

**Irish adult education policy: victim or beneficiary of globalisation? A critical policy  
analysis between 1997 and 2007**

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## **Abstract**

### **Irish adult education policy: victim or beneficiary of globalisation? A critical policy analysis between 1997 and 2007**

This thesis represents a ten year study of an unprecedented and hitherto unexamined period of policy development in adult education in Ireland. Using a detailed critical policy analysis of three documents considered to be landmark texts in the Irish adult education world from 1997 to 2007, it illuminates why and how this occurred, as well as its consequences. Taking account of developments in adult education and lifelong learning internationally around the same time, this case study of adult education policy in Ireland is explored through the lens of globalisation. The study is intended to inform and support policy activism in adult education in Ireland, including my own work as Chief Executive Officer of a national advocacy body in this field, as well as contribute to the field of critical policy research in education generally, and adult education specifically.

The choice of a critical approach to research was informed by my position as an activist working at a high policy level in the world of adult education and follows a policy trajectory method. The study reveals how a unique convergence of national and global events triggered the proliferation of adult education policy. For some this meant the realisation of the broad humanist vision of adult education, whereas for others it represented an integral element of Ireland's future economic competitiveness. The resulting ideological battle over the type of adult education ultimately supported by the State highlights how ill-equipped adult education stakeholders are to influence the full breadth of the policy process. The thesis reveals the extent to which the policy during this time was perforated with empty rhetoric which disarmed adult education stakeholders who mistakenly believed it provided the necessary security for their vision.

As Ireland, along with many other countries, seeks to rebuild its society after the collapse of the global economy in 2008, the thesis offers new insights for researchers and policymakers about similarities and differences between Ireland and other countries in relation to adult education policy. It argues that new opportunities to advocate for adult education may emerge. Against this backdrop, and drawing on the findings of the thesis, I propose an advocacy toolkit for those wishing to influence adult education policy, drawing directly on a policy trajectory approach.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### **1.1 Why I am researching adult education policy**

Unprecedented media coverage followed the publication of the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) in 1997 (Morgan et al 1997). Ireland's educational image was tainted with the apparent surprise revelation that one in four adults in the country were deemed to score at the lowest level of literacy on a scale of one to five. Here was a national problem, some would say a hidden but damaging problem, which featured on the front page of *The New York Times* in July 1999 under the compelling headline, 'In the Land of Joyce and Yeats, a Struggle to Read ABC's' (Clarity1999; NALA 2000). Following this international media glare, and an earlier national advocacy campaign described later, Government politicians mobilised and policy action followed. Whilst only a microcosm of adult education and just one driver of the subsequent policy developments, this single moment precipitated a series of previously unseen occurrences which ultimately changed the Irish adult education landscape forever.

This key policy moment sets the scene for my study as it marks the start of a high stakes battle, played out between diverse players through the policy process, over what type of adult education is valued by the Irish State. Epitomising a long-running contest between those who see the purpose of adult education relating to the needs of the labour market and those who come from a radical adult education tradition, these tensions continue to this day and are captured in two recent publications: the State's first *Further Education and Training Strategy* (SOLAS 2014) which now encapsulates adult education predominantly in a labour market context and Maynooth University's *Further Education & Training: History Politics Practice* (Murray et al 2014), which argues for adult education aimed at supporting communities and global citizenship.

Framed by this context, this chapter presents a brief background to my thesis so as to familiarise the reader to my topic. It first sets out why I have chosen my research question and then moves on to declare my background and role to my subject area. I then give an overview of the structure of the thesis including my research aims and questions, and propose some initial ideas as to its potential contribution to policy and research.

In 1993 I studied adult education in Maynooth University and after graduation, started my career in the field, all the time maintaining an informal connection with the academic staff who had taught me, and who would later play a major role in adult education policy. The Head of Adult Education in Maynooth was Tom Collins, and he, along with his team, wrote sections of the White Paper on Adult Education (DES 2000). I was involved initially as a practitioner, teaching adults and young people for whom the mainstream education system had been an unpleasant experience, resulting in them pursuing an alternative education path that, hitherto, I had never known existed. My time in Maynooth achieving the post graduate diploma in adult and community education, along with my initial work experience in an adult literacy centre, politicised me and my view of education as I recognised mainstream education had not worked well for everyone, particularly those from poorer backgrounds. In late 1995 I moved into the area of lobbying for adult literacy, including policy development, working for the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA), one of only two national adult education advocacy bodies, the other being AONTAS, the national adult education organisation. NALA had, for the first time, successfully secured European Union funding to carry out research which heretofore had been impossible on their meagre State funds. My direct involvement in an EU-funded project brought exposure to adult literacy activity in other countries and its relationship with social inclusion as well as a view of Brussels as an ally to what was viewed by the Irish State, at best, as a marginal educational enterprise.

Early in this phase of my career, a unique event in the history of adult education in Ireland took place. In response to the ‘shock’ revelations of the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) in 1997 (First Report on the Joint Committee on Education and Science, 1998, p. 46), the incoming Government announced it would publish its first adult education policy, which came to fruition in 2000. Adult literacy was its top priority. Having put three years of significant professional effort into the policy development process, outlined in more detail below, I had an expectation that the policy proposals would be implemented and bring about significant expansion of the sector. When over the next seven years, only some policy areas were progressed in terms of implementation and two further related policy documents were issued in short succession, the contested and incremental nature of policy development and implementation became more apparent to me. As I experienced between 1997 and 2007, the traditional view of policy development and implementation as a value-neutral endeavour (Griffin, 2009; Taylor et al, 1997) was not substantiated. Reading as part of my EdD programme exposed me to academic work on the simultaneous development of national lifelong learning policies in other English-speaking countries and provided me with the inspiration to set about exploring critically what I had experienced and its similarity, or not, with occurrences internationally. In particular, I took heart from the following quote:

‘In its explicit commitments to equality and inter-culturalism (diversity), the Irish strategy is most distanced from the market-driven rhetoric that is otherwise dominant. Ireland currently has the least formally developed state provision but is arguably the furthest on in defining its future policy strategy for literacy. It is therefore making an interesting leap from a situation that has stayed close to the adult literacy of the 1970s to a contemporary vision that responds to current national and international agendas but avoids the narrowness that has characterised notions of ABE [adult basic education] over the past two decades in the UK’. (Hamilton et al, 2001 p32)

The above quote signifies a widely held academic and also conceivably, popular view that Irish adult education is more progressive, and perhaps less exposed to the forces of globalisation and neo-liberalism than parts of the United Kingdom and the United States. My thesis explores the extent to which this may be the case.

The contrast of the dearth of policy in the Irish adult education sector before 1997 to a proliferation of policy during the next ten year period peaked my interest and I set about finding the answers to a range of questions: what national and global influences impacted adult education policy making in the period 1997 and 2007? Why did a series of policy documents on adult education emerge at this time? Who was involved in their production and implementation? What difference did the policy documents make to the adult education sector and why? At the outset of the study, it was my intention to explore these questions critically so as to deepen my understanding of the policy process and enhance my capacity as a lobbyist to analyse policy development and implementation in order to bring about change in adult education in the future. As an educational professional, I have spent my career deeply engaged with policy issues and become critically aware of their history, political and economic context and implications for practice. Over a decade of study for this thesis, coinciding with my senior position within adult education policy in Ireland, has led me to recognise the need for practical applications of critical analysis, an application that I have come to see is usually overlooked by most academics from a critical tradition. One outcome of this study, then, is to propose the development of a toolkit for lobbyists in this area that is rooted in a critical perspective.

I became the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the NALA in 1997 and since then have sought to bring about better conditions for people with literacy and numeracy needs. My role involves devising the strategic plan for the Agency which, at present, is concerned with three main areas. Firstly NALA aims to influence policy development and policy implementation,

not only in the specific area of adult education but also in other areas like public health that impact on the lives of people with literacy and numeracy needs. Secondly NALA aims to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in adult literacy and numeracy through research and innovation with both adult learners and practitioners. Finally NALA aims to encourage people with literacy and numeracy needs to seek out learning opportunities and contribute their views to broad range of societal issues that impact on them (NALA, 2014). Upon adoption of the Agency's strategic plan by its elected Board and membership, I work mainly in the area of lobbying for policy development and implementation. This work entails seeking to meet and discuss adult literacy and numeracy with Ministers, elected representatives and government department and state agency officials, as well as networks within the community and voluntary sector. This thesis is therefore informed directly by my experience of, and academic critical reflection on, carrying out this work since 1997.

In order to enhance my own insights, I have chosen critical policy analysis as it is concerned explicitly with creating a more equal society through education (Taylor et al, 1997; Ozga, 2000). The challenging of inequalities that exist in society is a key tenet of adult education. A critical policy analysis of three key policy documents during the decade in question fits best with my current work as a policy lobbyist, which is underpinned by a commitment to social justice, a commitment that is very challenging to realise during the policy process. In this thesis, I attempt to critically analyse these documents with a view to deepening my understanding of the period as well as gaining greater insight into the messy realities associated with policy exercises throughout education and beyond (Hatcher & Troyna, 1994; Ball, 1993). By providing an explanation of policy and the policy process that is concerned 'with the *who* and *how* of policy production' (Gale 2003 p64) and what this has meant for adult education in Ireland, I hope to narrow the chasm between theory and practice through the creation of a critical analysis toolkit. In seeking to answer my research questions outlined



below, I, along with other adult education stakeholders, will hopefully be better equipped to influence adult education policy development, implementation and evaluation in the future.

## **1.2 My professional role in the policy area during the period 1997-2007**

In 1997, as I took over the role of Director of NALA, a new Government came into being and announced its intention to publish the first Green Paper on Adult Education the following year. As NALA was both funded by and worked to influence the Department of Education and Science (DES), I had met with the lead official with responsibility for adult education, a key official involved in this work and soon got to know the newly appointed senior official who was tasked with the production of the Green Paper. My relationship with these senior management officials and their successors was a constant during the period in question and it still holds to this day. I had also successfully lobbied the incoming Minister for Education during his spell as opposition spokesperson on education. The creation of a new Junior Ministry to cover adult education meant I worked closely with that Minister for the duration of his time in that office and once again, I maintained a relationship with all his successors during the period and to date. I had worked on the first joint lobbying campaign between the two organisations with our sister charitable organisation, AONTAS, the national adult education organisation, in the run up to the 1997 election campaign and subsequently as we both responded to the Green Paper during the consultation process. I wrote NALA's submission, attended the launch of the White Paper on Adult Education (DES 2000), and subsequently worked on the implementation of the National Adult Literacy Strategy contained within it. I was appointed by the Minister of State at the Department of Education and Science to sit on the National Adult Learning Council (NALC), a key national structure established in 2002 as part of the implementation of the White Paper on Adult Education. The

Governing Board of NALC was made up of 25 members covering two key government departments, the statutory providers of adult further and higher education and training, their management bodies, unions, employers and the community and voluntary sector. It met for two years before being disbanded. The White Paper on Adult Education is the first document under scrutiny in my thesis.

NALA was also given representation on a sub-group established under the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning which provided a direct conduit by which to influence its report which came in 2002. Owing to the demands of involvement in implementing the White Paper on Adult Education, I delegated the role of Taskforce membership to a colleague, and oversaw all of NALA's contributions to it. This is the second document I am concerned with.

As I was conscious that policy and funding for adult education, under the nomenclature of training, rested with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) and FAS, the state training and employment agency under its aegis, I developed a relationship with the Minister and relevant officials here too. This arose initially as a result of the lead role DETE had in the management of EU funds, including those which NALA had successfully accessed from the mid-1990s. As a result of these relationships, albeit after the publication of their National Skills Strategy (2007), I was appointed to the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) which had published the Strategy, by the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment. This Strategy completes my trilogy of policy documents at the heart of this thesis. In summary then, the three policy documents for analysis in this thesis are: Learning for Life: White Paper on Adult Education (DES 2000), Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning (DETE 2002) and Tomorrow's Skills – Towards a National Skills Strategy (EGFSN 2007).

In short I was involved, to differing degrees, with the creation and implementation of the three key policies during the period which are at the core of this study. My involvement was manifested through writing NALA's policy submissions to each of the documents, meeting with Ministers to win their support for the adoption and resourcing of NALA's proposals, working with key officials and participating in stakeholder groups to realise the implementation of the policy that had been secured. At the time it felt productive and rewarding, taking advantage of a series of unexpected and often serendipitous spaces to make contributions. Yet it was also heady and opportunist, as there was little time to reflect on why these spaces were emerging. The thesis therefore addresses a need that cannot be met in the midst of policy activity, namely a need to step back and explore how the wide-angle lens of an academic study can contribute to the craft of an adult education lobbyist.

### **1.3 Limitations**

I have explained my motivation to conduct this study and I recognise the advantages of direct experience of, and involvement in, the policy landscape I wish to explore critically.

Conversely, as Taylor et al (1997) note, people within the space they are researching may find it more difficult to do critical analyses, however much they might wish to. In reflecting on my role in NALA as a 'critical friend' to policy makers, I am using an academic exercise to provide me with the space to critically evaluate on the past in order to be better informed in my work in the future. I also recognise that my immersion in this area comes with potential and actual disadvantages. For example, I am aware, as someone who was present at meetings and events, that I hold insider information which I may struggle to evidence in a way that will give that information credibility in an academic thesis. I am also aware that my perspective is heavily influenced by my career to date, with all its personal and professional vested interests

(some of which I might not be aware of) and yet needs to be open to other perspectives found in the available literature. This will involve trying to be critical of myself and colleagues both in NALA and beyond who I have worked with during the period in question, recognising that open engagement with those colleagues as a result of new insights can be very difficult.

#### **1.4 Why examine policy in adult education in Ireland during this period?**

There is a dearth of academic research in the area of adult education in Ireland generally (McGuinness et al 2014), as there is in other English speaking countries (Field, 2003) and particularly regarding policy (Ruane 2012). This, I believe, has hampered policy development and policy implementation as well as critical evaluations of how policies are developed and implemented, from which lessons can be learned (Gale & Lingard, 2009). In this vacuum, policy makers and influencers, including myself, rely on other sources of information, namely non-academic research primarily focused on the contribution of adult education to economic growth and research from other English speaking countries with a longer history of adult education. Whilst the policy documents I examine in this study have used research to provide an evidence base for their policies, it appears that evidence from some countries and some sources are more dominant than others, and to differing degrees, over the time period.

As my research questions suggest, these often overlooked characteristics of policy making seem weighty and require critical analysis. Perhaps most significantly, this study aims to fill a gap by providing such an analysis of adult education policy with the Irish context at the forefront, alongside a synthesis of international developments. This facilitates the exposition of what is and is not unique about the Irish context, thereby better positioning Ireland to be

part of future international studies of lifelong learning, such as those carried out elsewhere (e.g. Coffield 1999).

The proliferation of adult education policy is a further reason for choosing my topic. The decade from 1997 to 2007, as noted above, provides the first national policy document, White Paper on Adult Education, devoted to adult education in the history of the Irish state, despite a recommendation to successive governments since the 1970s for adult education policy. This was then followed in close succession by two further policy documents. In addition, there were a number of other policy documents and reports which influenced the sector, providing arguably the richest period of policy making in adult education in Ireland to date. The European Commission (Jarvis 2009) equally features heavily during this period as a key producer of policy statements, along with the OECD (Schuller 2009; Lingard 2001; Martin 2001), the World Bank (Rivera 2009) and UNESCO (Rubenson, 2009). All these institutions have their own blend of adult education and subsequent policy recommendations that appear, invariably, to arrive at the holy grails of every nation, namely governments being able to deliver on increased social inclusion and economic competitiveness. Lifelong learning is presented as a ‘wonder drug’ (Coffield, 1999, p.479) for a raft of societal problems and a ‘convenient political shorthand for the modernising of education and training systems’ (Tight, 2002, p40).

In relation to political developments framing this proliferation of interest in adult education, at the national level, one political party, Fianna Fail, albeit in coalitions with minor parties, held power for the duration of the period in question and beyond. Bertie Ahern was Taoiseach for the period, with his Minister for Finance, Charlie McCreevy, holding the post for seven years. I had fruitful meetings with both of them concerned with advancing NALA’s adult literacy agenda and getting their support to bring about change. As a result of the Fianna Fail-led Governments’ durability, some of the political figures that feature in the story

of this time played a role in more than one government department that had an involvement in adult education. This gave adult education much political exposure over the period as well as enabling lobbyists like me to have relationships with relative longevity with people in the political world who held power.

The proliferation of adult education policy also coincides with the period from the late 1990s to the late 2000s of unprecedented growth in the Irish economy known as the ‘Celtic Tiger’. This led to significant increases in budget for adult education and its subsequent expansion. This period of transformation, it has been argued, occurred as a consequence of the way in which Ireland embraced globalisation and there is widespread consensus that four policy instruments were key to this success (Kirby, 2009; O’Riain, 2014). At least two of these, education and training policies and collective bargaining, known in Ireland as ‘social partnership’, will feature strongly in my account of adult education during this time. In 1987, the incoming Government brought the social partners together to negotiate and agree a wage agreement to bring about economic stability. Over the period of my study there were 7 agreements and a new evolving form of governance in Ireland. Initially, the importance of social partnership was confined to its significant influence over general policy at the time, whereas, as my study progressed, the significance of the social partners in adult education policy grew.

In more recent times, the forces of globalisation on Ireland have been seen from a contrasting perspective. During my EdD, Ireland’s fortunes changed very dramatically and in 2008, the country entered recession. This effectively stopped the expansion of public services and new policy development. As the economy contracted and unemployment soared, Ireland sought and accepted a bail out from the International Monetary Fund, European Union and the European Central Bank. This triumvirate known as ‘the Troika’ also provided conditions upon which the bail-out would operate and encompassed in these the reform of all public

services aimed at addressing unemployment, including the further education and training sector in which adult education is located. In just two years of austerity measures, a new Government carried out the legislative aspects of the reform, bringing education and training together in one government department, an aspiration which had dogged adult education since the 1970s. Under the stewardship of a newly formed further education and training authority, named SOLAS (Irish for light), the first strategy for the sector has now been developed and published within a very tight six month timeframe and its implementation is currently underway (SOLAS, 2014).

In summary then, this context of rapid and reactive policy responses to crisis sets the scene for evaluating what difference policy made to adult education between 1997 and 2007.

### **1.5 Research aims and questions**

In the shifting policy context outlined above, the main aims of the research are:

- a) To analyse critically adult education policy development and its implementation between 1997-2007
- b) To explore which policy actors and what drivers are determining adult education policy and its implementation
- c) To make recommendations about how to use critical policy analysis to influence future adult education policy development and implementation, as well as future research in the field.

These aims generate an overarching research question: what national and global influences are evident in policy making for adult education between 1997 and 2007?

This main question will enable me to answer the following sub-questions:

- (i) Why did a series of three policy documents on adult education emerge in close succession after decades of no development in this area in Ireland?
- (ii) Who was involved in their production and implementation?
- (iii) What has been the impact on policy for the adult education sector?

## **1.6 Outline of the thesis**

The thesis will focus on an in-depth critical evaluation of the three key policy documents from the period identified above, using the methodological approach of a policy trajectory analysis (Ball, 1993) which will emerge in the following chapters. In order to set the scene, chapter two provides a historical, political, social and economic context for adult education in Ireland. In chapter three a literature review will provide an analysis of adult education policy in Ireland and where it sits vis-a-vis adult education policy internationally. With a view to illuminating distinctions and commonalities, as well as tensions and contradictions in policy making and implementation, chapter four explores the pros and cons of a policy trajectory analysis. Chapter five will detail the results of the analysis, informed by and tested against the key themes which have emerged from the literature review. In the final chapter, I will attempt to critically appraise what difference policy during this period has made to adult education and what my approach in this thesis has added to broader academic and policy practitioner understanding of the policy process. I argue in the conclusion that knowing how that difference came about, and what its impact has been, will provide a credible and hopefully interesting Irish-based academic source on adult education policy to inform future development in an area where academic research of this sort has been largely absent. Finally,



in proposing a toolkit, I hope that the thesis will enable adult education stakeholders to reflect on the contested nature of policy and to apply a critical analysis across policy trajectories.

## CHAPTER 2 IRELAND AND ADULT EDUCATION – A CONTEXT

A small island to the west of Europe, Ireland is home to just over 4.75 million people. Prior to its recent high profile economic collapse in 2008, Ireland experienced its most prominent international positioning on league tables of economic success, a success all the more poignant in the light of its humble beginnings. My study coincides with this extraordinary period of time which I will now unfold using academic sources such as Coolahan (1994, 2007), Hardiman (2005) and Drudy (2009), as well as government policy papers and reviews. In order to situate the reader, I will describe the historical, social, economic and broader social policy context of adult education in Ireland, as a basis for evaluating the relationship with and impact on the specific policy that is the focus for this study. I will start the chapter with an introduction to policy making in Ireland including the details of the machinery of government / governance in the Republic and its relationships with the European Union and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in particular.

