise them, direct them to relevant training and assist them in gaining employment. This one-stop-shop is called Intreo and is a new service from the DSP. It is a single point of contact for all

employment and income support. The DSP, it is designed to provide a more streamlined approach for clients. It was envisaged that this new service would be rolled out across the country during 2012/2013. The establishment of NEES was part of the government's overall restructuring and disbanding of FÁS and reform in general of the labour market activation policies that were included in the Pathways to Work Initiative 2012. In the overall new structure, NEES are expected to work closely with the ETBs and SOLAS in referring clients to FET. Specific protocols of referral were agreed by the agencies and subsequently developed (SOLAS, 2014).

Apprenticeships

In January 2014 the Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairí Quinn, published a review of the apprenticeship system. The main findings and recommendations of the review group were:

- a) Expansion of apprenticeships to new business and industrial sectors. The role of employers in such an expansion is key in identifying the occupations that would be suitable for new apprentices.
- b) An apprenticeship council should be established, and employers should pay apprentices in the new areas for both on-the-job and off-the-job periods.
- c) Existing apprenticeship programmes should be continued and adapted over time, with issues such as duration and the level of qualifications being decided on a trade-by-trade basis.
- d) The curriculum for trades should be examined and updated as a matter of urgency and where feasible common modules across apprenticeships should be provided. Other skills such as literacy, numeracy, maths, science and ICT should be integrated into courses.

(Department of Education and Skills, 2013)

SOLAS has statutory responsibility for the designation and planning of apprenticeship training as part of the statutory apprenticeship system that is under the remit of the DoES, the Higher Education Authority, employers and unions. Employers across each trade and occupation are responsible for the employment of apprentices. ETB training centres and IoTs are responsible for delivery of the training and education elements of apprenticeships. The Apprenticeship Council has been established to examine how the apprenticeship system can be expanded into new sectors of the economy (SOLAS, 2014).

Minister Quinn stated that according to the DoES, this major reform would deliver more than €2 million savings annually and formed part of the government's public service transformation agenda. The Department Review (Sweeney, 2013) stated that as part of the reform:

SOLAS should take the opportunity to apply best practice in FET delivery, in particular adapting and applying the flexible model and newer methods of subcontracting developed recently by FÁS: ETBs should move away from the traditional academic year approach to the more flexible programme structure of FÁS, thereby improving the responsiveness to the real economy; shorter duration intensive courses should continue to be available on the basis of their employment impact; and work placements should be expanded.

(Sweeney, 2013, p. 8)

The newly established ETBs would have the function of implementing the SOLAS strategy; they agree and sign service level agreements with SOLAS to provide FET in their regions.

Other Providers of Further Education and Training

Although a comprehensive FET sector was established with a detailed strategy and robust legislation to underpin the sector, some aspects of provision still remain outside the remit of SOLAS and ETBs; these include CERT (now Fáilte Ireland) the statutory body responsible for training and recruitment in the tourism industry. Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) responsible for training in the fisheries industry and the national state fisheries board. This agency provides training for those who want to pursue a career in fishing or fish processing. Teagasc the state agency that has responsibility for training and research for the agricultural industry and this also includes the forestry industry. Coillte, the state forestry agency that manages the forests of Ireland and also provides training programmes in forestry. Also sharing the FET arena are private providers. These are private companies that bid to provide FET to businesses and co-operatives.

Summary

The FET sector is now engaged in a major reform agenda led by the Irish government at the behest of the 'Troika' as part of its proposed structural reform. This structural reform was extensive and strategic. It was a compulsory and non-negotiable solution imposed on government by the IMF. The role and functions of the varying organisations and agencies that

make up the new FET sector are outlined succinctly in legislation and in numerous strategies. The DoES, SOLAS, and the newly formed ETBs, Intreo and QQI must all collaborate to provide a streamlined fourth pillar of education for Ireland that is effective and efficient. The response to the reform agenda by the Irish government was to streamline unwieldy, disconnected, incoherent and complex agencies and bodies together to form new authorities and structures.

Although the changes introduced were seismic, they presented challenges for the integration of services and the future policies and strategies that would form and influence the new sector. SOLAS recognised the fact that they must develop their plans and strategies within the context of the Governments 'The Action Plans for Jobs' and 'The Pathways to Work' initiatives. It is now the remit of SOLAS to amalgamate two very distinct sectors that for decades ran independently, with separate governance and, in the case of training, distinct policy and funding. Whilst achieving this, SOLAS must take cognisance of the government's strategies and policies on driving the economy forward.

QQI, the DSP and NEES have clear guidelines and policy procedures to follow as part of the FET sector. Strategies, reports, analysis, texts, secondary commentary and empirical data specific to FET are emerging as the sector is established. The policy discourse clearly defines the function and role of the sector and evaluates the progress and development of the FET sector. This is a new departure whereby a glut of documentary evidence is available to research and scrutinise the newly established sector. Specific and detailed legislation was enacted to establish the sector, as the importance of this sector to the economy is now to the fore as a factor of government strategy and public policy discourse.

Chapter 7

Summary of the Research Process

This study set out to examine the evolution in both the shape and direction taken by further education and training (FET) in the Republic of Ireland over eight decades, from the 1930s through to the present day. For most of this period, responsibility for the education and training of young people and adults was divided between separate authorities and agencies, each with their own administrative arrangements and policy priorities. In 2013, for the first time, a unified sector and structure of further education and training was established, alongside higher education and school education. Based on a systematic reading and analysis of primary and secondary sources, three phases of development are identified prior to amalgamation and were examined and analysed.

The research analysed the historical development of the FET sectors to indicate how and why, for decades, they occupied separate spaces and what policies, strategies and legislation created the boundaries that became blurred over time and at other times would overlap. This study analysed the space FET occupies and the policy discourse and legislation or lack thereof that shaped these sectors. The study identified and analysed the space that has been filled in Irish education and called FET. It concluded by presenting the structure and agencies that form the newly established FET structure and examined how these are emerging and forming the new sector.

The argument of the research is that it took an exceptional set of circumstances, a global financial crash in 2008 and subsequent fiscal restructuring enforced on the government by the IMF, for a breakthrough to a unified framework and national strategy to amalgamate FET. It has taken a seismic economic collapse and outside intervention to create this new sector. This new sector of FET is a significant historical development within the Irish education and training landscape.