### **2.1 The policy making process and key stakeholders in Ireland**

As my study is concerned directly with policy, it is useful to provide a brief overview of the public policy process in Ireland. The Oireachtas is the Irish language name given to the parliamentary structure in Ireland and is made up of the President, the Dail and the Seanad. The Dail has the lion-share of power of the trio and is aided in its work by Committees, including one covering all aspects of education. The Dail members elect the Taoiseach (Prime Minister), who then appoints Ministers to form the Government. Once a Government is formed, it publishes its Programme for Government and initiates its policy making.

The majority of policy proposals in Ireland, as in most other countries, come from government departments, via the respective Minister, to Cabinet for consideration and decision. Proposals are usually titled under a Memorandum to government and have been prepared by civil servants and advisors in the relevant department. Senior management in each department consists of the Secretary General, Assistant Secretary Generals and Principal Officers. Government puts policy to the Oireachtas for final approval. Government departments also have support from a number of bodies in the formulation of policy, chief amongst which is the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) which is chaired by the Secretary General of the Department of the Taoiseach and made up of representatives from government departments and the social partners. The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) also plays a key role, especially with regard to informing national development plans.

#### ***2.1.1 Other stakeholders in Irish public policy making***

In addition to central government (15 ministers, 15 junior ministers, and government departments), there are also over 600 state agencies who play a role in policy making. In effect, government remains the single biggest policy influencer (Hardiman 2005). Outside government, there are also the social partners, made up of 5 interest groups known as pillars: employers, trade unions, farmers, environmentalists and the community and voluntary sector. Further information about social partnership agreements relevant to this study is presented later in the chapter. Other permanent stakeholders include local authorities, political parties, think tanks and the media. Outside Ireland, the European Union (EU) is the largest influencer of national policy, producing a considerable amount of policy and directives which Ireland is committed to implement. Other supranational influencers on national policy making, include the OECD, the World Bank and the United Nations. The role of these supranational bodies is dealt with in the literature review chapter that follows.

In terms of political parties, two parties have dominated the Irish political landscape: Fianna Fail and Fine Gael. The Labour Party whilst around as long as the two larger parties, has never had significant public support and sits now alongside Sinn Fein, the Green Party and an ever increasing number of independents. Pertinent to the period of study are the Progressive Democrats who were in existence between 1985 and 2009.

### ***2.1.2 Irish interest groups in adult education – AONTAS and NALA***

Interest groups also play a part in policy making in Ireland, particularly in the area of social justice. Whilst some of these groups are members of the community and voluntary pillar of social partnership, their lobbying efforts extend beyond that structure. There are two specific adult education advocacy bodies which need a brief introduction.

AONTAS, established in 1969, has sought to advance policy in the area of adult education. Overwhelmed by the perceived challenge of addressing the adult literacy problem in the late 1970s, the board of AONTAS advised the establishment of a separate organisation to take up the lobbying campaign on that front, a similar development having already occurred in the United Kingdom (UK). The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA), of which I am CEO (see chapter 1), was established in 1980 and has been campaigning, alongside AONTAS, for an adequate policy response to the area of adult literacy and adult education (DES, 1998).

Both organisations are made up of their members, adult education learners, practitioners and providers; these elect the Boards which govern them. They receive the vast majority of their funding from the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and work closely with that Department to advance the case of adult education and adult literacy.

### ***2.1.3 How Irish policy is made***

In the main, but not exclusively, policy is proposed through a Green Paper and put out for public consultation, following which a White Paper is published, confirming the public policy. As will be seen in the following chapter, three different approaches were taken to policy formulation in adult education. There is also an increased emphasis on evidence based policy making in the three documents examined, with reliance on statistics and international comparative data much in favour.

### ***2.1.4 National development plans, social partnership and the European Union***

Since 1989 Irish governments have developed National Development Plans for investment in large scale national infrastructural projects with a view to achieving the long term growth of the Irish economy. These plans (1989-1993; 1994-1999; 2000-2006; 2007-2013) were also concerned with drawing down European Union Structural and Cohesion funds. Ireland received €17 billion in support from these funds, 75% from 1989-2006. In conjunction with the Social Partners and local authorities, government departments were involved in the consultative process which contributed to the formulation of each Plan.

## **2.2 Locating adult education within the Irish education and training system**

The Department of Education and Skills is the lead department for education policy, including much of what is covered by the term adult education and is responsible for the formal education system. Within that system, it is compulsory to attend school from age 6 to 16, with the majority of primary and secondary schools non-fee paying. Third level education is heavily subsidised by the state and takes place in universities and institutes of technology. During the period of this study, these three levels of education were regarded as the

‘mainstream education’ system, with further, adult and community education described as ‘providing second-chance education opportunities, addressing skills needs and promoting equality and social inclusion’ (DES 2004 p6). In recent years, a limited universal pre-school year has been introduced.

### ***2.2.1 Relevant legislative context for adult education***

The main piece of legislation underpinning adult education relates to the Vocational Education Act 1930 which provided for the establishment of the Vocational Education Committees (VECs). In 1967 An Chomhairle Oiliúna, AnCO, the Industrial Training Authority, was established and amended in 1988 to be An Foras Áiseanna Saothair, FAS, the National Training and Employment Authority. The Further Education and Training Act 2013 provided for the establishment of a new further education and training authority, SOLAS and the dissolution of FAS. The Education and Training Boards Act 2013 changed VECs into Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and replaced all 9 Acts relating to the VECs.

The Education Act 1998 provides for the education of all. The Qualifications Act 1999 enabled the establishment of the National Framework of Qualifications. The National Training Fund Act 2000 provides for an employer levy to cover training in the labour force.

### ***2.2.2 Adult education provision***

The majority of adult and further education is provided through the Vocational Education Committees (now called Education and Training Boards (ETBs)). Their largest programme is the Post Leaving Certificate Programme (PLCs) and is a full time vocational skills programme aimed at assisting participants gain employment or progress to higher education. Whilst the bulk of participants on PLCs are school leavers, the programme also caters for adults returning to education.

The Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) provides full-time second chance education to adults over the age of 21 and in receipt of a qualifying social welfare payment. A similar programme aimed at early school leavers and called Youthreach is also available and each programme annually caters for around 5,000 people.

The Adult Literacy Service is a part-time programme, providing people with literacy and numeracy needs with one to one or group tuition, free, during the day and in the evening. It caters for around 50,000 people annually, including English for Speakers of Other Languages. Community education operates alongside this service, providing an extensive array of programmes to meet the needs of disadvantaged communities.

Since the late 1990s, the Department of Social Protection has provided the Back to Education Allowance which supports adults in receipt of benefits to participate in full-time second or third level education programmes with the aim of improving their labour market outcomes.

### ***2.2.3 Adult training provision***

During the period of study, training policy was the responsibility of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) and part of the Employment and Human Resources Development Operational Programme, outlined in the National Development Plan 2000-2006. The majority of training aimed at the adult population was provided through FAS, the state training and employment agency, either as an intermediary funder or through its direct provision. FAS had responsibility for the 26 craft apprenticeships which caters for around 10-15% of school leavers and takes place over four years. FAS also provided traineeships in occupational skills for job seekers over a two year period and funded a further intervention for early school leavers who are unemployed, through Community Training Workshops and Local Training Initiatives.

In 1998, Enterprise Ireland was established as the state economic development agency and since then has provided training to support indigenous enterprises. The following year Skillnets, an enterprise-led body, was established and using a budget from the National Training Fund, provides funding for training via sectoral networks of private companies. Other state training providers include Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) and Teagasc, respectively the state fisheries and agricultural bodies.

Funding for further education and training mainly comes from state resources although these are augmented by ESF co-funding.

## **2.3 Historical context of adult education in Ireland**

### *2.3.1 A brief history of Ireland up to the 1990s*

After a bloody and divisive civil war 100 years ago, the Irish Free State won independence from the UK under the Anglo-Irish Treaty in 1922. The largely agrarian economy meant that Ireland's trading relationship with the UK remained key to its survival, but an economic philosophy based on protectionism from the rest of Europe hampered growth. Until the 1960s, poverty and emigration were characteristics of the country, as was the dominance of the Catholic Church in all aspects of Irish society.

A change of approach came with the 1959 government of Sean Lemass who adopted a different economic model in which Ireland actively sought foreign direct investment from the United States, engaging in free international trade and pursuing European Economic Community (EEC) membership. Reform of the education system was also key to Ireland's new agenda during this time, and free second level education was introduced in 1967,



following the seminal OECD report (DE 1965) which characterised the development not as burdensome expenditure but a crucial investment in Ireland's future.

Despite Ireland finally gaining membership of the EEC in 1973, it was many years later before the benefits of such a development were felt. Like many other countries, Ireland's fortunes were blighted by the global impact of the oil crisis in 1973, and from then into the late 1980s, Ireland became known as the 'sick man of Europe', due to high unemployment and taxation rates. As a consequence, political instability followed.

### ***2.3.2 History of adult education in Ireland***

There is a dearth of Irish adult education policy and subsequent research during the twentieth century, in part explained by the relative youth of the Irish State, its economic challenges and the impact this had on its education system in comparison to its European neighbours (O'Donnell et al 2001). The late introduction of free second level education in 1967, following the highly influential OECD's *Investment in Education* (DE, 1965) report, is a distinguishing case in point. As a result of the paucity of research, a key reference document in understanding the development of adult education policy in Ireland during this time is itself a policy paper, namely the first and (only) Green Paper on Adult Education (DES 1998). A green paper is typically concerned with providing policy proposals which can be debated as part of a consultation process and are followed up with a white paper containing agreed policy. Yet the Irish Green Paper on Adult Education is unusual in containing not only a chapter on the rationale for adult education as a future cornerstone of the Irish education system but also a chapter on the history of adult education in Ireland during the twentieth century.

The first phase of adult education up to 1968 was largely concerned with activities undertaken by rural development groups, religious institutions and trade unions. According to

the Green Paper, the second phase of development of adult education covers the period 1969 to 1988, during which the only two key government reports into adult education were commissioned and published: the Murphy Report, *Adult Education in Ireland* (1973) and the Kenny Report *Lifelong Learning* (1984) which are discussed later in the chapter. This period in Ireland is categorised as one of economic growth and investment in education which provided some initiative and promise to the new adult education activities that were emerging mainly through the voluntary sector throughout the country. AONTAS was established as a member based not for profit organisation concerned with the promotion of adult education. The first Government budget line for second chance adult education, Adult Literacy and Community Education Budget (ALCES) and a grant to support the work of NALA (Dail Eireann Debate, 1984) were also established.

The two commissioned reports, noted above, detailed the level and extent of adult education in the country, which was minimal, and made recommendations as to what needed to happen in order to support its further development. However ‘economic problems ....together with dramatic increases in the school going population meant that a concerted central programme in Adult Education in this period was never likely’ (DES 1998, p40). The roll-out of free second level education in the 1970s and 1980s remained the priority for education expansion. Whilst the expansion of education to all children was a feature throughout the western world, it happened far later in Ireland. The lack of development of adult education is again situated as a result of the constraints on state finances and not as a result of state priorities within those constraints.

Finally the Green Paper outlines the post-1989 phase, concentrating on the developments within Vocational Education Committees (VECs), in particular the setting up of a number of programmes, the Vocational Training Opportunity Scheme providing adult education for the unemployed being the largest, and the appointment of Adult Education Officers. The Paper

draws the conclusion that there is a convergence of national and international wisdom about the need to recognise the role of adult education in the wider formal education sector at this time. A national source, heavily influenced by the OECD, is cited, the *Report on the National Education Convention* (1994), as is an EU source, the *Strategy for Lifelong Learning of the Irish Presidency* (1996). The Green Paper then provides a further chapter profiling adult education and training provision. In effect, the Green Paper is an example of a bottom-up policy development, enabled and validated by the global discourse on lifelong learning, insofar as the practice of adult education is well described and documented and presented to the reader as an unproblematic segue into a policy that provides the necessary architecture to formalise and regulate it.

Within the wider framing of adult education outlined above, in the context of my study, I am most concerned in this thesis with the post-1989 phase up to the mid-2000s. I will deal with key moments during this time in more detail later. However two reports which occurred during the second phase, 1969-1988, are integral to why adult education policy finally emerged in Ireland in the period covered by this study, and need some discussion here.

### ***2.3.3 Murphy Report, Adult Education in Ireland (1973) and the Kenny Report Lifelong Learning (1984)***

In 1969, the fourth successive Fianna Fail government set up a commission, chaired by Con Murphy, Ireland's first Rights Commissioner in the Labour Court and one of those involved in establishing AONTAS to advise on the development of adult education in Ireland. This commission was operating at a time of wider education and training developments as a result of their recognised contribution to economic growth and it is likely that adult education was being explored as a further contribution to that domain. The findings of the commission, known as the Murphy Report and titled *Adult Education in Ireland* (1973), detailed 22 points

necessary to develop the adult education system in Ireland, including national and local structures, and a special report on how to address the needs of adults with low literacy. It also included a broad definition of adult education aimed at ‘serving the needs of people in every sphere of human development’ (Seanad Eireann Debate 1974). Yet political change was untimely as a new coalition government of Fine Gael and Labour formed earlier that year and the new Minister for Education did little to advance the recommendations. A return to a Fianna Fail government in 1977 until 1981 saw two recommendations advanced. In 1979 the recommendation to appoint Adult Education Officers in VECs was realised, and the following year the Adult Education section in the Department of Education was established. Many years later the report was deemed to be ‘culturally inquisitive and cosmopolitan’ (O’Sullivan 1992) in comparison to more mainstream education policy discourse of the time, a characteristic that was possible because of its distance from mainstream education policy makers, as well as from the Roman Catholic Church. This ‘difference’ (Inglis 2008 p252) may also have contributed to its ineffectiveness in countering economic imperatives for adult education.

In 1983, the recently formed Fine Gael Labour coalition government appointed another commission on adult education, this time chaired by Dr Ivor Kenny, Director General of the Irish Management Institute. The appointment of Dr Kenny as chair even more clearly aligned the purpose of adult education with that of the labour market. Dr Kenny had spent the previous twenty years of his career supporting the professional development of managers and during the time of the report, moved into University College Dublin’s Business faculty. He later went on to chair a number of Ireland’s most profitable companies.

The Kenny Report, *Lifelong Learning* (1984), was the first state report to have lifelong learning as its central theme, as it now characterised adult education, noting it was ‘not about night classes’, and thereby taking a different tack to the British National Institute of Adult

Continuing Education (NIACE) which continued to lobby for liberal adult education against possible cuts in the 1990s (Tuckett 2009). The Kenny Report highlighted the importance of developing a structured adult education system, catering to the needs of all adults, including those with basic education needs. It called for the establishment of a National Council for Adult Education, as well as local structures. This report noted that such developments were an economic imperative, not just a narrow educational concern. However the economic crisis of the 1980s meant that there were even greater economic constraints for the government to attend to and, once again, little was done to advance adult education, despite the promise of the first female Minister for Education. Considered a liberal and feminist, Minister Hussey is credited with the adoption of a partnership approach to education policy formation when she set up the Curriculum and Examinations Board (Gleeson 1998). She also awarded NALA its first government grant as a result of its lobbying and initiated a process aimed to eliminate sexism from the school curriculum (Dail Eireann Debate 1984; Hussey 1990).

#### ***2.3.4 Historical influences from outside Ireland***

Like Britain and many countries internationally during this time, Ireland's education policy was heavily influenced by supra-national bodies, as is further illustrated in the literature review. The extent of the relationship between these bodies and Ireland's adult education policy is a particular focus of this study especially as there is a clear reliance and growth in use of OECD data to justify the direction of policy during the period in question, and before, and a corresponding decline in the referencing of UNESCO, again in common with other Western countries.

The wider lifelong learning policy discourses from UNESCO, the OECD and, to an extent, the EU, clearly influenced the content of the Murphy and Kenny Reports, noted earlier, as well as the activities of those working in adult education, but the challenging socio-economic

and political environment in Ireland between the 1960s -1980s meant they did not take hold to the extent they did in some other western European countries. The literature review, in the next chapter, describes how the concept of lifelong learning went in and out of fashion and during a second wave of popularity, reached Ireland again at a key moment as the country prepared for a new developmental phase. Drawing on the OECD's discourse and political project for lifelong learning (Rubenson 2009), I argue that this time there was a convergence of the State, the economy and civil society to realise it in Ireland.

During two periods of significant social, cultural and economic change in Ireland, the OECD played a major role. The OECD's *Investment in Education* (OE, 1965), as mentioned above, elevated education policy as central to the nation's future and brought about radical change in how education was viewed by the Irish state. This was followed by the influential OECD Review of Education in Ireland (1991) which once again promoted education as an essential element of the country's strategy for success. According to Coolahan (2007) there was 'considerable concordance' (p10) between the OECD's work and Education for a Changing World (1992), the country's first Green Paper on Education which yielded almost a 1,000 submissions during the consultation phase. The subsequent White Paper on Education in 1995 solidified the adoption of the OECD's recommendations. A similar pattern of influence and policy adoption can be found in the publication of the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) and the White Paper on Adult Education, detailed later.

Akin to the OECD, there is also evidence of the influence of the EU in adult education policy. Ireland joined the EU in 1973 but it was not until the 1990s that lifelong learning was being proposed within policy, namely the White Paper on Teaching and Learning (EC 1995). Ireland held the Presidency for the fifth time in 1996, as the EU began to promote its policy with the Year of Lifelong Learning and publication of the Commission's 'A strategy for lifelong learning'. Against this backdrop, a series of Irish reports throughout the 1990s

identified the unfavourable skills profile of Ireland in comparison with other EU countries and recommended government action (Roche & Tansey 1992).

Since 1989, a programmatic approach to the use of European Social Fund (ESF) and European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to build education and training infrastructure provided for its expansion but mainly benefitting those aged 15-25 entering the labour force. Outside of EU resources, Irish employers had a poor track record of investment in education and training and, generally, Ireland had a weak system of vocational education and training (Roche & Tansey 1992).

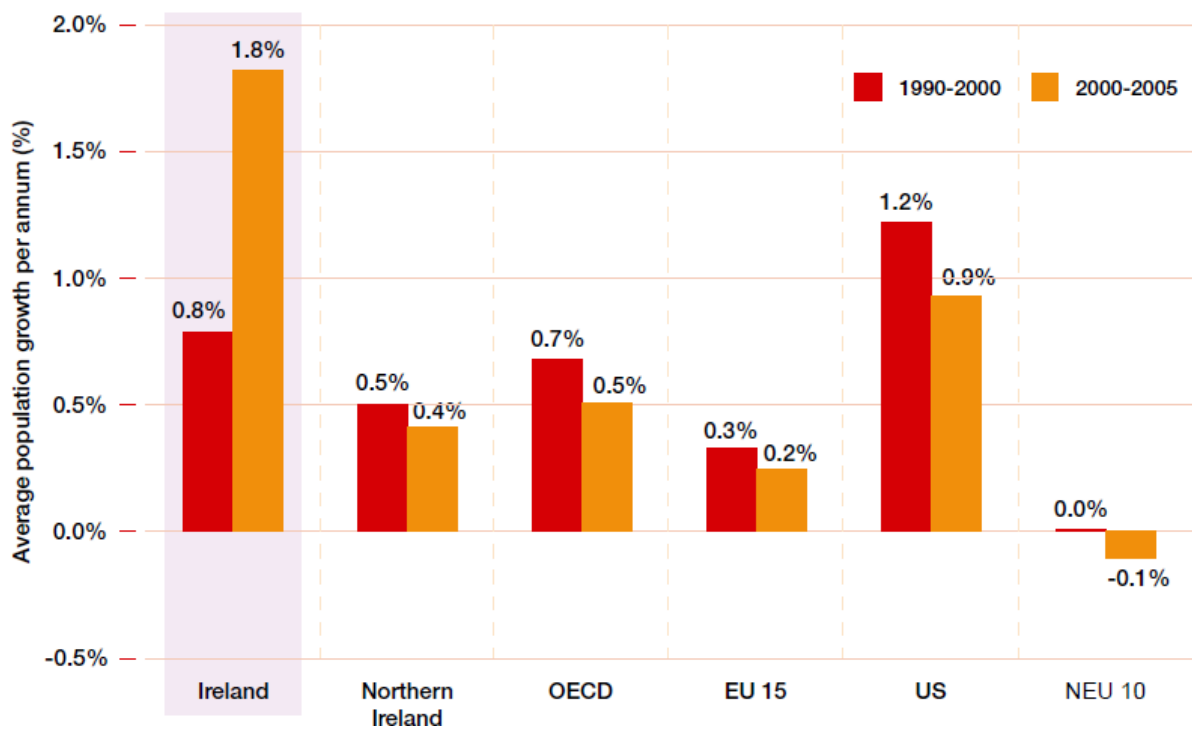
## **2.4 Social and economic context of adult education in Ireland from 1990s-2000s**

The 1990s overall were characterised by significant change in Irish society and this section will outline the key factors recognised as playing a part in that change.

### ***2.4.1 Population trends***

A rising birth rate from the mid-1990s, combined with a decrease in emigration, led to steady population increase. Between 1996 and 2002, the population grew by 8% and a further 8% to 2006 and stood at 4.24 million. By 2003, Ireland had the youngest population in Europe, and the strongest growth as illustrated in Figure 1 below, although projected population growth also showed a growing number of people over the age of 65. About a third of the population were living at this time in the greater Dublin area, including the capital city, confirming a continuing trend of rural depopulation. Population increase and, in particular, net immigration to Ireland, after a history of emigration, brought new challenges to the Irish education and training system, including catering for the needs of a less homogenous society.

Figure 1 Average Population Growth per Annum, 1990-2005



Source: National Competitiveness Council 2006 p53

#### 2.4.2 *Economic and labour market trends*

The Irish economy from the mid -1990s to 2007 experienced strong growth, at around 8% per annum and was the fastest growing economy in Europe. One of the most commonly used measures of economic growth is Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which captures the income of the country, including that generated by multi-national companies who may repatriate their profits. Gross National Product (GNP) is recognised as a better measure for Ireland, unlike other EU countries, of available income which is generated from the domestic tax base.

Strong economic growth enabled Ireland to reduce its public debt and increase investment in public services. Whilst education received increased budgets, by 2003 Ireland's educational spend was at 4.4% of GDP, lagging behind the OECD average of 5.9% GDP. However, in the same period, when measured against GNP, Ireland's education spend was above the EU



average. The largest share of educational spending went to higher education. By 2000 Ireland had full employment and was amongst the world's wealthiest nations. Despite this, during the period of study, the number of people experiencing poverty increased and income inequality remained relatively constant.

Ireland's employment rate grew during the period and correspondingly, unemployment fell. There was a decline in the numbers of people employed in traditional areas like fisheries and agriculture and a steady increase in the numbers employed in the services sector. Jobs in the high technology sector also showed a steady increase and high profile companies in this sector situated their European headquarters in the country.

#### ***2.4.3 Growth and competitiveness***

The 1990s were, therefore, characterised by rapid economic growth, much welcomed after recession in the previous decade. Unemployment was declining and from 1993 to 2001, growth averaged 8%, falling to a respectable 5% in 2006. As Ireland entered the much lauded 'Celtic Tiger' era, there was a sense that the time had come to put adult education on the map as the last area of mass education to be developed. Through the Industrial Development Authority (IDA), Ireland attracted foreign direct investment and its needs, the quality and quantity of the pool of skilled workers, became more important in ensuring the country's attractiveness. Policy was subsequently moulded to meet that need (Kirby 2009).

One of Ireland's key factors in coming out of recession and for economic success at this time was credited as being the education system, which had enabled the growth in labour productivity and increased participation in the labour market.

#### *2.4.4 National development planning and commitments to social partnership*

In the late 1980s and mired in an economic crisis, the government initiated a partnership process to galvanize the nation into collective action. In the National Social Partnership (NSP) agreements, the Irish government brought together three groups, employers, trade unions, and farmers, and facilitated a process that arrived at a common agenda for employment conditions, such as wage increases, so as to bolster growth. The Programme for National Recovery 1988-1990 (Government of Ireland 1987) also influenced policy in the area of education and training, requiring it to deliver on 'greater social equity' (p15) as well as upskilling the workforce. The subsequent agreement, titled the Programme for Economic and Social Progress 1991-1994, built on this further.

Social Partnership focused on training for the labour market. In the second National Development Plan submitted to the European Commission by the Irish government, one of the two central objectives of the Community Support Framework for Ireland, 1994–1999, was to reintegrate long-term unemployed people into the labour market. The government built its strategy around the priority of developing 'the skills and aptitudes of those in work and those seeking employment by both addressing the needs of the productive sectors and by integrating those who are marginalized and disadvantaged' (Government of Ireland, 1999, p. 272). Through the ESF-supported Operational Programme for Human Resource Development, a substantial percentage of the Irish adult population was able to participate in education and training courses (Bailey 2006).

By the mid-1990s, the Irish economy experienced the start of an unprecedented boom, with growth rates outstripping most, if not all, of its trading partners. Social Partnership and its focus on the education and training system, specifically the Operational Programme, played an important role in providing trained people in sufficient numbers to contribute to

employment growth at this time (Government of Ireland, 1999). This was to lead to future social partnership agreements and a wider policy interest covered in the agreements, including lifelong learning, as evidenced by its prominence in each of the documents studied in this thesis.

The community and voluntary sector joined Social Partnership in late 1996, becoming known as the Community and Voluntary Pillar, and contributed to three of the four agreements covering the period 1997 to 2016. Published by the government just before failing to get re-elected, Partnership 2000 (1996) proposes lifelong 'training and education' as necessary to equip Ireland to deal with the 'challenge of global competition' (p5). The implementation of a National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) in 1997 represented a key mechanism to build social inclusion, representing the first 'nationally agreed-upon set of policy targets, proposals, and programmes' (Bailey 2006 p204) to eradicate the main causes of poverty and social exclusion in Ireland. Following the UN Social Summit in Copenhagen in 1995, it was initiated by the left of centre Minister for Social Welfare and brought a significant focus on poverty across all government departments for the first time. NAPS set out to bring about the inclusion of people side-lined culturally, socially and economically.

The only adult education area covered in the Strategy was to address educational disadvantage by ensuring programmes are in place for people wishing to improve their level of literacy. It set the only achievement target for adult literacy, stating that rates should be reduced from the 25% identified in International Adult Literacy Survey (Morgan et al 1997) to between 10-20% by 2007. NAPS is the responsibility of the Department of Social Protection which leads on the monitoring of targets to reduce poverty. Whilst this Department would have a large budget to pay social welfare payments, it is not perceived to have political clout and cannot, as such, compel other departments to meet their commitments under NAPS.

Over the period in question consistent poverty was reduced and a number of the specific targets were reached. The DES was responsible for the achievement of the target to reduce the adult population with low literacy. However the Department decided not to commission a survey of adult literacy levels and consequently was unable to evidence achievement of the adult literacy target, without any apparent consequence of this undermining action.

In *Partnership 2000* (Government of Ireland 1996), adult education is only detailed in terms of second chance education and as part of the contribution to social inclusion. There is no reference to adult literacy which lends weight to the influence of the publication of the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) a year later. The references to lifelong learning are situated in the chapter on action to promote enterprise and job creation, the responsibility of the DETE, and as later set out in its White Paper on Human Resource Development (1997). Consequently, these texts only relate to those in the labour market. As my analysis will later show, the DETE only saw itself as the lead on lifelong learning for the benefit of the economy while the DES had responsibility for adult education for those failed by the education system, despite wider aspirations. The new Minister for Education and Science and the department's White Paper on Adult Education challenged this position, highlighting the critical role played by the politicians in power during this period through their embrace and interpretation of the lifelong learning discourse.

Supporting the second chance education theme, a breakdown of the written and oral submissions to the Green Paper on Adult Education (1998) show that largest single grouping of 69 of the 171 received are from local and national not-for-profit organisations, many of which were aligned to the Community and Voluntary Platform. The Platform was founded in 1996 to bring together organisations working to address poverty and inequality and was a member of the Community and Voluntary Pillar which provided a mechanism to influence

Social Partnership with a view to creating ‘a collective critical voice for equality, rights and anti-poverty interests at a national level’ (<http://communityplatform.ie/community-platform-vision-mission.html> ). NALA was admitted to join the Platform in 1997 while AONTAS was denied entry on the grounds that it predominantly represented state providers of adult education. As a consequence NALA was the single adult education voice in the Platform and subsequently through into the Pillar.

As part of the Social Partnership process noted earlier, education and training policy was influenced and developed. The role of the trade union movement and employer bodies in this area was significant and as Social Partnership was seen to benefit the growth of the economy, its influence and membership expanded. The involvement of the Community and Voluntary Pillar brought a new emphasis to the lifelong learning agenda. The Conference of Religious Ireland (CORI) as a member of the Community and Voluntary Pillar, promoted adult education for those who had benefitted least from the education sector. In a document referenced in the White Paper on Adult Education, CORI set out the social justice benefits of investment in adult education.

The next National Development Plan (NDP) 2000-2006 planned an investment of over €57 billion over the seven years. At the time it represented the largest investment plan ever drawn up for the State. This NDP had four basic strategic objectives: continuing sustainable national economic and employment growth; consolidating and improving Ireland’s international competitiveness; fostering balanced regional development and promoting social inclusion.

These objectives were to be achieved through six operational programmes, of which the Operational Programme for Employment and Human Resources remained the most relevant to adult education. The Employment and Human Resources Operational Programme

(EHROP) provided €13 billion in order to promote employability and adaptability, to support skills development and alleviate skills shortages.

While most of the public funding for this plan (90%) was provided from domestic sources, the contribution from the EU is noteworthy - €3.8 billion from the Structural and Cohesion Funds and a further €2.2 billion under the Common Agricultural Policy Rural Development Plan.

Whilst the Department of Finance had overall accountability for national development plans, each individual Operational Programme was under designated government departments and operationalised in conjunction with their respective state agencies. In the case of the EHROP, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment had the lead role, alongside its state agency FAS.

Monitoring Committees were also established for each Operational Programme and met twice a year. Membership included government departments, social partners, state agencies and the European Commission as advisors.

The National Development Plan 2000-2006 adopted the definition of lifelong learning used by the National Employment Action Plan (NEAP) 'as all purposeful learning activity, whether formal or informal, undertaken on an on-going basis with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence' (NDP 1999, p190).

To highlight the direct influence of the EU, the Plan states that the 'contextual framework for the implementation of European Employment Guidelines is the Member States National Employment Action Plans.....' Specific areas of attention identified for support are: 'promoting employability, skills and mobility through lifelong learning'; and building 'an

inclusive society, open to all (special attention to be given to the needs of people with disabilities, ethnic minorities and other disadvantaged groups etc.)' (NDP 1999 p219).

The EHROP brought a specific focus to adult literacy and lifelong learning, outlining major investments in the area and an intent to develop a system of lifelong learning in Ireland. In broad terms, commitments to lifelong were firmly embedded within the context of employability and labour market education and training measures. Based on Ireland's poor ranking in the OECD Education at a Glance (1998), the National Adult Literacy Strategy, Back to Education Initiative and an Adult Guidance initiative for the beneficiaries of these programmes were proposed, each with a stated investment to 2006. These commitments had been taken from the Green Paper on Adult Education (1998) and subsequently became central planks of the White Paper on Adult Education and its roll out.

Dovetailing with the NDP (1999), the next partnership agreement took a more expansive approach. The *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness 2000-2002* (PPF) (1999) used a definition for lifelong learning from the National Economic and Social Council (NESC), noting that this was in keeping with those used by the OECD and EU. The PPF committed to the creation of a Strategic Framework for Lifelong Learning through the publication of the White Paper on Adult Education and the establishment of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning with detailed terms of reference. According to a study of adult education policy, this latter development was not welcomed by the DES (Murtagh 2009) and was effectively a compromise through which to suture the two Departments' agendas together. It did this in the belief that lifelong learning would best prepare the nation for continuing change related to the labour market and would provide those citizens poorly served by the education system with a second chance. The PPF's indicator for this action related to the percentage of people aged 25-64 involved in continuing education and training.

*Sustaining Progress* (Government of Ireland 2003) is the follow-on agreement and consolidates the role of adult education as the strategic framework within which lifelong learning is being progressed by 'actively promote(ing) lifelong learning over the entire lifespan' (Government of Ireland 2003 p51). Despite this approach, lifelong learning is situated within a frame of economic development. Alongside, as one of ten special initiatives and situated within the frame of educational disadvantage, is a commitment to adult literacy. As mentioned earlier, this is the adoption of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy target to see a reduction in number of adults with literacy issues from 25% identified in the IALS in 1997 to between 10-20% by 2007.

The final social partnership agreement relevant to this study was published in June 2006.

*Towards 2016* is a ten year charter and references the forthcoming National Skills Strategy as providing a new 'strategic framework for the implementation of skills and training strategy' (p50). There is no mention of the White Paper on Adult Education or the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning and the strategic framework they collectively previously supplied, albeit ineffectively (Murtagh 2009). Adult literacy remains the priority in adult education (supported by the Houses of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Education and Science Fourth Report Adult Literacy in Ireland had been published a month earlier) and, together with the needs of low skilled workers, remains prioritised predominantly in an employability context. Education is to be a key priority in its capacity to build the knowledge economy and human capital.



#### 2.4.5 *The macro level policy context at the close of the period encompassed by my study*

From 1997, adult education featured strongly in the long term and strategic policy of the state. By the end of the period of my study, this pattern of prominence in economic and social policy continued with even greater protestations of its importance, to which I now turn.

Requested by the Department of Finance, the *Ex-Ante Evaluation of the NDP* (Morgenroth & Fitzgerald 2006) affords independent ‘advice on the priorities for public investment’ in the subsequent National Development Plan (NDP) for the period 2007-2013 (p3). It urges an expansion of almost €200m per annum in public expenditure on education as well as calling for greater proficiency in the use of funds through increased planning, evaluation and project management. Human resources and research and development come in at number five of its eight key main concerns and are mentioned as a continuing top priority. Training and lifelong learning are amongst the areas cited specifically under this priority for increased expenditure.

Drawing on OECD data, the Evaluation situates the educational attainment statistics for Ireland as broadly comparable with the average amongst OECD countries, but concludes the picture created by the statistics for the education of adult population is less favourable. In particular, the frequency of those with low level qualifications in the 25-64 years age group where c.40% have lower second level or less compares to an EU average of 38% and respective rates of 17% and 19% in Germany and Sweden. Furthermore, the level of state investment in education and training is described in the Ex Ante as significantly below international comparisons with the result that the participation rate outside the mainstream education system is low. For example, 17% of the employed in Ireland participated in non-formal learning in 2003 compared with the EU average of 21% and over 50% respectively in Denmark, Sweden and Finland. In addition to this, the authors point to prospective decline in

new entrants to the labour force, putting greater emphasis on those working now and into the future (Morgenroth & Fitzgerald 2006).

The expansion of the second and third level education sectors, and resulting increased participation, are credited as being key contributors to the success of the Irish economy during the 1990s. In light of this, the authors of the Ex Ante Evaluation of the NDP recommend increased public investment in continuing education and training for the lower skilled as they are less likely to be involved in education and training or to be supported by their employers in comparison to their more qualified colleagues. In a similar vein to other reports examined in this thesis, this strategy is put forward in light of the market failure concept and is seen as a means of building the future skills needs of the Irish economy. More specifically, it is argued that the proposed investment would improve the 'level of GNP by between 2-3%' and that the 'rate of return to the state of such an investment would be quite high, fully justifying the very substantial commitment of resources' (Morgenroth & FitzGerald 2006 p3).

Following this, the *National Development Plan (NDP) 2007-2013* (Government of Ireland 2007) outlines a series of challenges facing Ireland over the next seven years, one of which is to create and sustain high value employment opportunities. One way to meet this challenge is to ensure adequate investment in Human Capital. Around one seventh of the total investment in the Plan is set for this area. The Human Capital chapter of the NDP makes a clear commitment to lifelong learning highlighting the need to introduce formalised approaches with priority interventions for low-skilled workers in order to facilitate people to continually acquire the knowledge, skills and competencies required to meet the demands of the global economy.

The NDP 2007-2013 acknowledges the dominant role of the private sector in funding training for those in employment but also identifies the need for the State to provide increased resources for the training of low and unskilled workers where there is clear evidence of market failure. The Plan also covers lifelong learning under the heading of social inclusion, outlining an investment of over €4 billion in Working Age Education Support programmes.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

Shifting factors in the socio-economic and political context of Ireland from 1997 to 2007 provided, as this chapter has shown, a fertile ground for the development of adult education policy. The major drivers were a growing population, political stability, subsidies from the EU and foreign direct investment, which combined to create the Celtic Tiger era. As also detailed, adult education's historical backdrop was populated with diverse local groups and national interests, for whom policy recognition and accompanying resources had, for decades, been elusive. The emerging socio-economic conditions provided new opportunities to situate the contribution adult education could make to Ireland's future. This came in the form of 5 national development plans and 5 social partnership agreements, all heavily influenced by the EU and OECD. Continued lobbying by adult education interest groups, mixed with a booming national economy and supported by international policy drivers, came together for the first time, and enabled the establishment of adult education policy in Ireland. Yet, as is also clear, this content also reflected profound tensions between different traditions, purposes and values in the sector.

## CHAPTER 3 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews the literature relating to adult education policy in Ireland and internationally and aims to illuminate my research questions. It starts with a brief introduction to the three main policy documents analysed later in the thesis and the key features of the macro-level policy context at the end of the study period. This is followed by an analysis of lifelong learning policy in Ireland using a tripartite typology which situates it in an international context, but, more importantly, assesses critically its ideological base and challenges the degree of rhetoric and myth surrounding such policy. Finally the chapter explores the themes of neo-liberalism and the shrinking State emerging from the relevant academic literature on both lifelong learning policy in Ireland and internationally.

### **Part 1 Key adult education policy texts**

#### **3.1 Introducing the three policy documents**

Between 1997 and 2007 there were numerous of national policy documents in the area of lifelong learning, all of which include specific reference to adult education. As alluded to in the previous chapter, the policy term lifelong learning is synonymous with adult education, mainly due to efforts by the European Union (EU) to frame a policy that would bring together ‘liberal and vocational education into a single entity’ (Jarvis 2009 p2). Prior to this, adult education, lifelong education, continuing education, recurrent education and adult learning were all terms that involved adults being educated but, critically, from different perspectives, for different purposes and with different educational values. For example, recurrent education as a concept emerged from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1960 which challenged the efficacy of schooling as the dominant form of mass education. This type of adult education was concerned primarily with a vision of learning formally, informally and non-formally but was considered too costly for governments at the

time (Griffin 2009). The OECD could see though that governments were interested in lifelong learning as an investment in human capital for the labour market (Taylor et al 1997; Rubenson 2009). The term lifelong learning is now universally adopted, particularly in policy discourse (Tight, 2002) but problematic and highly contested (Coffield, 1999).

An explicit policy focus on adult education in Ireland in the late 1990s, albeit within the context of lifelong learning, was a very welcome departure from the past when national policy paid scant regard to the fact that there were thousands of adults involved in adult education in their local community, many with poor experiences of the State education system during their childhood. Following the publication of the Green Paper on Adult Education in 1998 by the Department of Education and Science, and the subsequent consultation process it initiated, there was much anticipation of the final publication 2 years later.

### 3.1.1 *'Learning for Life' - The White Paper on Adult Education*

*Learning for Life* declares, for the first time, that the Irish State accepts lifelong learning as the governing principle of educational policy to ensure that all learners can achieve their education and training goals within an overarching, coordinated framework. Adult education is defined as “systematic learning undertaken by adults who return to learning having concluded initial education or training” (DES, 2000, p. 12). The Paper provides six priority areas as the basis, and justification, for adult education in society as follows: consciousness raising; citizenship; cohesion; competitiveness; cultural development and community building. It then sets out the three core principles to underpin adult education:

- 1) A systematic approach highlighting the need for a holistic approach to the design of education and training policies including the interfaces between education and training providers;

- 2) Equality of access, participation and outcome for participants in adult education with targeted investment towards those most at risk as a priority;
- 3) Inter-culturalism, recognising that policy and practice need to serve a diverse population.

Against what an adult education academic claims is a promising ‘charter for emancipatory adult education’ (Hurley 2014 p74), the proposals in the White Paper on Adult Education are framed from the perspective of the adult learner in the context of four key learning sites – the school, community, workplace and higher education. As the top priority, increased investment in adult literacy is set within ‘a comprehensive framework for second-chance education for those with less than upper secondary education’ (DES 2000 p15). Ireland’s first ever National Adult Literacy Programme sets out to provide increased learning opportunities for the estimated 500,000 adults with literacy difficulties identified by the IALS.

Whilst not a ‘policy blueprint for the training sector’ (DES 2000 p12), the inclusion of ‘competitiveness’ and the workplace as a key learning site were attempts in the White Paper on Adult Education to suture over the education and training divide, something perhaps discordant with the banner of lifelong learning but necessary to situate adult education strategically for future development. However in order to progress these areas, the White Paper had to concede to the work of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning under the auspices of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE), which had already commenced.