By highlighting the historical transitions and changes that occurred as a key aspect of a wider political context of economic flux and change, and through the examination of historical documents and secondary text analysis the study scrutinised the influences on the development and evolution of these sectors. Relations between the state and the developments that influenced transformations and transitions were explored and illustrated through evaluation and

analysis of reports, debates and texts (see Appendix 2). The legacies and historical contexts of the separate sector identities are complex, their organisational cultures and operations driven by socio-political and economic drivers. Over the decades the sectors responded to government policy discourse, strategies, interventions, socio-economic and political contexts in a complex framework of interactions, evolutions and developments. Based on a systematic reading and analysis of primary texts, three phases of development were identified prior to the amalgamation of FET. The use of Critical Policy Analysis: a trajectory perspective, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Documentary Analysis through a hermeneutic lens explored the relationship between discursive practices, specific primary texts, events and the wider social and cultural structures relations and processes (the shape and direction of developments of FET historically) and the recent developments.

The evolution and development of FET did not occur in a vacuum. In the first phase the earliest developments occurred within the political context of a postcolonial state in a context of political turmoil, with a fledgling government ambitiously setting up central government and local education structures underpinned by legislation in a closed economy that was mainly agrarian. The second phase from the 1960s onwards Ireland engaged with European and the wider world in a political and socio-economic context. Irish governments had to contend with external influences and contexts and weren't always free to determine policy, and this came to the fore from the 1970s onwards. External influences included Ireland's membership of the EU, the policies of the OECD and the wider global context. External influences over the past eight decades had direct and indirect impact on the growth and formation of FET. Funding from the EU would be a major factor in moulding and shaping the development of FET.

From the 1990s, Ireland was impacted and influenced by EU policy discourse; the Bologna Process and the Lisbon Treaty. The lifelong learning agenda promoted by the EU Commission was a driving force in Ireland and influenced the development of the qualification structures. The EU's Lifelong learning discourse was and is influential in nature and in this regard, it is hardly surprising that a lifelong learning focus is apparent within educational policy discourse in Ireland. In essence, the world was changing rapidly, with new technology and the effects of globalisation on all areas of education, and validated qualifications were important to industry and the economy at large. This socio-political context would be subsumed by the wider context of globalisation and the knowledge economy. As a result of the progress in the EU, the role played by the NFQ Policy, primarily the (NCVA) and latterly (FETAC), all impacted and drove

the sectors forward. Their influences are still apparent today in the qualification structures and certification available to the new sector. Significantly the enactment of legislation to establish a qualifications framework gave legitimation to PLCs, adult education and all training qualifications, and Ireland no longer relied on UK qualification bodies. It gave the sectors credibility and national quality standards. FÁS training centres and PLCs could advertise courses with recognised qualifications on a national framework of qualifications. Further education colleges, formerly PLCs, emerged as part of the education choice for students who wanted to access work directly or as a stepping stone into higher education. FÁS continued to provide education and training for the trades and apprenticeships. Adult education, within the VECs, had managed to secure its own funding streams, namely VTOS and BTEI, and was considered the most successful, remaining so to this day. RTCs became IoTs and are legislated to evolve into universities of technology.

Evaluating and analysing the development and evolution of FET was complicated by the multiplicity of changes of government, the passage of time, changes in terminology, changes to organisations, changes to strategy, changes in legislation and changes to funding that all originated separately and distinctly. Over the decades, there was an absence of a coordinated strategic direction and no deliberate planned policy from central government. The obstacles to providing an integrated or co-operative approach were a result of different government departments having responsibility for FET as separate entities, most recently VECs under the remit of DoES and FÁS under the Department of Enterprise and Employment.

Analysis and research highlighted that PLC / colleges were mainly shaped by the environment of the VECs and operated in the context of second-level school educational policy, resources and funding, on one side and adult education policy discourse on the other but belonging to neither. Central government influenced the development of policy or the lack thereof, while local government, i.e. VECs, in the past implemented policy or filled vacuums created by a lack of central government policy. Without central government policy or legislation VECs developed a culture whereby they manipulated the system to meet training and education needs of their local economies. A predisposition within the VECs as local educational organisations was their propensity to meet educational and training needs of communities, therefore growing provision organically and in an ad hoc manner. This form of provision was evident from the outset and became an innovative method through which VECs could keep apace of employment needs in their city, town and county regions.

In contrast, training was resourced directly by a government department, with strategic planning, policy discourse and EU funding shaped and directed training as a recognised agency. Although FET has now emerged as a single amalgamated sector, the histories of the two sectors (further education and training) and their influences are intricate.

The political context was a major factor and driver in the formation and implementation of policy and financial support coming from government. Multiple collapses of governments followed by general elections, by economic recessions in quick succession determined the fate of these sectors over decades of uncertainty. The landscape of FET was also influenced by changing external conditions, global recessions and oil crisis. In fact, the rapid changes that have occurred in the development of the new sector happened within the context of a global economic crisis. One lesson from the past and observed during this study is that policy and strategy are dependent on the government and ministers in power and that rapid change of both has a bearing on what policy discourse, strategy or legislation will or will not be implemented. There was a tendency by newly appointed ministers to devise strategy and policy and ignore the plans of the previous incumbent. The new structures of FET will impact on ministerial ambition to resist from reorganising the system in an ad hoc and unplanned manner and should lead to stability for the FET sector.

Key stakeholders in education across the decades such as the Christian churches, local politicians, FÁS, VECs, employers and unions led to the complexity and had a major say in and control over how education and training developed. The power tension between church and state in the education arena has remained a factor right through the decades and is still part of the political debate. The state, from its formation, attempted to establish a secular branch of education, but was compromised by church influence. The perspectives and interests of key stakeholders led to the complexity and inhibited the development of a unified sector.

Apprenticeship training remained one of the most unwieldy sectors within this area of education and training. Although many attempts were made since the Apprenticeship Act 1931 and many other Acts legislated, it was and remains one of the most complex areas of education and training in Ireland. It warrants research and exploration of the complexities in establishing a modernised and organised system.

During the various eras, national FET organisations and their individual institutions responded to their specific environments to meet local needs and how they manipulated funding streams to create educational or training provision to meet national strategy was paramount to their development. These separate organisations were influenced by their contextual history and their own cultures developed. In many ways, the FET sector is a significant departure from the proposed developments of the sectors in the previous eras. Demands for greater accountability and efficiencies through regional training boards, with oversight from SOLAS will change the FET landscape. As highlighted in this study it is not certain whether or not this will eradicate duplication and the blurring of boundaries in providing courses and meet economic skill shortages. Other aspects of provision also under scrutiny, are the many players involved in apprenticeship training dependant on economic stability and skills requirements.