I attended the launch of the first ever White Paper on Adult Education *Learning for Life* (2000) during the summer of 2000. Yet, although the Minister of State with responsibility for Adult Education officiated, the event was marked by a noticeable lack of attendance by any senior civil servants from the Department of Education and Science or any other government

department. Nor was the Minister of Education in attendance either. The significance of this was not fully understood until years later with the realisation that many of the fundamental proposals in the White Paper relating to structural change were not being pursued (AONTAS 2006). The key coordinating structure in question was the National Adult Learning Council, which although hastily established in 2002 by the outgoing Minister of State, was subsequently reviewed and suspended by the DES in 2004 and never re-emerged. As a result, an overall lack of coordination along the lines feared in the *Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning* (Taskforce on Lifelong Learning 2002), and cited as essential in achieving the National Skills Strategy (EGFSN 2007), remained for the period in question.

### 3.1.2 *Taskforce on Lifelong Learning*

Arising from a Government commitment in 1999, the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning was set up by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, in apparent collaboration with the Department of Education and Science, to build a strategic framework for lifelong learning by mapping existing provision, identifying any gaps and suggesting solutions to fill these. This development seemed odd in light of the above publication, and in any event, the final report stated that this objective was deemed too ambitious to achieve through the ‘reductionist methodology’ (DETE 2000 p6) it was given.

In a similar vein to the White Paper, the *Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning* (2002) adopted a broad approach to Lifelong Learning which enables ‘individual development, active citizenship, social inclusion and the economic well-being of society as a whole’ (DETE 2002 p6). It goes on to identify factors necessary to realise this approach, most crucially, a) a significant systemic shift within the education, training and certification systems and in the enterprise sector; b) along with attitudinal change on the part of individuals and society in general and c) a long-term commitment on the part of government

and citizens and additional investment which, if not forthcoming, may well have a negative impact on Ireland's long term economic and social well-being.

The Taskforce proposed a framework for progress containing the following elements, each of which strikingly mirrored the 'key messages' of the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning (European Commission 2000) and are presented in brackets for illustration:

- Developing and implementing the National Framework of Qualifications; (Valuing learning)
- Ensuring basic skills for all; (New basic skills for all)
- Providing comprehensive and coherent guidance and information; (Rethinking guidance and counselling)
- Addressing delivery, access and funding issues; (Bringing learning closer to home)
- Better learning opportunities in the workplace for workers. (More investment in human resources) (DETE 2002 p8).

Overall, the Taskforce appeared to overlap with much of the ground opened up, if not comprehensively covered by, the White Paper on Adult Education but provided a distinct labour market perspective on the most important areas for development, steered by the EU and according to the dominant stakeholders involved, at that particular historical moment.

### 3.1.3 *The National Skills Strategy*

In mid-2005, the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) was requested by the new Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment 'to identify the skills required for Ireland to become a competitive, innovation-driven, knowledge-based, participative and inclusive economy by 2020' (EGFSN 2007 p5). Perhaps driven by the disappointing outcomes of the mid-term review of the Lisbon Strategy in 2005, the Expert Group carried out a programme



of research which was published as the basis for the development of a National Skills Strategy. At the launch of the report, two months shy of the General Election in 2007, the Minister announced the report would, in fact, be the National Skills Strategy (NSS) as opposed to just the research base for its development, as the document states (EGFSN 2007 p5).

Its principal adult education recommendation was that an extra 500,000 people in the workforce would need to move up at least one level in the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). It broke this down further, calling for 70,000 people to upskills from NFQ levels 1 and 2 to level 3; 260,000 to move to levels 4 and 5; and 170,000 to move to levels 6 to 10. It estimated that the cost of this scale of upskilling would be €153 million per annum for levels 3-5 and €304 million for upskilling at higher levels.

The National Skills Strategy contains a detailed description of Ireland's changing skills needs as a result of the continued growth in the services sector and the relative decline in 'traditional' sectors of agriculture and manufacturing. The greatest increases in employment are predicted to be in the 'professional', 'associate professional' and 'personal and service' groupings. These occupations along with all others are described as becoming more 'knowledge-intensive' and requiring higher levels of skills and qualifications. Borrowing heavily from the EU's 'key competencies' (2006), the Expert Group presents a portfolio of generic skills which it believes essential for all workers and this includes literacy, numeracy and IT literacy as well as communication, interpersonal and learning-to-learn skills. It states that it is a 'widely shared assumption' (EGFSN 2007 p48) that the knowledge economy will continue to need low skilled workers but mainly those who can demonstrate they possess the generic skills referred to above.

### 3.2 Synthesis of the common themes from the three documents

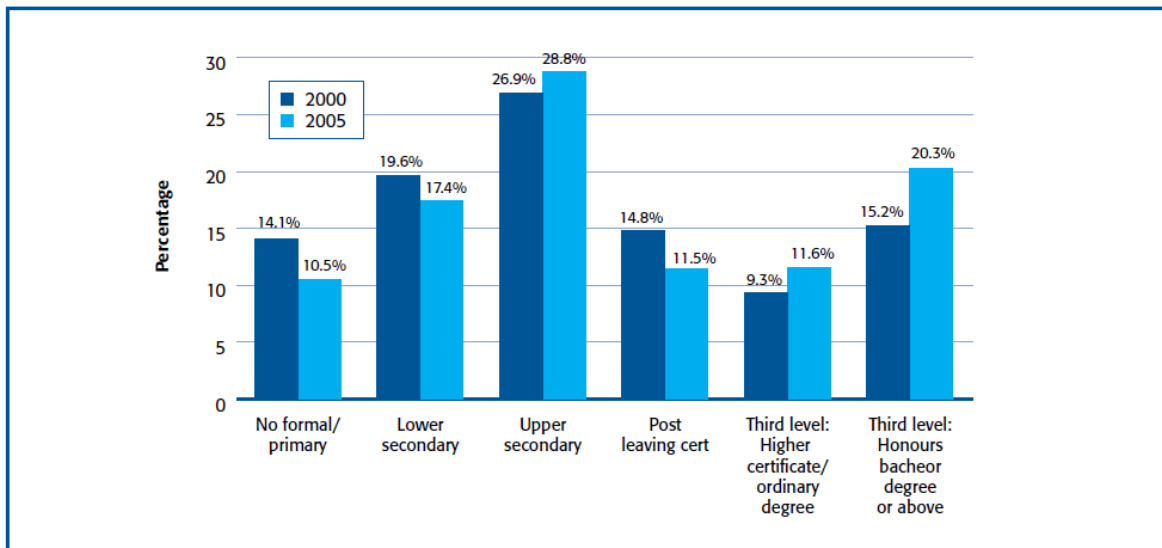
All three documents exist to make a case for investment in lifelong learning, to convince those making funding decisions and to gain support from the beneficiaries, providers and learners. Unlike the broader societal enhancing rationale in the White Paper on Adult Education (DES 2000), the National Skills Strategy (EGFSN 2007) overtly starts by proposing that human capital development has played a very significant role in Ireland's increased productivity and successful economic and social development and therefore, in order to continue this association, there is a need for enhanced funding of the education and training infrastructure. There is a commonality between the documents about the role of education and training in preparing Irish society for change brought about by technology and globalisation, and yet this is underpinned by different ideologies, resulting in a noticeable shift in each publication from societal ambitions to economic imperatives, as well as inconsistencies and tensions.

For example, in order to convince the State, employers and individuals to invest in lifelong learning, there are common statements based on 'research' in all of the documents (DES 2000 p9; DETE 2002 p65) that 'participation in education has an unambiguously positive impact on earnings' (EGFSN 2007 p51). However the evidence provided to support this claim all relates to years spent in schooling and participation in higher education. The financing of education and training by individuals and employers is situated within the frame of human capital theory, which applies a cost benefit analysis, to varying degrees in all three documents. Little or no evidence is put forward to convince, specifically, adults with low educational attainment that it is economically worth their while returning to learning. Nevertheless, 'it is made clear that there is evidence and argument to support the benefits to the State if they do so' (Bailey 2007 p9).

The National Skill Strategy draws predominantly from an economic point of view, namely that of market failure in education, as the primary reason for State funding. From this proposition, the case is made for public financing of education for specific groups of individuals, most notably the low skilled, as otherwise, it is doubtful they will make the investment themselves. This investment will bring advantage to them and the wider society in which they live (Bailey 2007). Only the White Paper includes social justice concerns in its rationale for State investment in such groups. For reasons to be explored later, the documents all chime that investment should be targeted at those ‘most at risk’ (DES 2000 p13; DETE 2002 p64), proposing that the low skilled or those with less than upper secondary qualifications ‘be assisted to achieve such an award ...without incurring tuition costs and with a level of subsistence...provided by the State (EGFSN 2007 p93).

A key theme in all three documents is concern with Ireland’s performance in relation to other competitor states. For example, they are each careful to scrutinise the level of State resources in education and training only in comparison with other nations with whom Ireland competes, and not to critique resource allocation within the State or between government departments. Using OECD figures from 2003, the National Skills Strategy shows that Ireland spent 4.5% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on educational institutions which was less than the OECD average of 5.4%. The National Skills Strategy also states that the vast majority of expenditure on education and training in work comes from employers and around 80% is spent on general education and training. Consequently, the documents note that Ireland’s participation rate in adult learning is relatively poor, all referencing Ireland’s education ranking in EU or OECD comparative data. Between the timeframe of the first and last documents, as shown in Figure 2 below, the educational attainment levels of the labour force improved. Despite this Ireland only moved from 22<sup>nd</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> out of 27 OECD countries in terms of the percentage of the labour force with a lower secondary qualification attainment.

Figure 2 Labour Force (25-64) by highest education level attained, 2000 and 2005



Source: CSO; National Skills Strategy 2007 p64

In light of the insufficient investment to date, each document suggests that if policy is not realised to address this, there will be negative consequences. For example: ‘Low levels of literacy and poor education levels, particularly among older adults, continue to pose fundamental challenges for Ireland in maintaining competitiveness and growth, and in promoting social inclusion’ (DES 2000 p52). It will lead to ‘surpluses at lower educational levels, with a large number of low-skilled individuals, unemployed or inactive’ (EGFSN 2007) as well as shortages of people with standards of education and training at third level or above. Despite their similar propositions to ensure that all citizens and latterly workers should have greater access to learning, ideally leading to higher levels of qualifications, all three documents are light on detail critical to policy realisation. A distinctive feature of the EGFSN is that the main recommendations in their report are costed, although the basis of the calculations are not in the report.

### 3.3 Hegemonic policy concerns

There is a clear commitment to adult education and training being framed within the broad approach of lifelong learning as evidenced by its position within all the policy documents reviewed above and indeed many others. Its realisation, however, appears more complex. Ireland has not invested in two key areas that would complete the scaffolding for building a true lifelong learning culture, namely a universal pre-school education system and an adult learning system. This thesis is primarily concerned with the latter and is attempting to ascertain why, despite the substantial policy rhetoric to the contrary, lifelong learning is not a reality in Ireland.

In contrast to the State policy documents, the *Socio-Economic Review 2007* (2007) by the Conference of Religious Ireland (CORI) Justice presents an alternative perspective on the education and training system in Ireland. For example it highlights that under the current investment regime, the exchequer puts in two and half times more money into those individuals who complete three years in higher education than it does for those who leave school before the completion of post-primary education (CORI 2007). To address this, the report recommends that an allowance is made available to those aged between 18-40 who have not benefited from higher education but who would like to return to learning. In this way, it is suggested, a 'culture of access to continuing lifelong educational opportunity' might be developed (CORI 2007 p159). The CORI report concludes its section on education by condemning the level of public funding for education generally, stating that it is 'out of step with our social and economic aspirations' and that this is most evident in the areas of early childhood education and adult second chance learning, the two areas described as 'most vital in terms of the promotion of greater equity and fairness' (CORI 2007 p160).

### 3.4 Tensions

Although the points summarised above unite the three policy documents, there are, predictably, explicit and implicit areas of disagreement. For example, the CORI Review brings the equality perspective to bear alongside an increasing hegemony of arguments about the economic imperative to invest in upskilling the adult population. This is a theme taken up by academics in relation to the reform of the education and training system in the UK, in particular the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992 which saw the separation of vocational from non-vocational courses for adults (Hamilton et al 2000; Ecclestone 2000). As not primarily concerned with enhancing adult education, the reports did not see it as helpful to divide up the purposes of learning as either related to work or not. Courses in adult education related to employment were ‘highly resourced and closely monitored’ whereas those that were not were characterised as ‘fragmented and marginalised’ (Hamilton, 1998, p.102). This development has continued into the twenty-first century, with a growing body of criticism in New Literacy Studies around how adult literacy has been narrowly conceived within the human resource development model which underpins it and wider lifelong learning policy in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and beyond (e.g., Street, 2001; Hamilton et al 2001; Kell, 2004).

Close attention to adult education within the context of lifelong learning, like in many other industrialised countries, is based around the interpretation of the implications of the global economy and the need for nations to upskill to compete, rather than concerns with social justice or equity (Blunt 2004; Peters 2001). Nevertheless, even within this narrow context, it is still taking a very long time to move policy proposals in adult education, as part of the overall approach to lifelong learning, to ensuring that high quality learning opportunities are available to the adult population. Nor is it clear whether policy proposals around adult

education and training interventions are framed from a purely economic perspective and, if so, what the implications are.

In this light, I aim next to explore these questions through a critical analysis of contemporary Irish lifelong learning policy drawing on the tripartite typology offered by Andy Green in his article ‘Models of lifelong learning and the ‘knowledge society’’ (2006). The Republic of Ireland is included explicitly some of the time in Green’s analysis of the English speaking countries group and is therefore assumed to be working from a neo-liberal or Anglo-Saxon model. This organising framework will help reveal how and why Ireland might be more associated with this model than the policy rhetoric might suggest and therefore not as close to the Nordic model which inspires it. The extent to which Ireland’s adult education policy landscape is influenced by globalisation and its approach to it will also be explored. I turn next to follow Green’s approach to see if I can identify more clearly the type lifelong learning system operating within the Irish knowledge society between 1997-2007, concentrating on the adult population.

## **Part 2 Understanding the Lifelong Learning model in Ireland and its influence on Adult Education**

### **3.5 A typology of lifelong learning**

According to Green, there are two dominant models of competitive economies in the world today; the ‘neo-liberal’ or Anglo-Saxon model associated with the United States of America (USA) and other English speaking countries, and the ‘social market’ model, associated with Germany and other northern European countries. In both of these there are constant tensions between achieving economic competitiveness and social cohesion in equal terms. However

Green maintains there is a third model which is more in harmony with social and economic development, namely the social democratic model of the Nordic states. In effect, this model ‘achieves higher rates of employment...often higher productivity, whilst also displaying higher levels of equality and social cohesion’ (Green 2006 p309).

When focusing on findings regarding a comparison of each of the three models in terms of GDP, the Nordic countries have the lowest level of income inequality and the highest values for educational equality. This, combined with their high employment rates, suggests that the model is worthy of separate classification and further exploration. Green takes his analysis into the area of lifelong learning and its characteristics, this time looking at four groups: France and the Mediterranean states; Germany, German speaking countries and other nearby countries; the Nordic states; and English speaking countries.

In respect of the Nordic countries, Green first notes how they are the most homogenous group of the four groups examined in terms of lifelong learning. The system of education is highly decentralised but within an overarching framework of policy goals directed by central government. Most distinctively from the other groups, both adult learning and post-compulsory education and training draw significant levels of public funding and are underpinned by strong social partnership traditions. I note that different social partnership models operate in different countries (Hardiman 2005), but further explanation about this is beyond the scope of this work. Green then examines the relationship between the different models of lifelong learning and the socio-economic models operating in the different regions by asking three questions: 1) how many high skilled employees result from each system; 2) how are skills dispersed through the workforce; 3) what is the extent to which adults are participating in adult learning?



In referring to the International Adult Literacy Survey (OECD 2000), Green shows that the Nordic countries have the greatest proportion of workers in high skilled employment. In addition, the Nordic countries perform best in terms of adult literacy levels. Drawing further on the data in IALS and also the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), he highlights how the Nordic countries demonstrate low levels of educational inequality. Finally, looking at adult learning, Green tells us that the Nordic countries have the highest participation rates and this factor, he suggests, contributes to their ability to have high employment. Green goes on to conclude that the Nordic countries' system of lifelong learning contributes positively to their economic and social development, firstly by contributing to the levels of skill in the labour market, secondly by reducing the levels of inequality in the skills profile, and finally enhancing employment rates, thereby delivering improved productivity and social inclusion. In so doing, Green maintains that it provides an alternative to the dominant binary approach to the knowledge societies based on the neo-liberal and social market models.

### **3.6 Analysing Ireland's Characteristics of Lifelong Learning against Green's Typology**

#### ***3.6.1 Participation in Lifelong Learning***

From an examination of the data in Ireland's Central Statistics Office *Module on Lifelong Learning* (CSO 2004), it is possible to delineate the profile of adult participation in formal and informal education. People with higher levels of educational attainment are more likely to have participated in lifelong learning and consequently to have gained further increases in their educational levels. Therefore 'the pattern of participation in lifelong learning in Ireland is causing increased educational inequality' (Bailey 2007 p4). A further compounding factor is that workers in low skill occupations, possibly as a result of their educational attainment,

have low rates of participation in lifelong learning in comparison to workers in higher level employment, and this is especially the situation in particular types of employment. In terms of job security and expansion, the dominant forecast is that Ireland, like many other EU countries, will increasingly offer professional, high skilled jobs and correspondingly, there will be a decline in low skilled work associated with specific sectors.

### 3.6.2 *The education and training system*

In examining the characteristics of lifelong learning further, the education system in Ireland is largely centralised, with the Department of Education and Science during the period in question dealing directly with around four thousand different entities, most of which are individual schools. The need for a devolved authority in the area of adult learning, akin to the Higher Education Authority and a key proposal of most of the relevant policy documents at the core of this study, seems critical. There is no local or regional education authority structure either, despite the efforts of various previous political administrations to reform the Vocational Education Committees (VECs) along such lines (Walshe, 1999). There are comprehensive primary and secondary schools provided by the State but, unlike in the UK and US, there is not ‘a wide variety of different types of upper secondary general and vocational programmes’ (Green 2006 p314). Neither is there the level of private funding for education in Ireland, coming in at 7% in 2003 in comparison with 27.7% in the USA and an OECD average of 12% (EGFSN 2007). The contrast is even starker in the third level sector. Also dissimilar to the US and UK is the availability of adult education and training, which is poorly resourced by the State in Ireland. However, Ireland does share the ‘light levels of regulation’ and a ‘voluntaristic’ nature of adult education and training found in other English speaking countries according to Green (2006 p314). For example, out of 17 countries in the EU, Ireland was the only country with no rules in relation to eligibility for Learning Leave (DETE 2002).

### 3.6.3 *Inequality*

Similarly though, to the UK and USA, Ireland produces ‘polarised high skills labour forces’ (Green 2006 p315; EGFSN 2007). This is evident through the results for Ireland from the International Adult Literacy Survey which showed that the one in four of the adult population scored at the lowest level of literacy (Morgan et al 1997). Research has shown a robust correlation between literacy levels and economic productivity (OECD 2000). Another research paper revealed a substantial relationship between the positive outlay in education in any stage and a country’s subsequent growth and labour productivity. The research, which draws from the adult literacy skill levels data in fourteen countries of those who joined the workforce between 1965 and 1995, revealed an increase of 1% in literacy scores relative to the international average, which, in turn is associated with a 2.5% rise in productivity and a 1.5% hike in GDP per head (Coulombe et al 2004).

Green’s article does not go into the area of the human capital model of education and training for the labour force taken up by other writers in the field (e.g., Hamilton et al 2001) but this is understood to be the chief approach to lifelong learning in the context of the models of the knowledge society outlined above. As I showed earlier, human capital appears to be the overwhelmingly dominant concept underpinning recent significant policy documents in Ireland, most notably the National Development Plan (2007) and the National Skills Strategy (2007). However in both these documents, there are also significant commitments to social inclusion whilst the White Paper on Adult Education *Learning for Life* sets out a broader based model of lifelong learning concerned with equality and contributing to both social and economic development in a more balanced fashion.

### *3.6.4 The Anglo Saxon model extends to the Celts*

Upon reading Green's article and, more recently, two reports on lifelong learning in Ireland (Downes et al 2006; Maunsell et al 2008), I would deem Ireland to be operating from the Anglo-Saxon model but with the proviso that it also has its own different national exemplars and identifying what these are will be important for understanding the Irish model of lifelong learning. There are key drivers in the knowledge society and lifelong learning, some of which are likely to be shared by many countries and indeed regions. However it is likely, given Ireland's recent history, that there are unique features influencing its development (Riddell et al 2007). Is it possible that some of the national characteristics relate to aspects of the Nordic model of lifelong learning? Green argues that it is not necessary to see the models above as necessarily incompatible but adds that the social democratic model of the Nordic states provides an example of a further model that achieves a stronger balance of economic and social outcomes. Nordic countries have the highest social spending, lowest levels of income inequality, and higher levels of educational equality.