Analysis of historical documents produces an important finding in that many historical variables and factors over the decades ensured that the amalgamation of the sectors did not happen. A finding of the research and analysis is that prior to its amalgamation FET was unwieldy and occupied many spaces in provision, some overlapping with others. It will perhaps take years of planning and many strategies before it becomes a recognisable sector and functions as a whole.

Challenges for the New Sector

The legitimacy of the FET sector is now well established within a robust legislative framework, with the aim of government bodies and agencies to work together. The challenge as identified from this research is the need to maintain a coherent and well-coordinated sector, capable of meeting the skills needs of the economy, rather than a disjointed sector where provision overlaps and is duplicated, and agencies' goals and aims are blurred with those of others within the framework or sector.

There are indications throughout the research that political planning and policy discourse must be challenged and that an open discourse on the new sector and its future also require focus and research. Although a FET sector is now firmly established and reviews of different aspects of FET provision are taking place, FET faces significant challenges into the future. It is not a perfect amalgamation; no more than any other system could be that is created from disparate

parts. The various stakeholders the DoES, SOLAS, ETBs, the DSP and QQI have endeavored to establish the present structure and are all working closely to establish FET in Ireland. The ESRI (2014) commented that ‘The establishment of SOLAS and its strategic and oversight function has the capacity to change governance structures more in line with international norms; however, it remains unclear exactly how the governance function of SOLAS will materialise at an operational level’ (p. 114).

The challenge facing SOLAS is that with the co-operation of the ETBs they must now provide a cohesive, organised entity that is recognisable as a quality sector both nationally and internationally. It needs to be branded and cohesive and ‘do what it says on the tin’. No matter how many aspirational policy documents are written about this new sector, it will be the strength of the legislation that underpins it that will in time come to the fore. SOLAS needs to ensure that ETBs, though individual bodies of governance, work in a coordinated and unified manner. It is imperative for this new sector that the silos of the past are dismantled, and a quality integrated sector of FET is provided. There are many issues and challenges ahead for ETBs in amalgamating divergent but fundamentally similar sectors. Many actors and players will share the arena of FET, and how this is organised at this initial stage will have consequences into the future for the success of this newly formed sector.

Establishing the identities of the new regional ETBs encompassing national training as the new brand remains a challenge. The prospect of expanding ETBs’ capacity and colleges of further education to meet educational and training needs in a coherent and consolidated manner will require a robust and clear strategy. ETBs and SOLAS will be charged with providing clear pathways of education and training and the reduction of duplication in provision. As SOLAS collects and collates empirical data, reporting and statistical returns should support the streamlining of the sector. As Ireland emerges from a deep recession and the economy improves, the key concern is to provide a FET system to meet the demands of a changing society.

Introducing policy and strategy to shape a new education sector for the future requires planning, resources, administration and organisational structures that can support and facilitate change and implementation of policy and strategy. All this must be underpinned not just by legislation, but by sustainable legislation that underpins policy initiatives and drives a new sector forward.

Budgeting and resourcing for the new sector are necessary prerequisites to assist in establishing FET in Ireland as an integrated system. The weakest aspect of the new FET system relates to inadequate resourcing to implement the strategic development and the limited budgets that exist at government level. Ireland is still in a state of flux with Brexit, and this remains a hidden factor that can influence how Ireland's fragile economy will develop and sustain growth.

The review of apprenticeship training has taken place with a proposed outline of how it will be organised into the future. Although now governed by SOLAS, there is, however, a sense that this area of training and education will remain as it is until the economy and business and industry can afford to train apprentices and support them. Historically, apprenticeship training is without doubt firmly linked to the state of the economy and in the past linked to the construction trades. Apprenticeships are now moving from their traditional spaces into new areas of technology and trade; this in itself will be a challenge as new areas either accept or reject this type of training.

As provision exists in its various forms, it is therefore the organisation and streamlining of this provision that requires strategy and organisational structure to dismantle the silos of training and further education provision. However, it must be acknowledged that in what were historically separate sectors of training and further education, provision was duplicated due to lack of policy, coordination and joined-up thinking by central government. Historically, these two sectors were very separate in their governance and funding and in how they were recognised and organised. Even within the separate sectors, there existed a multiplicity of provision. The ESRI (2014) noted in their report that 'The composition of Irish FET means that it encapsulates a range of diverse activities including initial vocational education, adult education and training (including literacy and basic education), workforce development and community education and training' p. 119. The challenge for SOLAS and in turn the ETBs will be to streamline the FET sector and provide quality provision. In tandem, they must work with external agencies, i.e. QQI on the qualifications front and the DSP in upskilling the unemployed and the long-term unemployed. As this study shows, the policy, legislation and organisation of FET, although separate, was fundamentally disparate. The ESRI (2014) stated that:

The research highlighted that the diverse nature of the sector was seen as making it difficult to form a clear identity for FET. The FET sector was viewed by stakeholders as being less clearly defined and of lower perceived status than Higher Education (HE). This was regarded as reflecting broader societal norms and expectations but was also seen as relating to the fragmentation of FET provision and perceptions of current provision.

Other fundamental differences will need to be ‘ironed out’ to rationalise the FET sector. It will be at the coal face of provision that the similarities and differences will be most acute. Change management therefore will be to the fore and the policy and strategy to manage this transition of change will be paramount. The ESRI (2014) argues that ‘Both the VECs and FÁS have largely had autonomy with respect to the composition and nature of provision with little strategy direction coming from national authorities. The historic lack of any governance or planning function within the Irish FET sector will certainly have meant that the Irish system is less well equipped to respond to national priorities’ p. XII. This view is possibly a little over simplified but still of relevance. However, as training and further education evolved in many different ways, the training sector in the past was clearly linked to governance by its government department. Training was branded, was a recognised sector, was funded, had organisational structures and reported on an annual basis on its activity. The VECs’ further education and the PLCs, on the other hand, operated under the guise of second-level schools, and further education grew organically to meet local and regional labour and progression needs of students and employers.