The model of knowledge economy/society is usually defined in terms of labour productivity, employment rates, wage equality, skills distribution and socialisation. According to Green and others (Rubenson 2011), the Nordic model comes out best across all determinants.

Lifelong learning supports the outcomes in each model to varying degrees, in particular three areas: the output and distribution of skills for the labour market and the rates of participation in adult learning. The lifelong learning system can therefore produce high average levels of skills into the labour market and determine the different levels of inequality in the distribution of skills, which ultimately impact on the levels of social cohesion and employment rates.

Lifelong learning systems with high levels of participation in adult learning also deliver on social inclusion.

In light of the analysis, then, it is known that Ireland's lifelong learning system produces a high degree of skills inequality but why? Some reasons may lie in the welfare system and its level of support to low income families and the lack of universal pre-school and adult education provision. These, as well as other forces, will need to be examined with a view to determining how reform in these areas might bring greater education equality, but that is beyond the scope of this thesis. School diversity is also playing a role here as better educated higher earning parents are securing better schools for their children, with the result that there are pockets of poor performing schools for lower income families. Such school diversity is rare in Nordic countries. This is just one of the many reasons why the Nordic model of lifelong learning works. The system produces relatively equal skills levels for all learners largely due to the egalitarian school system, supportive welfare state and the high participation rates in adult learning. If one accepts that the model of lifelong learning in Ireland in reality is more akin to the Anglo-Saxon model, is there a realistic course of action that could see Ireland move towards the model achieved in the Nordic countries? Is there political will for such a seemingly radical departure?

### *3.6.5 Challenging the State*

In looking at Green's description of the Nordic or social democratic model in comparison with the social market and neo-liberal models, it is possible to situate Ireland's lifelong learning model as carrying some characteristics of both the social democratic model and the neo-liberal model at the level of policy rhetoric. In terms of policy, I have shown how over the period there appears to be two competing approaches to lifelong learning in Ireland. One set of policy documents examined above looks at it from a broad paradigm of human potential, social cohesion and equality (e.g. White Paper on Adult Education (2000) at one end of the spectrum and the Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning (2002) at the other) whilst the other set work from a paradigm concerned with human resource,

employability and adaptability (e.g. National Development Plan (2007), Towards a National Skills Strategy (2007)). This tension mirrors the academic debates about the model of the Irish State during the Celtic Tiger era, whether it was developmental or competitive and how, as a result of its response to the ‘pressures and opportunities of globalisation’ (Kirby 2009), it is seen as test case for other small nations. I now turn to the academic literature both in Ireland and internationally to illuminate further the paradigms underpinning adult education policy.

### **Part 3 Themes from the academic literature on adult education policy in Ireland and internationally**

#### **3.7 The emergence of Neo-liberalism in Irish Education**

Neo-liberalism is described as a ‘complex of values, ideologies and practices that affect the economic, political and cultural aspects of society’ (Wayne & Gibson 2007 p1) which is based on liberal economic principles. It is concerned with ensuring that the market is free to operate unencumbered and encourages privatisation, deregulation and individual responsibility. Geraldine Mooney Simmie (2012) explores the rhetoric of school education policy texts in Ireland from 2000-2012 and argues that Irish society is increasingly in the grip of neo-liberalism over the period. She argues that, arising from the economic downturn in the 1980s, considerable education reform followed recommendations of the OECD. Despite reforms, there still remained educational disadvantage, with evidence that the introduction of free fees to higher education in the late 1990s has mainly benefitted higher income groups. Furthermore, the state introduced legislation so as to shift responsibility for educational equality from the Department of Education and place it more on the individual. Mooney Simmie carried out a critical analysis of policy documents relating to school teachers between

2000 and 2012. Particularly relevant to my study is her contention that between 2000 and 2003, there was greater collaboration between the state and teachers, aided by EU funding and shared ownership towards educational reform. This was set to change as a result of two significant developments, one relating to the introduction of legislation to regulate teachers and the second to the report aimed at reviewing the operation of the Department of Education and Science. The latter was carried out by a former head of the Department of Finance within a four month period and was not subject to public consultation. The recommendations of the Cromien Report (DES 2000) were acted upon, resulting in the Department of Education divesting certain responsibilities in order to concentrate more on its core role of policy. Mooney Simmie argues that these two developments were informed by a neo-liberal philosophy which was introduced in the early 2000s and had fully taken hold in education in Ireland by 2012.

This is a theme taken up by Bernie Grummell (2007), an academic based in Maynooth University, who also asserts that, within education policy, a neo-liberal discourse has adapted adult education principles for its own logic. Unlike contemporary similar policy documents in the UK, the White Paper on Adult Education is described as an exception, albeit challenged by the struggle to balance economic and social needs. Despite this, Grummell concludes that the emancipatory promise of adult education is being increasingly constrained by the dominant need of the economy for productive individuals and consequently needs to 'disentangle itself from neo-liberal incorporation to create space for contextualised and emancipatory learning' (Grummell, 2007 p 13). It is hoped that a key outcome of this thesis will be to empower adult education stakeholders to do this.

The impact of neo-liberalism and globalisation on adult education in Ireland is the subject taken up by Finnegan (2008), also from Maynooth University, who maintains that despite the rhetoric of policy, it is the dominant paradigm in Irish society. Although the White Paper on

Adult Education has brought many positive developments to the sector, Finnegan maintains that it is formed from a neo-liberal agenda concerned with supplying skilled labour for improved economic productivity and is co-opting adult education work for this purpose. It is left to those working in adult education to equip themselves to interrogate policy and contribute to a balancing of the competing policy goals.

### **3.8 Impact of the EU on adult education in Ireland**

Helen Keogh (2004), an adult educator based in the Department of Education and Skills until her recent retirement, maintains that European Social Fund (ESF) support was an essential driver in adult education activity during the 1990s and in the period following the implementation of the White Paper on Adult Education. In effect, this funding enabled programme development in areas neglected by national policy. The raft of EU policy activity coming from the Lisbon Agenda, however, also presented challenges to Irish policy makers who, according to Keogh, needed 'to go beyond the rhetoric' (p25) and resource the implementation of agreed objectives. These challenges included how to realise the concept of adult learning through a partnership approach when providers and their institutions are divided along traditional education and training lines. Keogh asserts that an internal European Commission review identified that the potential of its policy, *Communication Making the European area of Lifelong Learning a Reality* (2001), was not realised. Working groups and their members mainly reflected school and higher education learning and interests and consequently the policy makes limited explicit reference to adult education. Keogh remains upbeat in her view that the EU offers more potential to adult education stakeholders than threats, albeit largely through the availability of funding, which could be used to implement outstanding elements of the White Paper on Adult Education. The optimism



continues as Keogh suggests that influencing policy at national and EU level is as simple as expressing views to national policy makers. She maintains that this advocacy will be necessary to achieve a 'publicly funded adult education service in the interests of equal opportunities' (2004, p25).

In her study of lifelong learning policy and higher education in Ireland, Doona (2007) focused on identifying the impact of the White Paper on Adult Education on higher education bodies. In her conclusions, she maintains that lifelong learning policy in Ireland is similar to that found across Europe, all of whom have been influenced by key EU policy documents, detailed later in this chapter. She maintains, however, that the concept of lifelong learning has shifted from the holistic development of the person in the 1970s to one more focused on serving the needs of the globalised economy in the 1990s, which coincided with Ireland's entry to lifelong learning policy development. Doona's study reveals that the White Paper on Adult Education has influenced higher education institution's policies but there was little available evidence of impact.

In broad terms, the EU is the most influential external body on public policy in Ireland, and as such it is not surprising that this would include adult education. Nevertheless, adult education is a marginal area of concern in research compared to other policy areas (Holford & Mohorcic Spolar, 2012).

### **3.9 Domestic factors**

The extent of the influence of the European Economic Community (EEC) and then the EU on Irish vocational education and training since the 1970s through policy and the ESF, has been affirmed in a recent state commissioned research report to inform the development of the first

Further Education and Training Strategy in 2014 (McGuinness et al 2014). The report claims to be ‘unique’ in providing a comprehensive mapping of the FET system. It sets out the macroeconomic and labour market context for Ireland’s late and hurried entry into lifelong learning policy during this time as a backdrop of significant economic growth from the mid to late 1990s and an unprecedented volume of inward migration from 2004, which resulted in Ireland being one of three countries to allow new member states full access to the country. In terms of the legislative context, the ESRI authors note that the term ‘further education’ is first used in the White Paper on Education (1995) and enshrined as the further education and training sector in the 1999 Qualifications Act (McGuinness et al 2014). It notes seven areas for criticism in its findings covering governance, alignment with the labour market, accreditation, planning, policy implications and data provision, all of which have informed the current FET strategy.

By contrast, an earlier report from a different academic research team set out to provide a national report as part of an EU funded project which aimed to provide a ‘critical assessment of the concept of lifelong learning’ in Ireland (Maunsell et al 2008, p.vi). The team participated in a European Commission funded research project involving fourteen research institutes and aims to assess how well education systems were making lifelong learning a reality for all (Maunsell et al 2008). In their analysis, the White Paper is presented as an exemplar of a well balanced approach to lifelong learning, not just for economic reasons but also emphasising its contribution to social inclusion, a point also made by McGuinness et al (2014). The team share the theoretical perspectives espoused in the White Paper and conclude that ‘the main competing perspective in Ireland is not so much ideological as simply giving financial priority to adult education over other areas’ (Maunsell et al 2008 p5). However there is a parallel to Mooney Simmie’s finding detailed above that a growing neo-liberal perspective was entering education policy and its implementation. Maunsell et al record that

community education groups 'report a growing unease at the de-emphasis in education for the improvement of social capital and a move towards the ethos of education for economic reasons' (2008 p5).

The report is highly descriptive of the policy and legislation in place to support lifelong learning, as well as of provision and patterns of participation. The effectiveness of lifelong learning policies up to 2008 is determined by a very brief descriptive account of an eclectic array of activities. The report concludes with forty policy recommendations, many of which are derived from adult education stakeholders, including NALA, who fed into the project. The report illustrates the simplistic analysis of why adult education has struggled to realise its policy potential. It is a naïve understanding of the sector to present its only challenge as one of funding for speedier implementation.

### **3.10 Critical implications**

A further domestic factor is captured in a cross border study of educational disadvantage amongst adults, in which education policy and its impact is critiqued. McGill and Morgan (2001) maintain that the thrust of educational policy is to serve the middle class and, upon saturation in higher education, opportunities will be directed towards those down the social scale, as resources permit. There is no ideological explanation for this approach but rather a challenge to its hegemony. Whilst noting the proposals of the White Paper on Adult Education, the authors are critical of the policy rhetoric around the basic educational needs of adults and identify three areas that will lead to widening adult education participation: support for adults to attain basic literacy and numeracy, development of community education and provision of open and distance learning opportunities.

According to Murtagh (2009) there are lessons to be learned from the story of adult education in Ireland during this period. Despite the intent of the Government to create a national structure for adult education, it did not sufficiently prescribe a lead department to realise this objective. This critical gap was exploited as part of the rivalry between the two government departments with responsibility for adult education and training. The structure proposed by the Department of Education and Science (DES) in the White Paper was flawed and consequently added to its failure to launch, ultimately leaving the sector back where it started in 1997. The limited capacity of the DES, highlighted through the Cromien Report noted above, was a further weakness. The importance of those in the sector understanding the national policy process is also signalled by Murphy (1999), Keogh (2004) and Murtagh (2009), who see this knowledge as a necessity going forward if adult education policy is to be successful in the mind of stakeholders.

In his comparative policy analysis of lifelong learning policy development in Ireland and Britain, Field (2000) has pointed out that there is a 'paradox at the heart' (p215) of the lifelong learning policy making process among governments in Western Europe. In effect Field's thesis is that there appears to be widespread agreement about the need to support people to continually enhance their skills and knowledge, yet it is doubtful that there is the 'capacity of central planning and regulation for achieving radically improved educational standards' (Field 2000 p215) or sufficient activity to bring about the required cultural change. Both countries, according to Field, face this paradox but from different baselines. Both have been influenced by national committees, OECD reviews and reports as well as the EU which then triggered policy development, albeit with distinct and overlapping elements. In Field's view, lifelong learning in Ireland at the time of the publication of the White Paper on Adult Education, appears to be 'evenly divided between investment in general adult education infrastructure on the one hand and workforce development on the other' (Field 2000 p218),

despite some more radical rhetoric. This view is tempered with a recognition that policy development in this area is a relatively new departure in both countries and has come about in a short space of time. Field's argument is that realising lifelong learning is a challenge for governments because it lends itself to vision statements more than innovations on the ground, but is not politically appealing as voters will not want to pay for it. He concludes that 'lifelong learning suffers not so much from policy neglect as bafflement and uncertainty in the face of complexity, immeasurability and risk' (p225).

### **3.11 International organisations**

According to Taylor et al (1997), the creation of international institutions has been necessitated by the inability of states to cope with the challenges of globalisation. These institutions play a significant role in education policy and have been the subject of much academic debate. Lifelong learning as an international concept developed by international organisations in response to globalisation has become 'a useful label for policy makers' (Tight 2002 p.39). Although of recent origin in policy terms, it is argued that the idea of lifelong learning has always been with us (Griffin 2009; Ouane 2009). The evolution of adult education policy involves a number of international organisations, each using different iterations of the term.

#### **3.11.1 *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)***

From its establishment in the 1940s, UNESCO has always promoted the importance of education for everyone throughout their life, specifically naming children and adults as beneficiaries. Ouane (2009) presents UNESCO's 1970 definition of lifelong education:

as a process of accomplishing personal, social and professional development throughout the lifespan of individuals, in order to enhance the quality of life of both individuals and their collectives. It is a comprehensive and unifying idea which includes formal, non-formal and informal learning for acquiring and enhancing enlightenment so as to attain the fullest possible development in different stages and different domains of life (p304).

He argues that the definition is underpinned by humanist values and evolves from the classic philosophy of Socrates to Comenius and to the more modern writings of Dewey. The Faure report 'Learning to be' (1972) detailed UNESCO's situation of lifelong education as the central tenet for education development. It also situated lifelong learning as essential for the whole person and rejected education that only aimed at preparing people for employment. During the 1970s there was debate about using the term lifelong learning instead of lifelong education, but it was not until the mid-1990s that lifelong learning took precedence and was consolidated in two key reports during this time. The implications of this change will be discussed later.

Under the chairmanship of Jacques Delors, UNESCO established an International Commission on Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century which produced *Learning: the treasure within* (1996). The report provided a contemporary view of the role of lifelong learning in the modern knowledge economy. It did this, according to Jarvis (2008) and Ouane (2009), whilst reflecting 'UNESCO's rights-based, humanistic, transformative approach to learning' and in 'contrast with the approach of the OECD, the EU and the World Bank' (p307).

The second report emanated from the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V) at which government led delegations from around the world gathered, including Ireland and the UK, debated and concluded that adult education as a lifelong

learning process was necessary to equip people for the ‘challenges ahead’ (UNESCO 1997). In 2006 the UNESCO Institute for Education was renamed the Institute for Lifelong Learning and continues to publish on the importance of lifelong learning in the knowledge society, with an emphasis on the sharing of knowledge to alleviate inequality in and between societies.

### 3.11.2 *The European Union (EU)*

No doubt influenced by the UNESCO-led developments on lifelong learning which were at their peak up to the 1980s, the EU started looking at lifelong learning in the late 1980s resulting in the Standing Working Group on Education setting up a special taskforce on the issue. The European Commission (EC) issued its first policy on lifelong learning in the White Paper on Teaching and Learning: *Towards a learning society* (EC 1995). 1996 was the European Year of Lifelong Learning which provided a platform from which to promote the concept in member states, incidentally as Ireland held the EU Presidency (European Parliament and Council, 1995). The EC’s Strategy for Lifelong Learning (EC, 1996) was also published at this time. Subsequently through national consultation processes, the Commission invited all EU citizens to contribute to the *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* (2000) and the following year issued *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality* (2001). Following this, lifelong learning was firmly confirmed as an ‘overarching strategy of European co-operation in education and training policies and for the individual’ (Commission of the European Communities, 2002 p4).

According to Jarvis (2009), the raft of EU policy from the mid-1990s to 2006 showed how Europe was pursuing the concept of lifelong learning to achieve two familiar goals: enabling its labour market to compete in a globalised economy and all its citizens to participate fully in the new European Union. He maintains that during this time the emphasis between

employability and active citizenship was never equal and was, almost always, in the favour of the former. This, he argues, is as a result of the rise of global capitalism during the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and its need for a learning workforce. Much has been written about the influence of the EU and the swing from a humanist led approach to lifelong learning espoused by UNESCO to a more human capital perspective informing lifelong learning policy statements (Rubenson & Beddie 2004; Borg & Mayo 2004).

Europe is a region itself in competition with other regions in the global market, and as a result aims to influence EU member countries to adopt its policies and create the conditions where state funded further education and training is vocationally oriented. However there is also a shifting emphasis onto the role of the individual in continuously learning and hence the move away from lifelong education (implying state funded) to lifelong learning (implying individually financed). An embodiment of this is the Lisbon agenda, recognised as a key driver of adult education from 2000 (Keogh 2004). However over the period in question, the promise of the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning seemed to be more narrowly interpreted as the Interim Progress Report on the Lisbon Agenda took an ‘hortatory stance’ (Keogh 2004 p20) to make lifelong learning a concrete reality.

### 3.11.3 *The World Bank*

The World Bank is another proponent of lifelong learning and, in particular, plays a key role in equipping nations to compete in a globalised knowledge economy and alleviate poverty. Rivera (2009) provides an analysis of the use of the term lifelong learning by the World Bank in one of its policy documents. He argues that the term is used frequently, interchangeably and often without clarity as to what exactly is meant by it. Despite this, it is clear overall that the Bank is concerned with lifelong learning from the human capital perspective, to work as its ‘handmaiden of the market’ (Rivera 2009 p281). Like most commentators (Jarvis 2008),



Rivera contends that the Bank rightly sees the potential of educating workers but also cautions against the limitations of this approach and calls on the Bank to clarify more carefully through the use of language what exactly they are doing. Goldstein (2006) describes how the World Bank, amongst others, provide aid to selected countries on the basis they achieve agreed policy reforms. The achievement of policy reforms is connected to targets constructed by global testing organisations and which Goldstein and others argue are not without their deficiencies. Jarvis (2008) sees aid as a particularly effective mechanism for ensuring borrower countries commit to the economics of neo-liberalism which most benefit powerful donor countries. Ireland's reform of the further education and training sector as a result of the commitments to the Troika referred to earlier bears this out.

#### 3.11.4 *The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)*

The OECD has always included education in its sphere of work although its position to the core economic purpose of the organisation has changed over time (Schuller 2009). From the 1980s, the OECD has been a more powerful influence in comparison to UNESCO in terms of education policy and in particular its neo-liberal view of education (Korsgaard 1997). It is argued that the OECD, like the other international organisations with an interest in lifelong learning, does so in light of its dual purpose of economic development and social inclusion (OECD, 1996). In 2002 education was elevated to its own directorate in the OECD which, according to Schuller, can be interpreted as a weakening of the link between education and the labour market and or a sign of the increased status with which education is now viewed. This dichotomous view is contested by Taylor et al (1997) who argue that the OECD's position on education was, from that time, heavily influenced by their adoption of globalisation and the primary relationship between the economy and education. The use of the term 'recurrent education' by the OECD back in 1960s reflect this original purpose as relating to the education of the labour market throughout people's lives (Gustavsson 1997)

and as an alternative to formal schooling. It is suggested by Jarvis (2008), however, that the realisation of such a reform to the education system would be very costly to nations but that the responsibility for education throughout life should rest more with the individual, fitting better with the neo-liberal agenda.

Since the 1990s, the OECD has written extensively about the importance of lifelong learning, primarily for the economy and to enable people cope with the rapid change brought about through technology. There is also, but in lower order of importance, the contribution of lifelong learning to health and social well-being as well as social inclusion (OECD 1996; 1999; 2000).

Much has been written about the OECD's influence on adult education and training policy (Jarvis 2008) and an argument that its work is underpinned by a neo-liberal paradigm (Lingard 2008). Schuller (2009) argues there is no single paradigm which informs the OECD's approach to lifelong learning but accepts that its work has significantly impacted on education policy globally. The processes used by the OECD include single country national reviews and multi country thematic reviews. The OECD also carries out external testing, with the Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competences (PIAAC) most relevant to lifelong learning policy. National tests are published as comparative surveys creating an 'international league table' (Schuller 2009) which have contributed to educational change but also have been the subject of much criticism (Taylor et al 1997; Hamilton & Barton 2000).

It has been pointed out by commentators that the OECD and EU are closely linked through representation on the governing Council of the OECD and other forums, leading to a 'congruence of policy positions on educational issues...in particular around the recurring rhetoric of quality, diversity, flexibility, accountability and equity' (Taylor et al 1997 p 71).

In addition, many former OECD staff subsequently work in the EU, creating the potential of reinforcing shared views and narrowing the base of policy making in education.

### **3.12 Adult education in Britain**

Similar to the experience at the time in Ireland, the British Committee of Enquiry into non-vocational adult education, known as the Russell Report (1973), concluded that adult education was very important not only in terms of its contribution to the economy but also in terms of its contribution to peoples' quality of life and then British governments waited twenty years before introducing legislation on the subject (Jackson 1997). Another parallel to the development of adult education in Ireland relates to the course taken over those twenty years in which Jackson argues that the values espoused by the Russell Report became increasingly influenced by the 'market-driven policies in line with the global development of capital' (p48). The swing from the values of the Russell Report to those of the market was consolidated by the publication in 1992 of the British Government's White Paper titled *Education and Training for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Motivation for investment in adult education was connected to the returns to the economy and increasing the country's relatively poor adult education participation rates in comparison to other countries. A Further Education Funding Council, like SOLAS in Ireland, was established in 1992 to ensure that providers better met the needs of learners in the context of the labour market and primarily those aged 16 - 19. Jackson (1997) suggests that, despite all this, there were some progressive changes. Once again with a nod to developments in Ireland, there was an attempt to break down the divide between education and training, including boosting the work of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ). However Jackson says that what British adult education needs is not another Russell Report or a White Paper. Rather what is required, then

as now, is adult education that can help society recover from the damaging effects of the rampant neo-liberal agenda as well as enable people to gain the knowledge and skills for survival in a competitive, global labour market, in other words, a new paradigm.

With the New Labour government of 1997 came what some hoped would be a new paradigm through its 'Third Way' political ideology. In the first instance, a National Advisory Group for Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning was set up to provide a report to underpin the White Paper on Lifelong Learning which was published a year later (Fryer 1997). *The Learning Age* (DfEE 1998) set out a clear role for lifelong learning for essential economic development within the neo-liberal agenda of the New Labour government (Jarvis 2008).

Slowey (2004) argues that the objectives of adult education in the UK have not been well served by the policy of lifelong learning from 1997 and that many working in the sector are disappointed that the rhetoric of policy has not translated into action on the ground. This rhetoric drew from the language and terminology of the adult education sector. Slowey points to five factors which help explain these developments. Firstly she maintains that there has been a desire to widen access to education but, in reality, this has been targeted at young adults and those of working age, and is being driven by a human capital perspective.

Similarly Slowey suggests that the idea of recognising learning wherever it takes place is increasingly leading to people feeling they have to learn, as opposed to them wanting to do so. The third area Slowey identifies is quality. Once again, on the face of it, quality is a good thing. However when it becomes only associated with accredited outcomes, which is forcing many types of adult learning back to the margins, it becomes a negative influence. Pathways is the fourth factor highlighted by Slowey and, similar to quality, the once flexible pathways that enabled adult learners to learn whatever they want are being re-constituted into linear pathways that confine and constrain learning. The final factor is partnership which is

espoused throughout the policy of lifelong learning. This, however, is often played out as a necessity for funding and with non-statutory partners in much weaker positions. These five factors illustrate areas where the language appears to capture the essence of adult education but, in reality, challenges the existence and underlying values of adult education.

Slowey contends that tensions affecting adult education in the UK are echoed in other countries including Ireland, which concurs with the arguments of Field detailed earlier. In an exploration of policy documents in the UK and Scotland surrounding adult literacies and social exclusion, Tett (2006) maintains the impetus for change is focused on the need for the individual to use lifelong learning as a tool to improve their situation, with the consequence of less dependency on a shrinking welfare state. This is seen as an effect of globalisation and consequently happening beyond any one nation and across many.

### **3.13 Conclusion**

In this literature review, I have introduced the three policy documents which will form the heart of my analysis. Locating the three policy documents in the wider international policy context, I have established the model of lifelong learning in Ireland which is at odds with the policy rhetoric. Finally I have drawn out the main relevant themes on adult education policy in Ireland and abroad, noting their striking degree of homogeneity, underlying tensions and potential influence on national governments. This set the scene for my in depth critical analysis.

## CHAPTER 4 THEORETICAL APPROACHES AND METHODS IN POLICY ANALYSIS

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter describes how I set out to answer my research questions which are concerned with a decade of lifelong learning policy in Ireland from the mid-to-late 1990s. As detailed in the previous chapter, the first policy on lifelong learning in Ireland, *Learning for Life*, was published by the Department of Education and Science in 2000. It was greeted with great excitement by those working in adult and community education, at all levels, in particular because it also contained the first policies on areas such as adult literacy and community education. It represented a culmination of many reports, development and lobbying aimed at realising a coherent structure for adult education in Ireland, thereby enabling the sector take its rightful place alongside other parts of the wider education system. The White Paper was then followed by two further adult education policy documents coming from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

How these policy documents came about and their impact, then and emerging into the future, is at the core of my research. I am interested in understanding why it took so long for there to be a policy on lifelong learning in the first place, in comparison to many other European countries within the EU, which, as the literature review showed above, placed a higher policy value on adult education. I am also concerned with identifying which actors were involved in bringing each policy into publication and what their commitments were. I intend to use my critical analysis of lifelong learning policy in Ireland to contribute to ‘policy learning’ as described by Raffe (2011) which challenges ‘policy borrowing’ as a way of influencing policy development going forward. A further aim for me is to understand how to help policy makers achieve a better balance between the economic and social rewards of investing in this area as evidenced by the Nordic model outlined by Green and discussed in the literature

review. I am also interested in how a critical analysis of this decade of policy might illuminate the shaping of lifelong learning in Ireland in the future and how a critical approach might have practical benefits for those working in policy.

There are three sections in the chapter. The first provides a review of key critical education policy researchers, particularly Jenny Ozga and Stephen Ball, and how these theorists inform my research purpose. The next section explores the complementarity between four critical education policy frameworks, one each from Ozga and Ball and a further two from Stewart Ranson and Trevor Gale respectively. Finally using a policy trajectory approach as my core analytical strategy, I explain how I will carry out a critical policy analysis of three key policy documents relating to lifelong learning in Ireland from 1997-2007.

## **Part 1 – A review of critical education policy researchers**

### **4.2 Critical policy analysis**

Gale argues that the traditional view of policy making as the preserve of politicians and public servants and delivered through a process of mutual agreement is ‘both theoretically naïve and politically abhorrent’ (2003, p52). In following this position, then, any critical analysis of policy and its influences must seek to determine ‘What is really going on?’ and ‘How come?’ (Troyna 1994 p72-73 quoted in Gale 2003 p53). I share the motive of these and other critical policy analysts in wanting to know what is going on in policy on lifelong learning in Ireland, why and what are the key ingredients necessary to influence this area in the future. Researchers coming from the critical perspective aim not only to understand but to challenge the status quo. In order to start this process, I will outline my understanding of policy and my approach to studying it.

Starting with the definition of policy, I discovered in my readings that what may seem like a simple idea is, in fact, highly contested, with many different arguments including some researchers who declare finding a definition to be a futile exercise (Taylor et al 1997). 'What governments choose to do, or not to do' is described as one of the simplest definitions of policy (Taylor et al 1997 p22 quoting Dye 1992 p2). As a corollary, why they chose to do what they do connects an understanding of policy as also incorporating values. According to Kogan (1975), values are at the centre of understanding policy. A further consideration is how policy comes about and this leads to view that policy is a product as well as a process (Bell & Stevenson 2006).

In defining critical policy analysis, a range of terms denote this area, including 'critical policy scholarship' and 'policy sociology'. These terms draw upon the social science tradition in terms of research methodology, using historical and documentary sources as research methods and illuminative research techniques. There is also a concern with questions of power and social justice which provide the rationale for being critical in this field. Other researchers seem less caught up with the use of the term 'critical' but are equally concerned with the importance of a clear understanding of what is meant by policy analysis (Hajer 2003). For Hajer, the term is used to denote 'a family of approaches devoted to the study of policy making' concerned with the 'development and application of a variety of social scientific insights to help resolve public problems via concrete policy interventions' (2003 p181).

### **4.3 Critical policy researchers in education**

In the study of education policy it is necessary to declare both one's approach to educational policy research and related values. This statement comes through forcefully when reading



Jenny Ozga (2000) who, from the outset, makes it clear that she comes from the critical tradition. Ozga explains that policy is sometimes seen as traditionally associated with the state. However she, like many other writers, sees it as contested, not fixed and that it ‘encompasses all parts of the system’ (2000 p38). This point is very important in the argument Ozga makes about how research in education policy is carried out. If policy is seen as predominantly relating to government, it is likely a researcher will follow what she describes as the policy analysis route in order to make a contribution, akin to Hajer referenced earlier, whereas if policy is seen as linked to a wider context than government, then a researcher may embark on a social science project to make a contribution. The use of the term project relates to the ‘policy project’ given to us by Dale (quoted by Ozga 2000 p38) in his approach to theorising educational policy as it captures the idea that central to policy is an intent or purpose, both hidden and explicit.

Ozga takes this idea and explores in more detail the competing theoretical paradigms in education policy research. Firstly there is the ‘social administration project’ which is used to conduct education policy research aimed at changing and improving practice (reform). The researcher is typically concerned with finding the best solution to a given problem. Defined as a pluralist approach, this was the dominant approach to education policy research during the period of the welfare state when policy was understood to be made through negotiation and compromise by those who had an interest in it, for example government and educationalists. Secondly the ‘policy analysis project’ is research concerned with effective and efficient delivery (finding solutions/advocacy) not content (enhancing understanding). It can also include the academic analysis *of* policy as well as analysis *for* policy. According to Ozga, this rational model of analysis is the dominant approach to policy research now and comes from a ‘positivist’ view of value-neutral knowledge (Taylor et al 1997). It is known as the rational model of policy analysis. Thirdly there is the ‘social science project’ in which a

problem is defined by theory and the goal is to improve the theory (a better understanding of how things work) not the problem originating from policy makers. Ozga is oriented towards a social science project. For her the researcher must have social justice concerns and values and must ask questions during the research concerned with equality. Influenced by Marxist theory and concerned with structural inequality and its reproduction through educational policy, this is a neo-Marxist perspective.

Ozga describes theory as ‘statements about how things connect and how things come to happen as they do’ (2000 p43). In helping us to make sense of the world, theory can ‘guide us to action and predict what may happen next’. As a description of theory, this will help me gain a greater understanding in relation to my field of interest and, hopefully provide a basis for useful practical changes to the status quo.

Once again Ozga, like Kogan earlier, brings the reader back to an awareness of values and how they affect the choices being made in terms of theory selection. She sees two purposes of theory – to help solve a problem (problem solving theory) or to develop a new perspective (critical theory). As an exponent of the latter, she describes it as standing apart from the prevailing order and asking how it came about. This approach leads to the ‘construction of a larger picture of the whole of which the initially contemplated part is just one component, and seeks to understand the processes of change in which both parts and whole are involved’ (Ozga 2000 p46 quoting Cox 1980).

Stephen Ball is also committed to the critical policy genre and shares an interest in and pursuit of social justice with Ozga but he has other concerns and takes a more eclectic path. For Ball (1994) it is very important for researchers to define what is meant by policy and, in order to achieve this, he uses two very different, binary conceptualisations; *policy as text* and *policy as discourse*. He sees policy as both, not either and they are intertwined and feed off

each other. In considering *policy as text*, Ball explains that there are many layers to uncover, including the meaning attributed to the text by the author, as well as its many readers, and the changes to that text before publication and afterwards, in terms of implementation and enactment. Ball argues that most policy documents may be considered as ‘writerly’ texts if they are presented as largely straightforward and delineated. These texts are contextualised by their readers, in terms of how they interpret and implement them. In contrast, other policy documents may be considered ‘readerly’ texts if they are vague and open to wide interpretation. He also highlights that other texts are likely to be circulating at the same time and these will also have an impact, positive and or negative. Like Ball, Ozga suggests we read policy texts as narratives as they tell a story, in a certain and powerful way and that this can be analysed by the researcher. This is textual analysis and the researcher can develop a framework of categories to aid the process. Ozga maintains that the reading of a text is informed by the researcher’s approach to problems and questions and by the social science project / critical theory stance. There is a need to read policy texts over and over again as the ‘reading and re-reading of texts, and groups of related texts, reveals the reiteration of key words and phrases that encapsulates policy makers’ assumptions’ (Ozga 2000 p105).

In *policy as discourse*, Ball presents how policy can be explored in terms of power, namely what is considered knowledge and truth, who is allowed to speak and how the discourse also excludes, silences and marginalises. He maintains there are number of dominant discourses within social policy, that they change over time, and that having more than one theory to draw upon, from a researcher’s ‘toolbox’, is useful in exploring them. This is his significant departure from Ozga but one which is shared by Taylor et al (1997). They believe that ‘there is no recipe approach for doing policy analysis’ (p36) and that a range of factors need to be taken into account in determining the approach, including the purpose of the research and the position of the researcher. This is of particular relevance to me as a policy insider who

remains in the line of work beyond this study. Another aspect Ball puts forward as important to analyse relates to *policy effects* which he breaks down into first order (changes in practice) and second order (impact on social justice) effects. These are the outputs and outcomes, whereas the first set of concepts, *policy as text* and *policy as discourse*, relate to the inputs. All three concepts will be used in this study to examine the constructs behind lifelong learning policy.

Describing his approach as an exercise in ‘contemporary history’ and ‘policy sociology’, Ball (1990) stresses the complexity which must be unearthed. His theoretical and conceptual analysis is ‘eclectic or pragmatic’ (Ball 1990 p2). Ball maintains that economics do not determine state policy but rather constrain it. He states that he is a neo-pluralist whose theoretical framework for theorising education policy and its pattern of change, is made of the concepts of ‘relative autonomy, agency and delimitation’ (Ball 1990 p2).

Following Ball’s approach, a state control model of education policy is inappropriate for education policy analysis. However Hatcher and Troyna (1994) challenged Ball’s view on this, believing the state to have the ‘upper hand’. They felt that his emphasis on micro-political recontextualising of policy blinded him from seeing the full extent of the state’s power. They see the state as centre stage in policy analysis but not in the same way as the neo-Marxists. They see the economic as providing context and shaping the political, the social, the cultural and the ideological. The role of the Irish state in the development of educational policy will be examined in the analysis chapter with a view to determining the ways in which policy responds to the hegemony of economic imperatives and the degree to which adult education policy is aligned with the need to develop human capital.

The overall contribution of research in this genre is to ‘draw attention to and challenge the taken for granted or dominant assumptions informing policy’ (Ozga 2000 p46), as well as

telling us about the positive and negative effects of policy when implemented. In short, this type of research can explore how injustices are produced, reproduced and sustained through policy. Ozga and Ball set out the importance of the researchers' values in determining their philosophical approach. I share their commitment to social justice and want to see education policy making a strong contribution to this goal. A social science approach is therefore necessary in my research of adult education policy in Ireland in order to assess its contribution to social justice. This provides me with a different way to read policy texts in whose production and implementation I have been very involved with as a policy maker, through submissions and agreeing wording, and specifically to enable me and other policy makers to examine critically the assumptions underpinning the documents and assess their impact.

## **Part 2 - Critical education policy frameworks for analysis**

### **4.4 A synthesis of frameworks**

Having explored the theoretical considerations in undertaking critical policy research, this section draws on four policy frameworks for analysis that informed my research approach. Ultimately, a policy trajectory approach was chosen as the core analytical strategy.

As an approach to theory-led research, Ozga claims that 'education policy must have a *source* (origin), a *scope* (what is desirable and possible) and a *pattern*' (2000 p52), and that education policy can be made three ways: by the state, the economy and civil society institutions:

'The source of the policy; whose interests it serves; its relationship to global, national and local imperatives.

The scope of the policy; what is assumed it is able to do; how it frames the issues; the policy relationships embedded in it.

The pattern of the policy; what it builds on or alters in terms of relationships, what organisational and institutional changes or developments it requires' (Ozga 2000 p95).

In a similar vein, Stewart Ranson (1996) is concerned with theorising the nature of education policy and draws upon the debates between pluralists and marxists who have dominated this area. Ranson argues for a framework of analysis that seeks to dissolve these two and argues for the adoption of political theory and political sociology in order to 'focus upon the role of public policy in establishing the purposes and conditions of democracy in the learning society' (1996 p248). To that end, and in a similar vein to Ozga, Ranson draws on the work of researchers regarding how to theorise policy in this area to put together what he believes are essential ingredients in a framework for educational policy analysis as follows:

#### 1) Conceptualising policy

- The scope of policy
- The moments of policy (generation, formulation, implementation and evaluation)
- The organisation of policy (ad hoc and triggered or policy cycle)
- The planning of policy (choices and practices)
- The involvement of policy (who's involved, top-down or bottom up)

#### 2) Theorising public policy

- Historical location
- Theorising action and structure
- Theory, practice and value

3) A philosophy of public purpose - the task of theory is to explain why public policy is as it is and theorise as to the conditions for a different form of theory, the latter requiring a philosophy of its values and purposes (Ranson 1996 p270).

There has been in recent times a growing concern with the limited attention paid by critical policy researchers to methodological issues. One researcher in the area trying to address this is Gale (2001) who has put forward three methodological approaches to critical policy analysis, namely policy historiography, policy genealogy and policy archaeology. These are presented as ‘different ways of storying policy’, providing ‘overlapping historical lenses with which to ‘read’ and ‘write’ policy research (Gale 2001). His work complements that of Ozga and Ranson, providing a further way of asking questions to interrogate education policy.

Applying Gale’s five questions from policy historiography to the area of lifelong learning policy I wish to focus on, results in the following: 1) what were the ‘public issues’ and ‘private troubles’ within lifelong learning policy over the last decade and how were they addressed? 2) what are they now? 3) how have they changed from 1 to 2? 4) what are the complexities in these accounts of lifelong learning policy and 5) what do they reveal about the key influencers of these arrangements into the future? All these questions are embedded within, and will deepen, the documentary analysis of the context of influence from Ball’s trajectory approach, described later. In terms of policy archaeology, Gale explains that this lens can be used to determine 1) why are some items on the policy agenda (and not others)?; 2) why are some policy actors involved in the production of policy (and not others)? and 3) what are the conditions that regulate the patterns of interaction of those involved (2001 p387-388)? Policy genealogy is represented in a further series of questions starting with 1) how policies change over time as well as determining 2) how the rationality and consensus of policy production might be problematised and 3) how temporary alliances are formed and reformed around conflicting interests in the policy production process (Gale 2001 p389-390).

These questions will be best answered through documentary data, in a similar way to Gale who questioned and theorized about the influences in the production of Australian higher education entry policy (2001).

These three policy analysis frameworks have informed my thinking and added to my own theoretical understanding and will be embedded in to the policy trajectory analysis at the heart of this thesis to which I now turn.

#### **4.5 Ball's policy trajectory and its contexts**

Traditionally, much policy analysis research has been concerned with either policy generation or implementation, as opposed to recognising and researching the whole policy process. This stems from a view of policy as rational and technical and the idea that the people it affects are subjects. Ball challenges this view and puts forward what he sees as misconceptions of education policy research. Pertinent to my research, Ball argues that old policies do not necessarily displace previous ones, that policies stem from more than one level of the education system and can have multiple messages and interpretations impacting in their implementation. A policy trajectory approach provides the analytical scope to critically explore a policy period, seeking out all that goes on during it, as well as probe the policy processes and outcomes within it. Policy trajectory studies require an analytical strategy (Ball 1997) which examines policies in terms of lifespan or a cycle, recognising they are moulded and changed over time from their inception to implementation, sometimes in more visible ways than others. With other analysts, Ball provides a conceptual structure for the policy trajectory approach which involves an analysis of the policy process through a policy cycle and drawing on a number of contexts: 1) the context of influence; 2) the context of policy text production; 3) the context of practice, 4) the context of outcomes {in practice and in terms of



social justice} and 5) the context of political strategy (Bowe et al 1992; Ball 1994). These contexts represent elements of the policy cycle, broken down artificially for analytical purposes and go beyond the ‘stages’ model of the policy process (John 1998; and used by Murtagh 2009) ‘to a more encompassing view of *interactions over time and at different system levels*’ (Steer et al 2007 p177). As the policy process is not linear but rather a set of messy realities, a flexible approach is required and accommodated within Ball’s ‘conceptual toolbox’. The contexts provide the core framework for my cross-sectional examination of the three key policy documents related to adult education during the period in question, with each context a site of struggle and tension.