The FÁS training agency will bring a lot to the table in the amalgamation, firstly in having experience of meeting labour market needs and agenda and secondly in its vast knowledge of data collection and reporting. The DoES review (Sweeney, 2013) views the role of SOLAS as that of analyst and evaluator, as outlined in the legislation, and argues that ‘SOLAS and the ETBs in collaboration with DSP and Revenue should therefore develop robust data collection systems in order to construct learner and local labour market profiles, facilitate the tracking of employment, earnings and onward progression through FET and other performance information on FET programmes’ p. 8. The review is in general critical of the data collection by the VEC sector and calls for an improvement and the setting up of structures to gather vital statistics. This is acknowledged by the Further Education Committee of the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD, 2014) in their vision document, *Realising Opportunities: A Vision for Further Education and Training*, which states that ‘It is acknowledged that the measurement of progression currently yields unsatisfactory information, with significant numbers of ‘unknown’ outcomes. Colleges are committed to addressing this, valuing the potential of longitudinal information as an assessment of the effectiveness of

provision' (p. 22). This viewpoint is reiterated also by the ESRI (2014), when they criticise the lack of reliable data available in the FET sector:

There is a lack of reliable data on FET provision in Ireland and this proved to be a major constraint in underpinning the research process. There exists no single information source that tracks FET participants so as to enable the accurate and integrated measurement of enrolments, completion rates, levels of accreditation and progression by subject area and level of study.

(ESRI, 2014, p. 12)

It must, however, be noted that FÁS as the training agency had developed a culture of data collection, and each training centre was required to publish its annual reports and annual plans to secure funding. On the other hand, national statistics in further education and especially further education colleges are only a recent requirement, and annual reports and plans were internal documents published in-house and on websites. As the SOLAS strategic plan notes, ICT for gathering statistics and tracking students' achievements will become part of the new reporting mechanism and structure. This is perhaps an example of the many changes and challenges that will face the newly formed sector (SOLAS, 2014).

The ETBs, on the other hand, will bring a wealth of knowledge of working with the adult learner and will have a consciousness of their educational provision within local communities. Both sectors have a wealth of experience that can be shared and valued to create a quality FET sector. However, the ESRI (2014) report found conflicting views from interviews conducted with stakeholders on the objectives of the FET sector. The ESRI (2014) reported:

Stakeholders differed somewhat in the relative emphasis they placed on the two objectives of meeting labour market needs and countering social exclusion. In the context of recession, many representatives from statutory bodies and training providers emphasised the urgency of reducing unemployment by providing courses to meet labour market needs. Representatives from the community education sector pointed to the continued need to provide education and training designed to enhance the skills of learners without necessarily having a direct labour market focus. However, the vast majority of stakeholders viewed FET provision as addressing *both* labour market and social inclusion agendas. The diverse nature of the sector was seen as making it difficult to form a clear identity for FET.

(ESRI, 2014, p. 43)

These differing views may in fact present a policy and cultural divide between what was traditionally the training sector and that of the adult education/PLC (that existed within VECs in various guises). Not only is there a structural and organisational divide for SOLAS and ETBs

to conquer, but there may in fact be a divide in culture and perception on what the future objectives of FET are. This may in time require more in-depth follow-up research, analysis and, in time, change management to assist with the amalgamation.

Two very distinct sectors with differing past status, legacy, policy, legislation and governance have now amalgamated, and many unforeseen and unexpected factors will emerge. SOLAS and ETBs must be clear in their strategies about what the vision and objectives are for FET and make these as clear as possible for the students who will avail of their services and for staff who provide these services. The ESRI (2014), in its treatment of policy implications states:

There are a number of prerequisites to SOLAS's ability to fulfil its role in an effective and efficient fashion. In order to provide direction on the needs of employers and emerging labour market trends in vocational employment, data gaps with respect to existing provision must also be addressed as a matter of priority

(ESRI, 2014, p. 122)

On many levels, there is a considerable requirement for research and analysis to establish the FET sector and position it, so that it will 'tick all the boxes', so to speak, in particular the government's initiatives to get the country back to work. This on the surface appears to be a neoliberal agenda, with the economy and the needs of the economy as the driving force for the new SOLAS strategy. It appears, as in the past and dating back to the formation of the Irish state that the economy and jobs are influencing and shaping the FET sector. Imperative now is the amalgamation of the two sectors into a fully functioning sector as a fourth pillar of the Irish education system. The legislation, policies, strategies, definition and visions are all now in place; however, further research is required, as is more data gathering by all agencies and analysis and reviews put in place for an effective and efficient sector.

The challenge for the government and in turn policy is to ensure that all levels of this new sector function at an economic, training and educational level as an integrated unit, while embracing the philosophies of lifelong learning and the needs of civil society that all citizens reach their full potential and lead fulfilled lives. However, as training and further education sectors are no longer the remit of two government departments for their planning and policy, the DoES, without any opposition from other government departments, stakeholders or unions, has enacted new legislation to establish and create a new sector of FET with a newly developed

framework. The FET strategy is a departure in terms of development in that the DoES has charged SOLAS with this responsibility and therefore strategy will not directly come from central government and/or the DoES. Strategy has been implemented and planned without consultation and agreements, it is a *fait accompli*, one that was driven by economic circumstances and decisions made at EU level. As far back as Murphy (1973), it was argued that ‘the greatest single need of adult education in Ireland, to-day, is a definite system, framework and organisation within which it can function, develop and give satisfaction’. The DoES has now legislated for a new structure that encompasses all aspects of FET. These new structures should provide structures that the Murphy Report outlined many decades ago. As far back as 2000, the report of the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment (2002) also recommended the amalgamation of the two sectors: ‘the Taskforce points out that the analysis presented here demonstrates that the traditional conceptual and organisational divide between education and training is anachronistic. These boundary issues must be tackled if Lifelong Learning is to become a reality’ (p. 9). It has taken decades for the establishment and recognition of a FET sector, and in turn this has emerged with an amalgamation of two major sectors.

This is perhaps the most revolutionary and rapid change that has occurred in the Irish education system since the 1980s. The speed of the change is unprecedented, as change historically in Irish education can be slow and onerous. The policy and legislative vacuum are now filled and only time will show the robustness of both in establishing this new FET sector. Whatever about the internal amalgamations of the two sectors into one, the proof of its success will be whether students, employers, higher education and the general public recognise and value the new FET sector.

The strengths and weakness of this thesis research strategy

In researching and reviewing the newly established FET sector and its history of evolution and development appeared at times too broad and complex an area to investigate, particularly during a time of unprecedented change. Due to the longitudinal nature of the research any number of conclusions can be drawn. First the scale and scope of the text analysis, not previously examined in literature was substantial and significant especially since it was confronted with a large existence of historical data, heretofore not examined in the context of FET. Secondly the various secondary commentators have generally focused on varying aspects of education but not specifically FET. One of the major challenges and perceived weakness for this study was the lack of commentary and research papers explicitly analysing the sectors. The ESRI Report (2014), *Further Education and Training in Ireland: Past, Present and Future*, was the first major national report examining the sector. Thirdly there remains important areas where research work on FET and particularly the focus on student experiences is required.

This study is a new reading of texts, documents, policy discourse and legislation. the lack in Ireland of a research culture into FET was a constant influencer throughout the study on the design and approach. The reading of these documents highlights the advantages of historical policy research with a CDA methodology as an approach which recognises the cyclical nature and policy trajectory of policy making over time and enables new insights into the evolution and development of FET. The use of Critical Policy Analysis: a trajectory perspective, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) drawing on the work of Fairclough, Hyatt and Ball, Documentary Analysis through a hermeneutic lens explored the relationship between discursive practices, specific primary historical texts, secondary commentary, events and the wider social and cultural structures relations and processes (the shape and direction of developments of FET historically) and the recent developments. Using Scott (1990), criteria for assessing any type of research evidence, provided a structure within which to analyse and evaluate documents, texts, secondary commentary and debates (See Appendix 2). This study was conducted by desk research, and it examines the types of sources and their selection, to include methods of working and analysis, reliability and the study's claim to knowledge.

Reading of texts, policy discourse, and the use of consultation and analysis of FET over its lifetime highlights the tension between government central and local, between agencies and organisations and the tension in the space FET occupied over eight decades. These tensions

were not recognised in the wider commentary of the study which focused on specific, phase related issues.

An understanding of structural and systematic effects was an important focus that drove this study. However, the objective of this study was to go beyond a descriptive account of the historical development of FET and to evaluate and analyse what influenced and formed the sector's development. Original historical texts and documents gave context and time frames to historical situations and decisions and were considered important in the design phase of this research (See Appendix 2). Primary historical sources gave an insight into the context of their times and highlighted the varying issues at different times and eras that added to the complexity in the development of the separate sectors. Analysing and examining texts gave a clear indication of what was influencing and shaping these sectors. Each era or phase had its own policy discourse and strategy creating networks of socio-economic and political practice articulated through the documents. The hermeneutics lens gave focus to the research and supported the examination of documents by giving an application on interaction and language and an aid to understanding the position through the eyes of the participant. The response to the educational and training discourse of FET during this era where we have amalgamated the sectors is no different. Although FET has now emerged as a single amalgamated sector their histories and the influences remain intricate and complex.

Conclusion

This study concluded with a reflection on the future of the new FET sector and the challenges it faces. Publication of strategies, reports and policy documents will provide a rich vein for research of the FET sector and will benefit from research at a macro and micro level. The resulting restructuring of organisations, agencies, and the impact on stakeholders: students and staff, and on the provision of FET: education and training, student progression, research, the labour market and economic viability will be fields of importance not only for academics but to the Irish economy. The capacity to deliver activation services and re-skilling opportunities should will be a main focus. While the new framework is broadly in place, significant work remains to be done in order to build on the recent positive developments of amalgamating the two main agencies under the ETB umbrella.

What this study argues, is that in Ireland, despite the prevalence of policy discourse, debate, green and white papers, legislation, which might seem to indicate otherwise; articulation of and commitment to a clear policy on FET remained vague and elusive, and it would take an extraordinary set of circumstances for its establishment. For example if the proposal made in the Education White Paper of 1995, Charting our Education Future (Department of Education, 1995), namely that of establishing a FET sector, had happened, this sector would have had decades to embed and possibly mature into an important sector in the education landscape. The structures, amalgamations and establishment of a Further Education Authority all formed part of that proposal. However, it would take an economic collapse and financial and socio-political external pressure from the EU for Ireland to form this new sector.

The new FET sector is shaped and developed from a combination of policies, legislation and strategies. It is now one of the four recognised pillars of education in Ireland, the other three being primary, secondary and higher education. The FET sector has its own unique strategy and has definite structures that are bound by legislation. Although a new FET sector has been established, not all training will be encompassed within this sector. The FET sector will require national consistency in terms of provision, quality, qualifications and identity. A long-term strategic focus is vital for this sector to forge a new future and bind the difference of heritage and legacy that is bound up in identity and history.

The new organisational structure of the ETBs that have incorporated the training sector as part of their remit will also face challenges as ETBs co-operate with the multiplicity of stakeholders and are responsible for the implementation of SOLAS strategy and DoES policy. FET remains a complex area in Ireland, with not all government departments and state agencies and bodies included as part of this structure. Excluded are training provision provided by the Enterprise Boards, the National Learning Network, Skillsnet, agricultural training, and forestry and fisheries. The apprenticeship structure now aligned and governed by SOLAS will remain complex, with IoTs providing college training for some apprentices, and various stakeholders still within this space.

FET still has some way to go to become a fully integrated, streamlined sector that is not complicated by too many stakeholders, many organisations and internal structures, various funding streams and powerful influences that are both internal and external. As this research

has highlighted, changes in government and changes in ministers should not result in immediate change in policy, legislation and strategy. FET policy in Ireland as a new policy discourse concept has moved from the traditional manner of development, whereby Government Ministers and their departments formulated White papers and green papers and then introduced legislation. The DoES has delegated under legislation the authority of FET to various actors within the national framework (SOLAS, ETBS, and QQI) as the main players and implementers of policy.

To make it a successful sector in education, it is imperative that all aspects of education and training at levels 1 to 6 on the NFQ are catered for under the legislation and that the disparate and various organisations are fully amalgamated under one organisation and one national umbrella of FET. FET in Ireland has emerged as a single entity following a national economic crisis. It did not emerge during the ‘Celtic Tiger’ era, and it is in essence a reactionary solution to a situation. However, the new frameworks, legislation, strategies and structures are well received and herald a new process in developing and forming a new education sector. Policy documents and legislation will present researchers with documentation that is relevant and allow analysis and review of the sector over time.