Gale (1999) and Bacchi (2000) have been critical of the policy trajectory approach, preferring discourse to operate as the key concept. They see the positioning of the context of influence in pole position to represent a hierarchy that puts a greater emphasis on policy makers than the target of the policy. Overall, they see this approach as under playing the importance of power relations and insufficiently complex. By way of response, Ball has evolved the contexts, adding more complexity with a focus on first and second order outcomes and political strategy.

My main research question is concerned with identifying the national and global influences in the adult education policy process over a decade. In applying the context of influence, this will enable me to examine the factors which brought these national policies to fruition, including the work of lobby groups, and other historical developments in Ireland and internationally. In effect this will also help me to more fully answer my ‘why’ and ‘why now’ research sub-questions. This resonates for me with Ozga’s ‘source’ of the policy, deepening the examination of the origins of the policy process.

Ball urges the researcher to also reflect on space, advocating that education policy research be located not just nationally but as sitting within a broader geographical and historical framework. In my own case this will include a global perspective, drawing further on the work of Ball (1997) and the issues of ‘policy borrowing’ (transferring best practice from abroad) and ‘policy convergence’. A secondary consideration of space beyond the national, relates to the local and how policy may be influenced at this level, both in its inception as well as during the rest of its lifetime. This is also taken up by Gale (2001) and others (Seddon 1989; Kenway 1990; Taylor et al 1997) through the concept of ‘temporary policy settlements’ which enables us to see how a policy exists for and during a period of time to produce social regularities. I think this will be particularly useful in my exploration of the three policy documents under scrutiny, in order to ascertain the extent to which the EU Commission and other international organisations such as the OECD, as well as local and national lobby groups act as policy drivers.

I also wish to avoid a trap identified by Ball (1997) of focusing on only one policy in isolation from those around in order to recognise the impact of other policies also in circulation. This is linked to another of Ball’s criticism, related to ‘rampant ahistoricism’ (2006 p18). Ozga also highlights the importance of looking at the history of education policy making as the ‘history-sociology relationship is potentially a very rewarding one in education policy research’ (Ozga 2000 p116). Consequently, I will trace the development of lifelong learning policy and adult education in Ireland in general from the 1970s and more specifically from 1997. This will contribute to an illumination of the context of influence and political strategy. I will position this research primarily within the education realm, but also within the wider concerns of economic and social policy in order to enhance the analysis of this particular policy area by recognising its embeddedness within wider society (Ball 1997). To

this end I will examine key government policy documents of the time, as well as those which fill in the picture of how we got from there to where we are now.

In looking at the three policy documents, I will employ the context of policy text production and continue the analysis into the texts themselves as well as their writers and readers. This will involve examining what is contained in the policy papers and classifying whether each text is material or symbolic, top-down or bottom-up and other possible binaries. How these state-level documents are prepared and who is involved or not will also be important considerations. My approach will also involve examining values and assumptions underlying the three policy documents well as their use of language and discourses and how they were interpreted. This sits well with Ozga's 'scope' of the policy perspective, identifying the aspirations of policies.

How each of the policies was understood by various stakeholders and the trajectory they would take in terms of developing adult education provision and services, will be the work of the context of practice. In his own work, Ball captured the mangled realisation of national curricular policy developments in British schools. Similarly, this relates to Ozga's concept of the pattern of policies as they build on or create new architecture within organisations and between various stakeholders. I will seek out the real time consequences for adult education of each of these policies, as well as the conflicts inherent in each of the contexts.

In order to address my final research sub-question, I will use Ball's context of outcomes to assess the longer term impact of these policies on the adult education sector. The challenge of critically analysing what did and did not happen as a result of these policies is aided by Ball's addition of two layers of effects and his recognition of 'ad hocery' for policy analysis. As this study is not singularly-focused on the impact of one policy, but rather a 'policy ensemble' (Ball 1993 p14) over a decade, it is expected to provide a deeper level of analysis.

One of my research aims is to make recommendations about how to influence future adult education policy development and implementation. This will be aided by using Ball's final stage, the context of political strategy, so as to locate alternative policy pathways to achieve social justice outcomes.

Ball provides a rich source of ways of analysing policy, a comprehensive set of possible angles to explore. This richness of choice appeals to me as it provides a flexibility to go deeper or lighter across a wide range of aspects of policy study during the conduct of the research. Another advantage of this approach is his concern with efficiency which I interpret here as meaning is the attempt to rationalise education through policy reform. This wide evaluative context will enable me to pursue a social justice agenda but also the objective of knowing what works and perhaps ultimately what might work better.

Drawing further on the work of Ball (1997) and his template of binaries to be considered when doing educational policy research, are the many assumptions made about the nature of policy. Is it fixed and clear or fluid and imperfect? Is it possible to implement a policy on the same basis with the same results in all locations? Is the policy text context rich or context barren? How do texts reflect rights and responsibilities? Further binaries which provide possible classifications include whether the policy is distributive or redistributive; symbolic or material and; top down or bottom-up? (Taylor et al 1997) These binaries can be used to deepen the analysis and highlight changes over the period of the trajectory.

Ball (1997) points to a key tension at the centre of education policy research, between those concerned with efficiency and those concerned with social justice. Whilst acknowledging this tension, the challenge for policy makers is to incorporate a balance of both of these concerns in order to recognise the value of both to society. The balance between the state, civil society and the economy often appears to dominate the broader social, political and cultural contexts

and how they shape both the content and the language of a policy document. This will bring further light to the context of influence. The context of outcomes, in terms of practice and social justice will be a useful way of exploring this in the three policy documents under examination.

#### **4.6 Conclusion on the critical policy theory and frameworks**

It is clear there are a range of theoretical, methodological and ethical factors involved in studying educational policy from a critical perspective. In my approach I am drawing on specific authors and their similarities and differences to provide an integration of these theorists' approaches to make up my 'conceptual toolbox' (Ball 1993). Ball's policy cycle and its five contexts takes on the complex work of whole policy examination, and in the case of this study, the extension to three policy texts over a ten year period. The contexts will enable me to analyse the key influences of the origin of adult education policy in Ireland, how the policies were generated and interpreted, and their impact on adult education to date, as well as how they might inform policy advocacy in the future.

## **Part 3 My theoretical framework**

### **4.7 Introduction**

This third section positions the study within its theoretical framework, detailing why I have chosen the particular research approach, outlining and justifying my methodological approach as well as the data collection and analytical techniques to be used.

As I stated in the introduction to this thesis, I wanted to conduct an adult education policy study to hone my critical policy analysis skills so as to explore the potential contribution of theory and new perspectives to my work and improve my capacity as a policy advocate. In terms of how best to go about this, I had to take a number of things into account. Firstly two doctoral theses focused on adult education and lifelong learning policy during the same period involved interviews with the key policy stakeholders, thus offering me unique secondary sources. Secondly there is my identification as a policy insider during the period of time I am researching and the fact that, for the decade in question, I was directly working alongside all the relevant key policy stakeholders and present at many of the key policy moments. This, combined with the fact that I remain a policy lobbyist and work alongside these same policy stakeholders who remain involved now, as then, in the Irish education policy world, makes my position as a researcher more complex. Interviewing these people, I felt, could impact negatively on my professional identity and relationship with them and, unsure of the outcome of such an endeavour, I opted for a road less well-travelled in education and social research (McCulloch 2004), namely that of in-depth documentary analysis. I believe this decision capitalised on my unique position. Framed, as I showed above, by a particular critical approach, this drew on my previous academic work uncovering women and crime in 19<sup>th</sup> century Ireland through archival documents, as well as my professional work which involves critiquing adult education policy and its efficacy in meeting the needs of adults with literacy

and numeracy needs. On the surface, my research was concerned with learning from the recent past in order to better influence the future. In order to go beyond this, I needed to situate my work within the philosophies underpinning academic research in social sciences, and more specifically their epistemological and ontological assumptions.

#### **4.8 Theoretical perspectives**

There are two dominant philosophies underpinning research. One is the positivist perspective which is drawn from the scientific tradition and concerned with proving or disproving hypotheses. The other is the interpretivist perspective which believes research can only enhance our understanding and give meaning to the world. Both of these research traditions are underpinned by ontological assumptions regarding objectivity in the case of positivism, for example, and subjectivity in the case of interpretivism. They are drawn from very different epistemological assumptions about how knowledge can be determined. In the case of positivism, research methods from the natural sciences dominate whereas with interpretivism, methods are illuminative and qualitative.

In relation to policy analysis, both of these research traditions have limitations. The positivist tradition has been criticised for over stating its claim to objectivity achieved through the application of quantitative methods to solving problems. The rationalist approach to policy research originating in the 1950s was seen as a sequential methodology to solve problems, many of which were being recognised by the welfare state. By the 1980s as many of these problems remained and the welfare state was in decline, the positivist tradition was undermined, which gave space for alternative approaches.

The rationalist approach to policy examines policy from a chronological perspective which, it is argued, confines the analysis within a neat structure that does not exist in reality (Bacchi 2012), and has been found to reflect the views of policy workers (Gill 2012) as well as the authors. Codd (1988) argues that policy devised and analysed from the technical – empiricist view leads to the mistaken assumption that it is possible to determine its correct interpretation. Conversely, the interpretivist tradition has been criticised for not providing research results that are generalisable and therefore the research is not aimed at bringing about change. Consequently interpretivism is also criticised for not acknowledging the political and ideological aspects of knowledge. There is also a concern that the researcher deploying this perspective can bias the research.

A third approach to research comes from critical theory which challenges the assumptions underpinning both positivism and interpretivism and the interests they represent (Usher 2002). It rejects the notion that knowledge can be value neutral and devoid of values. Habermas is one of the founding fathers of critical theory which is concerned with research aimed at changing society in the interests of social justice through a critique of the dominant ideology. As I showed earlier in summarising the work of critical policy researchers, the critical perspective is concerned with uncovering and redressing inequalities in society and this mirrors my personal beliefs and professional orientation. Amongst the critical theorists embraced within adult education, Habermas claims that much of our communication is distorted and it is necessary to make valid what is being said. He also maintains that truth can be arrived at through the ‘ideal speech situation’ where the evidence is available and has been the subject of a robust discussion (Usher 2002). This ideal can be used as a benchmark against which to ascertain the quality of communication. This is achieved through a power-oriented discourse analysis, with the focus on discourse as procedure as opposed to the content of the communication (Chouliaraki 2008). Critical Discourse Analysis is an approach



to texts that examines the linguistic choices within texts as illustrative of how such choices construct a way of seeing the world.

According to McCulloch, Codd is an example of a documentary researcher who uses both critical and interpretive perspectives to deconstruct the official discourse of educational policy documents as ‘cultural and ideological artefacts to be interpreted in terms of their implicit patterns of signification, underlying symbolic structures and contextual determinants of meaning’ (McCulloch 2004 p46 quoting Codd). Codd (1988) views policy documents as socially constructed and also uses critical theory to challenge their dominant ideology and inherent contradictions. This approach is shared by Ball (1993) and Ozga who, as I cited above, note the importance of the ‘history – sociology relationship’ (2000).

Usher (2002) states, that in order to bring about change, a distinguishing feature of the critical perspective in comparison to positivism and interpretivism involves praxis, also embraced within adult education. This requires the researcher to be self-critical and reflexive during the research process and to be committed to taking action. Apple maintains that to be a critical scholar/activist, ‘requires a searching critical examination of one’s own structural location, one’s own overt and tacit political commitments and one’s own embodied actions’ (2009 p249).

The limitations of critical theory rest with its universal approach to emancipation and the role of the critical theorist to bring this about. It is also criticised by positivists for being overtly political in its purpose and not sufficiently neutral. This raises questions of bias, possibly less of a problem for me in my role as a lobbyist set against a set of declared values and principles which underpin my work (NALA 2012).

#### 4.9 My research approach

The research paradigm I am using comes from the critical perspective as I want this study to demonstrate that policy is more than text, involving a range of political, social, economic and cultural dynamics which combine to create the policy process which occurs before, during and after the text is produced. I hope that understanding this will contribute to more effective approaches to challenging and influencing policy in adult education in Ireland in particular so that it may have, and realise, social justice goals. According to Ball (2009), in order to achieve this very difficult ambition, the researcher needs to be able to think differently, deconstruct policy, provide sound options and discuss them with the powers of policy making. In order to achieve practical outcomes, I believe this requires further elaboration and is the inspiration behind the policy toolkit proposed later in the thesis. This toolkit will support the necessity of challenging the accepted and deeply rooted ‘common sense’ which often permeates policy documents and which, as I argued earlier, tends to come from a positivist, technicist orientation to policy. It is analysis *of* policy as opposed to an analysis *for* policy because critical policy research is recognised as a political activity and policy is an instrument through which to transmit ideology (McCulloch 2004).

A focus of critical policy scholarship involves an analysis of globalisation and market ideologies which are considered to dominate in the contemporary education policy environment. Lingard has noted that there are ‘globalised educational discourses’ operating beyond ‘overt policy borrowing’ (2009 p237) and that this manifests in different ways depending on the history and politics of the nation. In all cases, though, this has meant a lesser role for the state than was traditionally the case. There has also been a different way for the state to operate education. Taking this into account, my research is concerned with not only the content of Irish adult education policy but also how the policy came about, was developed and subsequently implemented. Central to critical policy analysis is how power is

exercised (Taylor et al 1997) in the political decisions around policies. I wish to examine the operation of power in the context of adult education policy as this will enhance the capacity of the research to inform future policy advocacy work.

Policy, understood in terms of both text and process, is also both contested and complex. In order to make sense of policy, Ball uses sociology as a lens for policy analysis. His approach is informed by distinct works of Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu concerning power. For Foucault it is how power operates through discourse and prevailing understandings of ‘truth’ and ‘knowledge’ while Bourdieu has a clear focus on the subtle social and cultural ways social class and social inequality are reproduced. Centrally, I will use Ball’s policy trajectory approach to help answer my overarching research question: to what extent does the period 1997-2007 suggest that Irish adult education policy is a victim or beneficiary of globalisation? I have picked 3 key policy documents during the period to be the subject of this cross-sectional analysis and will examine each document through the following contexts:

The context of influence is understood as what was going on before the policy production process and will be sub-divided into two areas: what was happening historically (why) and what was happening contemporaneously (why now). Policy borrowing as a concept will be explored as a way of thinking about the impact of globalisation. This approach will be applied to each of the three key policy documents under analysis, with a view to determining the economic, political and social factors that combined to see these policy documents come into being as ‘cannibalised products of multiple (but circumscribed) influences and agendas’ (Ball 1994 p16). It is hoped the analysis will also reveal common and distinct influences between the documents, as well as develop new insights and raise new questions.

The context of policy production relates to how each of the texts were constructed and developed over time, including what specific actors who were involved brought to the

process and the resulting political ideology underpinning the texts. Each of the three documents was produced by different people and used three different approaches but there are also some aspects of how they came about which are the same. The micro politics inside the state will be closely examined. Policy as a settlement, meaning the degree to which it represents a compromise, will be explored.

The context of practice relates to the intentions and contested meaning of the values and principles espoused in the three policy documents as well as the differing social realities they represent.

The context of outcomes is concerned with the first order effects of the implementation of the policy, largely defined as the explicit goals of the policy text. The second order effects are concerned with the achievement, or not, of social justice goals.

The context of political strategy is concerned with the evaluation of the outcomes at first and second order level and the presentation of alternative approaches.

Each of these contexts will have their own ‘struggle and compromise and ad hocery’ (Ball 1994 p26) and are played out privately or publicly. The challenge is to reveal both whilst rejecting the commonly understood flow of policy.

In addition to analysing the three documents against each of these contexts, I will also draw on Ball’s (1994) two different concepts of *policy as text* and *policy as discourse*. In the case of policy as text, this tool will help me conduct a textual analysis of the documents so as to uncover key words and phrases and their interpretation. In relation to policy as discourse, this tool will help me examine the use and significance of power in the struggle over meaning and interpretation in policy texts. This involves exploring ‘what can be said, and thought, but also who can speak, when, where and with what authority’ (Ball 1994 p21). This will enable

me to identify the discourses within the policies under scrutiny as well as alternatives for future consideration. Critical discourse analysis will also be used to identify and critique ideology as well as uncover the choices made in the texts and the ends they seemed to be aiming for. This will involve examining how the linguistic features of texts in each document are organised, as well as grammatical aspects (Mulderrig 2003; Taylor 2004).

#### **4.10 Methods**

The implications of the policy framework for analysis has informed my choice of methods. There are three main methods used in this work and it is intended that collectively they will create a form of triangulation to underpin the findings.

##### *4.10.1 Literature review*

The first is the literature review which summarises and critically evaluates approaches to policy analysis in this chapter, and adult education policy in Ireland and internationally, both with a sub-theme covering globalisation, explored in chapter 2. This also situates my research question in the body of existing knowledge on the subject and clarifies the contribution of my work to that field. As the body of knowledge in this area is so limited, I would argue that the literature review makes its own important contribution to the methods.

The literature review provides an overview of the findings of academic research texts on adult education in Ireland (for example Keogh 2004; Judge 2005; Grummel 2007; Doona 2007; Murtagh 2009) and assesses the validity and completeness of their endeavours. In the case of Doona and Murtagh, their doctoral studies involved interviews with the key policy stakeholders relevant to adult education during the study period and will be drawn on as a key secondary data source. In addition to interviews with representatives of higher education

providers, Doona also conducted an interview with the Principal Officer (PO) of the Further Education (FE) section of the DES, Breda Naughton, in 2005. Of even greater significance, Murtagh conducted 14 interviews with the key policy stakeholders, including all previous POs in charge of the FE section and the two Junior Ministers for Adult Education. In addition, he also interviewed 4 academics from Maynooth University and other DES and DETE officials involved in the Green and White Paper on Adult Education. Interviews took place between 2005 and 2007. Murtagh completed his methodology with a literature review, documentary analysis and, now retired, a reflection of his personal experience of working in public educational management in Ireland. As this is a policy study, there is also significant body of work on the topic written outside academia which is relevant (Knopf 2006). Included here are reports written by government-funded research institutes like the National Economic and Social Council (NESCC) and the Economic Social and Research Institute (ESRI) as well as those by social justice organisations like the Conference of Religious Ireland (CORI).

The benefits of the literature review to the thesis include an up to date synopsis of the field of study, including its strengths and weaknesses as well as a wider context in which to situate my study (Gray 2004). This provides an important support for my argument that my thesis contributes new insights to the body of knowledge on policy in this area. It also informed the research methodology and determined the approach to policy analysis.

#### 4.10.2 *Documentary analysis*

The second method is an in-depth documentary analysis: this has a number of advantages. It is very efficient because the data is already in place and it is particularly useful in capturing events which occurred in the past. The data in a document do not change over time whereas data drawn from an interviewee may change and be altered by the dynamic of the interviewer. In addition, the primary use of documentary analysis limits the ‘researcher

effect', that is the impact I as a known Irish adult education policy advocate would have on policy makers and other policy advocates. The degree of bias I may bring to the interpretation of the policy documents is easier to check as these documents are freely available, unlike interview transcripts.

It is argued that using documentary analysis is particularly effective in tracking change over time and covering a long period of time in a research project (McCulloch 2004). In contrast to the work by Murtagh and Doona which are largely concerned with the White Paper on Adult Education, my analysis is concerned with three core adult education policy documents, their antecedents and outcomes. This enables me to stretch beyond the ten year time frame and provide a contemporary postscript. Documentary analysis is also relatively cheap and accessible as a research method. It enables the development of international comparisons as it is possible to access policy documents from other jurisdictions. Again in contrast to the more parochial focus of Doona and Murtagh, my study explores the role of international bodies in Irish adult education policy. Furthermore, whilst the study is primarily concerned with three Irish adult education policy documents, other documentary sources including newspapers will be examined to enrich the analysis.

One of the disadvantages commonly associated with documents relates to the fact that they are generally not created for research purposes and, as a result, have a high degree of inconsistency. This is less of a concern for this research as the main documentary sources are all policy documents, written by civil or public servants and published by the State. In effect, documentary analysis will be deployed from both a quantitative and qualitative perspective. Data will be mined to identify patterns within and between the three documents at the centre of the study. In addition though, the documents will also be analysed to identify the meanings that can be drawn from them and the arguments that underpin such interpretations. This means the data is unbiased by the data collection method.