Ireland’s ability to adapt and embrace new technologies and knowledge is now highlighted by government to attract international companies. A principal consideration is that Ireland, within the context of Europe, is part of the knowledge society and knowledge economy. Globalisation and Ireland’s open economy will impact on this new sector and it will be expected to meet skills gaps and the need for training for a knowledge economy. As a consequence of globalisation, Ireland operates as an open economy within the context of global markets and is influenced by transnational and national economic growth and failure.

This research contributes and facilitates the extension and engagement of researchers to productively engage in policy discourse and strategy review of FET in Ireland and to investigate its many aspects and should not prevent them from seeing education against a backdrop of systemic change in Irish society. It also contributes to the conversation and discourse at an important stage in the establishment of this new FET sector in Ireland.

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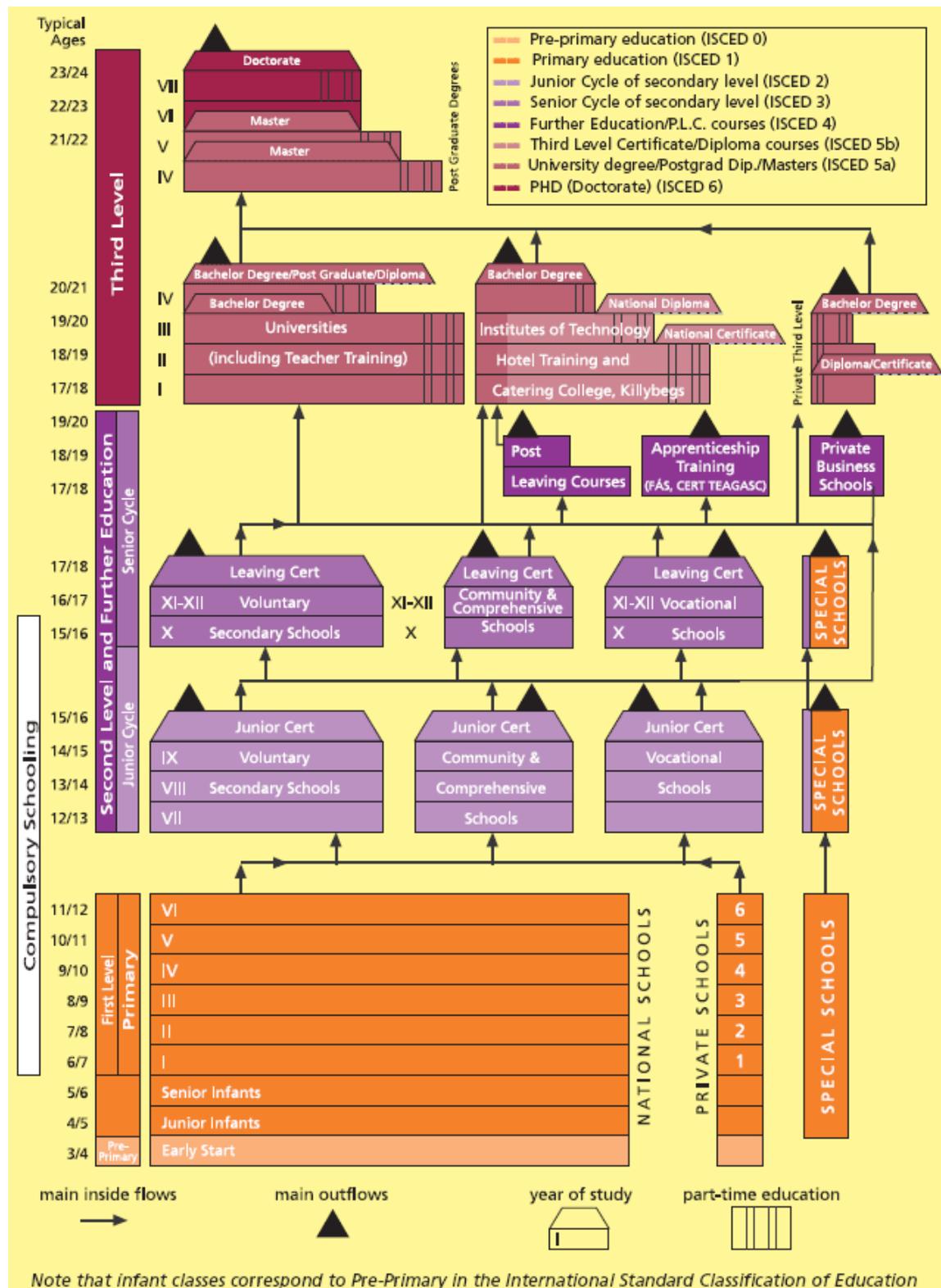
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Appendix 1

An overview of the structure of the Education and Training System in Ireland

This appendix presents a brief overview of the educational structure in Ireland.



UNESCO IBE World Data on Education, 6th Edition, Ireland

In Irish education, there were three very distinct and recognised sectors: primary education, post-primary education (second-level/secondary schooling) and higher education (third level education) up until the FET sector was established. It is envisaged that further education and training will occupy a space between secondary level and higher level and form the fourth pillar of education in Ireland. When making reference to higher level, universities and institutes of technology and private higher education institutes / colleges are included. In Ireland higher level is also called ‘third level’.

Primary Education

‘At first level the predominant institution is that known as the national school’ (Coolahan, 1981). In Ireland it is also referred to as ‘primary school’. Traditionally, national schools were church owned, with the majority Roman Catholic and the remainder Church of Ireland. Attendance at primary school can start from the age of four, lasts for eight years and is free. All schools adhere to the same curriculum and syllabus as laid down by the Department of Education and Skills. In recent years ETBs have been charged by the DoES to patron newly established primary schools. Educate Together also patron primary schools in Ireland.

Second-Level Schooling – Post Primary/Secondary Education

Following primary education, which finishes around the age of twelve, students’ progress to what is referred to as post-primary school (these include secondary schools that are faith schools under the auspices of the Christian churches, vocational schools, community schools and comprehensive schools. Also, in this space are Educate Together schools at this level. This second sector of education lasts for five to six years, with the first three years of study called the Junior Cycle, at the end of which the students sit a national state examination called the Junior Certificate in the subjects studied. This junior cycle is now introducing in school assessment with a move away from final year state examinations. This is followed by the Senior Cycle, which is three years if a student opts for a one-year Transition Year after their Junior Cycle. The Leaving Certificate Examination is the terminal examination of post-primary education. Students normally sit the examination at the age of 17 or 18, after five to six years of post-primary education. This examination is used for a variety of purposes; for example, as an entry qualification for a range of third-level institutions, including the universities and as a selection test for entry to many kinds of employment. This variety of use makes the

Leaving Certificate a dominant influence upon much of the work of second-level schools, affecting curriculum, methodology, assessment and organization. This provision of schooling is provided by secondary schools, comprehensive schools, community schools and vocational schools. In the past, the provision differed depending on the type of second-level school attended. However, today it is difficult to decipher the differences in the curricula that are offered. School retention report published by the Department of Education in 2011 91.6 per cent sat the Leaving Certificate Exam in 2016 or 2017, while 97.5 per cent sat the Junior Certificate Exams in 2014 or 2015. This retention rate to the Leaving Certificate of 91.6 per cent was an increase of 0.4 percentage points on 2010, when it stood at 91.2 per cent. The retention rate for males increased by 0.5 percentage points from 89.7 per cent to 90.2 per cent, while for females this increased from 92.7 per cent to 93.1 per cent, a rise of 0.4 percentage points (Department of education and Skills, 2011).

Secondary Schools (Post-Primary Schools)

Coolahan (1981) states ‘The oldest institution of second-level schooling is the secondary school. These are all denominational schools built by religious groups’ (p. 142). Referred to as the network of voluntary secondary schools they incorporate 400 schools and is supported by the Joint Managerial Body (JMB). The JMB, through the Secretariat of the Secondary Schools, provides a range of advice and support services, in addition to negotiating on behalf of school management in the network. The Council of the JMB is made up of representatives of the Association of Management of Catholic Secondary Schools (AMCSS) and the Irish School Heads’ Association, which represents the Protestant schools in the state.

Vocational Schools

Vocational schools ‘are second-level public schools under the control of local authorities formerly (VECs) now Education and Training Boards (ETBS). They are built and maintained jointly by central government and local authority. Since 1966 most of the vocational schools offer the full cycle of post-primary education’ (Coolahan, 1981, p. 142). Vocational schools, because of their public governance, are deemed non-denominational; however, in practice they are multi-belief, with religious studies forming part of the curriculum and Roman Catholic priests or Church of Ireland pastors with a seat on the local VEC. The inclusion of religious

studies has its origins in an agreement between church and state that dated back to the formation of the state.

Comprehensive and Community Schools

Also forming part of the second-level school system are comprehensive and community schools, which provide comprehensive curricula that offer academic and vocational subjects and provide for all students in their catchment area. Similar to the vocational schools, these schools are mixed, with boys and girls attending, whereas the traditional secondary schools are predominately single sex. These community and comprehensive schools are run by boards of management and many have their origins in the amalgamation of secondary and vocational schools providing second-level education in their local community. However, it must be acknowledged that the majority of second-level schools offer a blend of traditional vocational and academic subjects as part of their curricula. Free second-level education was introduced in the 1960s and in the intervening years participation levels have increased.

Higher Education/Third Level

The third distinct sector in the Irish education system is higher level and at times in Ireland referred to as third level. The higher-level education system incorporates state funded third level (majority) and private independent colleges. Universities, Teacher Training Colleges, the Institutes of Technology and the private HE Institutes. Within the IoT sector, Institutes of Technology within certain geographical areas are proposing joint detailed business plans that will be submitted to the Higher Education Authority to gain status as 'Technological Universities'. The detailed business plans set out the approach necessary to meet the criteria for university designation.

Further Education and Training

In 2011 the DES announced the establishment of a distinct Further Education and Training (FET) sector in Ireland. This sector is described as the fourth pillar of education in Ireland. This saw the amalgamation of further education and training under one government department the DoES. Further education and training had up to this point comprised separate agencies with separate governance at national and local level. This reform proposed the dissolution of the

state training authority, An Foras Áiseanna Saothair (FÁS), and the establishment of a new Further Education and Training Authority, An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna (SOLAS), under the auspices of the DES. SOLAS is the new Further Education and Training Authority in Ireland. It is responsible for funding, planning and coordinating training and further education programmes. SOLAS was formally established on 27 October 2013 by Ruairí Quinn TD, the then Minister for Education and Skills. He stated that ‘SOLAS will be tasked with ensuring the provision of 21st century high quality further education and training programmes which are responsive to the needs of learners and the requirements of a changed and changing economy.’ This will be implemented in partnership with ETBs who will organise and manage the provision of education and training required and identified for their regional areas. Further education and training fills the space that exists between second and higher level education

Other Providers of Further Education and Training

Outside of the VEC (now ETB) structure that incorporates FÁS, there are also other statutory agencies providing FET. Although a comprehensive FET sector was established with a detailed strategy and robust legislation to underpin the sector, some aspects of provision still remain outside the remit of SOLAS and ETBs; these include CERT (now Fáilte Ireland), Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM), Teagasc, Coillte, and private companies that bid to provide FET.

Appendix 2

An overview of documents and primary texts

Reports	Policy and Reviews	Legislation	Debates	Green / White Papers
1970 AnCO The Industrial Training Authority 3rd Annual Report 1969-70	2000 Commission of the European Communities A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, Brussels	1899 The Agricultural and Technical Instruction Act.	1930 Dáil Debate, Vocational Education Bill.	1992 Green Paper Education for a Changing World
2007 Central Applications Office, Board of Directors Report	2001 Communication from the EU Commission, Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality.	1998 Education Act	1977 Dáil Eireann Debate, Private Members Business; Youth Policy: Motion.	1995. White Paper: Charting our Education Future.
2004 Central Statistics Office Measuring Ireland's Progress	1984 Programme for Action in Education, 1984-87	1999 Qualifications (Education and Training) Act	1984 Dail Eireann Debate	1998 Green Paper Adult Education in an Era of Learning
1926-1991 Central Statistics Office, Historical Census Volumes	1985 Partners in Education Serving Community Needs	2000 Education Welfare Act	1987 Dail Eireann Debate, Green Paper on Education	White Paper 1998. Adult Education in an Era of Learning
1960 Commission on Higher Education - 1967 Volume 1 & 2, Dublin	Partnership 2000	2001 The Vocational Education (Amendment) Act	1988 Dail Eireann diospoiraíocht (debate)	1998 Green Paper: Adult Education in an Era of Lifelong Learning
1927 Commission on Technical Education Report	2007 Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025	2001 Youth Work Act	Houses of the Oireachtas Dáil Eireann, 2004. Joint Committee on Education and Science Debate - McIver Report: Presentation	2000 White Paper: Adult Education- Learning for Life
2009 Comptroller and Auditor General Internal Control and Governance in FÁS	2006 Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation (SSTI), 2006 - 2013	2012 Education and Training Boards Bill		1995. White Paper Charting Our Education Future

2003 Report of the Steering Group to the PLC Review	2015 Innovation 2020 - Ireland's Strategy for Research and Development, Science and Technology	2013 Further Education and Training Act	.	1997 White Paper Human Resource and Development
1994 Convention Secretariat, Report on The National Education Convention,	1984 Programme for Action in Education			1965 White Paper on Manpower Policy
1984 The National Youth Policy Committee final report	2009 Policy Options for New Student Contribution	1959 Apprenticeship Act	.	1980 White Paper on Educational Development
Culliton Report, 1992. A Time for Change: Industrial Policy for the 1990s, Report of the Industrial Review Group,	2010 Investing in Global relationships - Ireland's International Education Strategy 2010 - 2015,	1931 Apprenticeship Act		
	2014 National Strategy - A National Research Prioritisation Exercise, Dublin: The Stationery Office	1967 The Industrial Training Act. Dublin		
2002. Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning, Dublin: Stationery Office.	2016. A Strategy for Funding in Higher Education	1987 Labour Services Act		
1989 Report on Economic and Monetary Union: report to the European Council by Committee,	2001 Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality,	1924. Ministers and Secretaries Act 1924		
Department of Education Annual Report, (1921-22); (1924-25); (1926);(1925 - 27); (1927-28); (1930-31);(1931-32); (1935-36); (1940-41); (1946-47);(1951-52); (1959-60); (1960);	2001 -2012 FETAC, Policy Documents	1998 Industrial Development (Enterprise Ireland) Act.		
2012 FETAC Awards Report		2015 Technological Universities Bill		
1982 Report of the Minister for	2012 Guidelines for the Alignment of Further			

Fisheries and Forestry on The Forest and Wildlife Service,	Education Programmes with Skills Needs Enterprise			
1943 Commission on Vocational Organisation Report	1961 Outline Programme for Scientific Personnel 1961 - 1962,	1944 Vocational Education (Amendment) Act		
2009 Education Statistics -2008-2009	1958 Programme for Economic Expansion 1959-66,	1992 Regional Technical Colleges Act.		
2000 Adult Education Learning for Life White Paper.	1987 The Programme for National Recovery,	2012 Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012.		
1965 Investment in Education	1994 National Development Plan 1994-1998	2013 Further Education and Training Act 2013		
1973 Regionalisation Draft for Discussion	1999 Commission on the Points System			
1983 Report of the Commission on Adult Education: Lifelong Learning	2008 National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2008 – 2013			
1907Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction Report of the Departmental Committee of Inquiry	2011 National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030			
2003 Report of the Steering Group to the PLC Review, prepared by McIver Consulting	2012 (b) A Proposed Reconfiguration of the Irish System of Higher Education			
2007 Bologna Process Stocktaking Report	2010 Investing in Global Relationships - Ireland's International Education Strategy 2010 – 2015			
Report on the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning (Ireland)	2004 Achieving equity of access to higher education in Ireland: Action Plan 2005 -2007			
2007 Tomorrow's Skills Towards a National Skills Strategy, 5th Report, Expert Group on Future Skills Needs	1992 A Time for Change: Industrial Policy for the 1990s			
1943 Report of the Commission	1993 A Strategy for Competitiveness			

on Youth Unemployment	Growth and Employment			
2011 Report of the Research Prioritisation Steering Group				
2006 Adult Education Trends and Issues in Europe	1993 Education and Training Policies for Economic and Social Development			
1969 Report to the Minister for Education on Regional Technical Colleges	2003 Submission of National Qualifications Authority of Ireland to OECD Higher Education Review			
2010 No Way Back? The Dynamics of early School Leaving	2007 National Qualifications Framework and their Potential Impact on Vocational Education and Training			
2014 ESRI Further Education and Training in Ireland: Past, Present and Future	1964 OECD Training of Technicians in Ireland			
2009 Bologna Process Stocktaking Report	1973 OECD Short-Cycle Higher Education			
2015 The European Higher Education Area 2015:Bologna Process Implementation Report	1974 OECD. Towards Mass Higher Education: Issues and Dilemmas			
2000. Memorandum on Lifelong Learning.	1997 OECD National Innovation Systems			
2007 European Social Fund 50 Years Investing in People	2004 OECD, (a). Review of National Policies for Education: Review of Higher Education in Ireland			
2001 Stockholm European Council	2004 OECD, (b). Internationalisation and Trade in Higher Education: Opportunities and Challenges			
2003 The role of universities in the Europe of knowledge.	2004 OECD,. Review of Higher Education in Ireland			
2012 Bologna Process Implementation Report,	2008 OECD,. Tertiary Education for a Knowledge Society			

1960 Report on Education and Training of Professional Engineers	1991 OECD,. Review of Irish Education			
1989 Apprenticeship: a new approach - a discussion document	2010 Learning for Jobs OECD Review of Vocational Education and Training Ireland			
FÁS, Annual Report and Accounts 1991; 1992; 2009; 2011;	2014 OECD,. Education at a Glance			
1991 A Framework for the Future.	2014-2016. SOLAS Corporate Plan			
2007 Monitoring Ireland's Skills Supply, Trends in Education/ Training Outputs	2014 SOLAS Further Education and Training Services Plan			
1963 Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Retraining and Resettlement in Relation to The European Social Fund	2014 SOLAS Further Education and Training Strategy			
1983 Report of the Commission on Adult Education	2017 SOLAS Response to the Findings of the Evaluation of The National Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) Programme			
1976 Report of the Working Party on Complimentary Studies	2013 Review of Apprenticeship Training in Ireland			
2003 The Role of National Qualifications Systems in Promoting Lifelong Learning. Background Report for Ireland				
2002 Towards a National Framework of Qualifications The Employment Perspective. Report on the Focus Group Meeting				

2003 Report on the Workshop on the inclusion of international awards in the national framework of qualifications,				
2012 QQI-FETAC Awards Report 2012 data				
2014 State Examinations Commission, Annual Report				
1994 Report on The National Convention				