The work of Guba and Lincoln (1994) provides standards for documentary analysis which will guide my research. These have been examined by Wesley (2010) to make the discipline more robust. The research must be *authentic* and, to that end, the reader must feel the arguments made are *credible*. The research should also have *portability* insofar as the learning from the research can have some *transferability* in further academic or policy based work. It should also aim for *precision* which provides *dependability* for the reader. Finally the research needs to have *impartiality* by which is meant that the conclusions of the researcher can be traced in the research, including her or his positionality. This is known as *confirmability*. McCulloch (2004) also identifies the above as necessary rules to apply when appraising documents for analysis. He adds two further rules. The first deals with meaning and the importance of examining the context within which the document has been produced. Meaning is also derived from an examination of the use of technical phrases. Drawing from the work of Fairclough on critical discourse analysis, McCulloch (2004) explains the approach as one which seeks to ‘understand the language and other kinds of symbols and images in the text’ (p.35). This approach enables the analyst to uncover the deeper meaning held within texts. Discourse, according to McCulloch, is a very important aspect in analysing policy as the dominant discourse within a policy document is attempting to position the reader to interpret the world in a certain way (2004). This ties in with Ozga who states it is important to ‘think about policy texts as carrying particular narratives’ (2000 p95), analysing the story they are telling and the way it is to be read.

#### **4.11 Conclusion**

The research is positioned within the paradigm of critical theory and is informed by critical education policy frameworks. This resonates with my work as policy advocate and, combined



with my insider status considerations and continuing professional obligations, has informed my choice of methods. My research is using critical policy analysis in order to examine closely three policy texts, rejecting the notion that they are value neutral and that they can be truly understood in isolation of what is going on around them. I will endeavour to identify how each of these texts was constructed, interpreted and implemented as a result of historical, social, economic and political contexts and narratives. In the first instance, each of the policies will be examined through the lens of *policy as text*, with the aim of ascertaining their meanings and struggles. Then, each of the texts will be considered using Ball's other the analytical tool, *policy as discourse*, with a view to exploring power and the extent to which dominant discourses like globalisation and neo-liberalism can be identified and challenged.

The main aim of this research is to analyse critically the complex and hidden layers of influence and impact on adult education policy development and implementation from 1997-2007. This will be achieved through the application of Ball's policy trajectory approach consisting of 5 contexts as a useful heuristic tool. It is understood that the policy process is shaped and re-shaped by these five contexts, each of which relates to my research questions.

To fulfil my overarching research question, the analysis will start by identifying the historical and contemporary factors behind, and developments surrounding, the creation of three new policies. The application of the context of influence will mainly operate at the macro level, assessing relevant national and global influences and developments. Situating those involved, as well as the processes involved in realising the policy texts, and how they were understood by key stakeholders, will follow through the context of text production. An exploration of the understanding of the texts of each of the policy documents, as well as how they were to be implemented, will be captured through the context of practice. The consequences of the three policies will each be probed, with a view to determining how they adhered to their intended path and how well they met their social and economic promises. Collectively these policies

will be viewed through the context of outcomes. Did they do what they said and did this make a difference to the lives of those named as beneficiaries? Finally analysis will extend to the context of political strategy which will evaluate the policies with a view to determining future alternative propositions and what 'might be' (Looney 2004 quoting Goodson 1994).

Despite the distinct differences between the critical policy researchers cited above, there is also scope for a researcher to bring them together so as to strengthen a framework for a critical policy analysis of lifelong learning in Ireland. Methodologies matter because they are political (Ronnblom 2012). The methodology for this study has been designed with this in mind, aiming to be transformative and to fit both the purpose of the researcher who is a policy insider and the research questions which seek to challenge the future trajectory of adult education policy in Ireland. The theoretical work in this thesis provides an alternative to the dominant use of interviews with policy makers which advances the tools available in the field of study. A critical inquiry enables me to build on my day to day work as a policy activist, where academic work provides a more reflective, considered space to draw on theory so that I can understand better what is going on and why, as well as consider what alternatives might be pursued. This is what I set out to achieve through my critical policy analysis in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 5 ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

### 5.1 Introduction

As I have indicated earlier, I am concerned with using my privileged and uniquely placed policy insider role to explore the development of lifelong learning policy in Ireland since the mid-1990s through a critical analysis of national, meso-level policies: the White Paper on Adult Education, *Learning for Life* (2000), the Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning (2002) and the *Tomorrow's Skills, Towards a National Skills Strategy* (2007). This entails looking at the circumstances which led to the creation of each of the policy papers, their historical beginnings and relation to other policy texts, and their impact on practice and positioning of lifelong learning in Ireland in comparison with other countries. This will help establish why these policies came about. A useful concept here is *globalisation* and its impact on the Nation State. This involves an examination of the macro level policy in lifelong learning and through the lens of globalisation both as a contemporary and historical influence. After recording the historical influences, I draw out examples of *incrementalism* in policy production, showing how policy in this area has built upon policy papers and reports and how then they exist as *intertextual* policies i.e., connected to other ones and the significance of this.

The next task will be to uncover who was involved in these policy documents. Building on the policy maker interviews conducted by Murtagh (2009) and Doona (2007), I identify the key players in the policy production of each paper – in the case of the White Paper on Adult Education, the public list includes Ministers Willie O’Dea and Micheal Martin, the Principal Officer in charge of the Further Education section Margaret Kelly, her colleague Des O’Loughlin and the external academic consultant Dr Tom Collins based in Maynooth University. I also try to identify who else was involved from the Department of Education

and Science, other Departments, statutory agencies, as well as the role of the social partners, who, as outlined earlier, have come to play an increasingly influential policy role in adult education.

I also look at the text within each of the three policy documents so as to illuminate the assumptions underlying the policy, both in terms of explicit values and principles but also those which are implicit. This will enable me to tease out and evaluate the competing discourses throughout the policy process and what the policies were trying to achieve. I examine the language and linguistic strategies used in the document and the impact of these whilst being cognisant of what is not said and the impact of deploying *silences*. In doing a small level of language deconstruction and drawing briefly on discourse theory, I wish to acknowledge the importance of this area, perhaps as a basis for future policy research in this area, rather than being able to commit a substantial amount of this thesis to this endeavour.

I explore the notion of policy settlements to see the extent to which each of the policy documents attempts 'to suture together and over matters of difference between the participating and competing interests in the policy text production' (Taylor et al 1997 p50). This involves a comparative analysis between the documents as well as an examination of the related production processes.

Finally I examine the consequences of the policy, in particular in relation to implementation and anticipated outcomes, with a view to determining what difference these policies made to adult education in Ireland. These are at a number of levels, including practice, more recent policy and lessons learnt. Here it is important to note that the consequences of policy implementation continue to ripple out but eventually weaken, despite some caution to placing the 'final word' on a policy text as consequences can be felt for a long time.

As the White Paper on Adult Education is sixteen years old, it appears now as a symbolic relic of a golden age of Irish adult education, a policy moment that, in some senses, never materialised and is now lost. Seen in this light, there is likely to be an element of *policy refraction* related to specific areas of the document which I need to clarify and determine why changes, subtle and blunt came about. There is no public or published review process of the White Paper on Adult Education, although a small number of programmes covered within the Paper were subject to review and are considered as part of my analysis. There has not been an evaluation of the other two policy documents under analysis either.

Briefly bringing a narrow focus, I examine the impact of the first ever National Adult Literacy Programme, one of the four key parts of the White Paper and reinforced in both of the other two documents, the only programme area to have achieved this longevity. As I aim to show, it is my contention that as a result of global and local forces, the first national policy on adult education helped to not only raise awareness of adult literacy in Ireland at all levels but also provided it with its first national state strategy and policy through which it has embedded itself after three decades of struggle.

As described in the methodology chapter, the theoretical framework underpinning this work is informed by a number of critical policy analysts, but particularly Stephen Ball. I am using Ball's policy trajectory analysis approach and applying it to the three key policy documents as a way of exploring the journey and narrative of adult education policy over a ten year period. It will involve determining for each document the:

- 1) context of influence
- 2) context of policy production
- 3) context of practice
- 4) context of outcomes (first order and second order)

5) context of political strategy.

The chapter is divided into 5 sections, one for each context, encompassing the 3 documents.

## **5.2 Context of Influence Part 1**

The context of influence is understood as what was going on before and around the policy production process and will be sub-divided into two areas: what was happening historically and what was happening contemporaneously. This approach will be applied to each of the three key policy documents under analysis, with a view to determining the political, economic and educational factors that combined to see these policy documents come into being. It is hoped the analysis will also reveal common and distinct influences between the documents, as well as raise new questions.

### ***5.2.1 Historical influences at the domestic level***

In starting with the ‘context of influence’, it is useful to draw from the only public draft amongst the 3 policy texts, the Green Paper on Adult Education (DES 1998), which as referenced in chapter 2, uniquely provides a chapter on the historical development of adult education in Ireland. The introduction in the Green Paper baldly states that its purpose is to make the ‘case for concerted investment and development of a long-term policy on Adult Education in Ireland’ (DES 1998 p12). It puts forward four rationales: 1) addressing poverty and disadvantage; 2) promoting equality, competitiveness and employment; 3) supporting community advancement and 4) meeting the challenges of change. In terms of its type of policy, the Green Paper on Adult Education is symbolic, in that it is primarily concerned with strategically legitimating and locating adult education in Irish education history as well as connecting it to the wider international educational policy world (Taylor et al 1997). In setting out the historical evolution, it attempts to make a case that adult education has a long

and honourable tradition embedded in the development of the fledging Irish state, a hidden history not to be found in broader educational commentaries. The activities of the past are socially, culturally and politically situated in a positive, aspirational and validating fashion. The opening sentence of the history chapter tells the reader that the ‘major policy initiatives in Adult Education since the formation of the State’ (DES 1998 p 36) will be its focus.

However, no such policy initiatives are described; rather there is an attempt to situate the seed of an idea of adult education into developments such as the creation of the new Department of Education and the introduction of the Vocational Education Act in 1930, both of which were necessary conditions upon which adult education could develop in time. Taylor et al (1997) suggest that a symbolic policy may represent the start of a political process, which, if it can gain traction, can lead to further development of the policy and the deployment of the necessary funding to realise it.

The Green Paper crafts a history of, and for, adult education, drawing from its promise and potential with the aim of convincing the reader that adult education has a patriotic nationalist foundation upon which to build an Ireland for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which also infused the White Paper on Adult Education, as illustrated by this quote:

‘Adult Education is the last area of mass education to be developed in Ireland. The rationale for investment in Adult Education does not rest on purely economic issues, but also on the central role of learning in creating a democratic society, in promoting culture and identity, and in enriching and strengthening individuals, families and communities’ (DES 2000 p200).

Driven by a need to validate the contribution of the adult education sector to date, there is no critique of the policy choices and subsequent State neglect regarding the early development phase of adult education, which occurred up to 1969. However, the Paper notes that ‘When a

policy of major educational expansion began in the early 1960s, influenced by the OECD, it was directed primarily at increasing and widening access to the school-going population rather than to the adult population' (DES 1998 p37). In an attempt to down play the relationship between adult education and training, there is only a passing reference to the reform of the training sector at this time which was considered an essential element of our economic development and resulted in the establishment of a training authority (Heraty et al 2000). This was followed up in the late 1970s by a period of expansion in higher education (Coolahan 1981), also not highlighted in the Green Paper.

The lack of development of adult education is singularly framed within the economic constraints of a small nation state on the edge of Europe, as opposed to a deliberate conservative policy position not to develop it in favour of more mainstream education areas, as was clearly the case. It concludes that this lack of concern from the political and statutory sector 'made the contribution of a vibrant non-governmental sector....all the more important' (DES 1998 p37), explaining the role of these unlikely education players to the mainstream education stakeholders and wider establishment who knew little of this world, and who were a key audience for the document. According to the Green Paper, adult education was an element of many rural development associations, as well as women's groups, trade unions and religious institutions. In effect however, these organisations may not have used the term or recognised their activities as adult education. According to the account in the Green Paper on Adult Education, it existed organically and not in a systematic fashion moulded by the State. Adult education, and all that might be interpreted as comprising it, has existed in Ireland, like other European countries, despite the State. As the history of adult education moves closer to contemporary times, there is no reference to the continuing big role of religious institutions or trade unions in adult education, although the latter group do come to



the fore politically in the story of adult education, as one of the key players in social partnership.

### 5.2.2 *Historical economic constraints*

The provocative account of the historical development of adult education, in the Green and White Papers on Adult Education, is dominated by the economic difficulties of the time as the barrier to the realisation of adult education, a constant theme of adult education development (Garavan et al 1995). This sits well with Ball's view that economics constrain the State, as opposed to determine it (Ball 1993). It is clear that the political context also played a role in these determinations, as much then as now, a theme that will be dealt with later. The historical framing of adult education is in sharp contrast to the rationales of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning and National Skills Strategy, both of which emerged further into the Celtic Tiger era and had less requirement of, and regard to, history to justify their largely economically premised propositions. Their 'context of influence' relies almost entirely on the rapid pace of globalisation and the challenges it represents to a recently affluent Ireland.

There appears to be no evidence of an appetite to question the priority of mainstream education with regard to access to state resources as they came on stream, again following a pattern internationally, which had seen the rejection of the OECD's concept of recurrent education. By 1993, Ireland was spending 0.16% of its annual education budget on adult education and there appeared to be no plans or policies to develop this area, despite its social and economic potential being recognised at European level (Garavan et al 1995). In the White Paper on Adult Education, there is, though, a sense of struggle by those involved in adult education to get a comprehensive acceptance and understanding of adult education and its potential to be formally recognised by the State so that it may flourish. Its association with

people failed by the education system appears dominant in its identity to date in Ireland and has no doubt marginalised it in the eyes of many, that is until it found favour with powerful forces beyond the state. This is particularly evident in the central role played by the social partners in the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning and National Skills Strategy, both of which only elevated adult education for workforce development as imperative to maintain economic growth and prosperity.

### *5.2.3 Historical figures in adult education*

Many of the proposals of both the Murphy and Kenny reports, referenced in Chapter 2, are regurgitated in each of the policy documents under scrutiny for this thesis, clearly showing a long standing recognition of the need to establish adult education structurally within the state apparatus. It is noteworthy that both Chairs of the Murphy and Kenny reports were drawn from the business community and not the traditional civil servant or, latterly, educational academic, usually entrusted with these roles within the education community. The community and voluntary sector so eloquently positioned by the Green Paper was not entrusted with these roles either. Both reports, whilst holding a broad definition of adult education, make particular reference to the contribution of adult education to the economy and recommendations regarding the role of the social partners in the development of adult education, a slant not highlighted in the White Paper on Adult Education account of the reports. Only the White Paper on Adult Education references these two key reports, using them as historical benchmarks in its contemporary argument to establish an adult education sector formally and provides an example of 'incrementalism' (Taylor et al 1997). The White Paper was to replace them in terms of incrementation, being referenced by the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning and then the National Skills Strategy referencing both, as the key legacy documents in each case.

#### 5.2.4 *Historical influence of international bodies*

As noted in chapter 3, the Committee of Enquiry into non-vocational adult education known as the Russell Report 1973 was published when Margaret Thatcher was Secretary of State for Education for Britain and in 1992, the White Paper, *Education and Training for the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. So domestically, Ireland appears to have been somewhat historically in line with international trends in terms of policy development around adult education. How this policy convergence came about is at the heart of my analysis.

All three of the key policy documents under examination provide rationales for their development, drawing heavily on lifelong learning discourses of the OECD, the EU and UNESCO, but to varying degrees. The National Skills Strategy is the most detailed in drawing on academic work of economists, particularly in terms of the contribution of upskilling to the economy, as the publication was originally designed to be the research to underpin the strategy. One of the many common factors identified in each document for why development in this area is required, is the position of Ireland in comparison to other countries internationally. Drawing on statistical data provided by the OECD comparative studies, noted earlier, Ireland's educational status is examined and it is concluded in all cases that Ireland needs to invest more in lifelong learning to improve our international ranking so as to improve our economic position.

Traditionally adult education in Ireland was not identified for its contribution to the economy but rather its contribution to bringing about a fairer society. This rationale combined with the statistical data of educational attainment in Ireland up to the mid-1990s, had little impact on governments to invest in adult education until the late 1990s and the connection with the OECD / EU lifelong learning discourse. The use of 'critical statistics' to validate arguments inherent in policy dates back to the 1960s and resulted in increased expenditure in areas like

higher education and training (Heraty et al 2000) but did not extend to adult education until the turn of the century.

The dominant discourse is a clear and consistent message throughout all the documents, and their antecedents, namely that Ireland's future economic growth and development, as well as competitiveness, heavily depends on improving the educational attainment levels of the labour force. References are made to globalisation, the rapid pace of technological change and the internationalisation of trade as factors influencing Ireland's economic future. See Appendix 4 for further illustration of this. As Apple states, these kinds of phrases represent 'a rhetoric of justification' (1992 p127) as well as one of fear. Ireland's adult education policy is in line with the global 'policy narrative which talks of the learning to earning ideology' (Field 2011 p17) and marginalises the contributions to social and civic development. There is no critique of the OECD evidence or analysis in any of the three reports, or of any of the statistical data utilised, despite such critiques available at the time (Hamilton and Barton 2000).

Out of 71 documents referenced in the bibliography of the White Paper on Adult Education, the largest single grouping at 8 is from the OECD. The OECD references are also the largest grouping in the National Skills Strategy's bibliography. By contrast, the Taskforce for Lifelong Learning has no bibliography and the OECD is only referred to twice. Its international statistics are drawn from the International Labour Organisation, the only document to use this source, perhaps because it is a more trusted source for social partners as it has a social partnership governance structure. This difference also reflects the differing cultures of the writers of each document and their employers, the Department of Education and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, with the latter only concerned with those in the labour market. The ideological differences between the departments is an area explored by Walshe (1999), an education journalist in one of Ireland's two biggest

national newspapers who also worked at the OECD for a time, and more recently Murtagh (2009) and illustrated in the quote from the latter's work below:

*'The institutional rivalry between DES and DETE involved maximising Departmental interests and a battle for hegemony between the central organising idea of the competition state promoted by DETE and the more developmental paradigm promoted by DES and stakeholders in the community education domain. The lesson from this research is that the institutional rivalry between DES and DETE contributed to policy failures in developing an appropriate adult education architecture and also led to a waste of resources through unnecessary duplication in policy making and diverting resources to protect 'turf'.* (p250)

I return later to discuss my own contribution in this thesis to understanding the place of turf wars in the nature of policy failures in adult education.

The pattern of reference and acceptance to OECD data and analysis, and in particular Ireland's international ranking, is consistent throughout all the reports, reinforcing the findings of education policy scholars in the English speaking world (Rubenson, 2009; Holford et al 2010). As well as Ireland receiving and using the wisdom from the OECD as a policy instrument, Ireland also contributes to it. By 1999 and within a year of being appointed, Ireland's Secretary General of the Department of Education was elected as the first Irish Chair of the OECD's Education Committee, a position he held until 2005 which coincided with the completion of his seven year term of office as Secretary General and the rise and fall of adult education. John Walshe, referenced above, also joined the OECD in 1999, for a three year period before returning to his influential journalist role. It is argued (Schuller 2009) that since the late 1970s, the OECD has framed education in terms of its contribution to the economy and to democracy and that increasingly it is the former that

dominates the agenda (Taylor et al 1997; Walters 1997). In addition, it is argued (Rizvi & Lingard 2000; Rubenson 2009) that the OECD is wedded to the concept of globalisation which reinforces the relationship between education and the economy.

A further policy driver overlap comes from the fact that the EU has a seat on the OECD's governing Council. Like the OECD, the European Commission has long advocated for adult education, first using the term lifelong education back in 1970s and defining its philosophy in terms of the humanist tradition. Many academics have identified a shift in the terms used by the EU when lifelong learning came to the fore in the 1990s, replacing lifelong education. For example, Field (2006) argues that with the change of term came a shift in focus away from the humanist tradition towards the needs of the market and consequently greater acceptance of national governments, including Ireland. This has led to an 'academic consensus' (Holford et al 2010 p184) internationally that lifelong learning policies are dominated by economic concerns. Integrating adult education and training and a movement away from discrete entities is signposted by Europe with the use of the term 'adult learning'. Ireland, like the UK, had education and training respectively dealt with in two departments who each claimed the lead position in the realisation of lifelong learning policy. Whereas adult education is now in the UK's Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, from the Department of Education and Employment, in Ireland training has come into the Department of Education and Skills. This is further evidenced in the language shift across the three policy documents storied in this thesis. The White Paper on Adult Education is transplanted by the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning which is then replaced by the National Skills Strategy.

The role of the European Commission and the influence of policy documents emanating from it are another common feature of the documents, albeit with far fewer references. Each contextualises their policy from the perspective of commitments made by the Council of Ministers of Education as represented during this period by the Strategy for Lifelong

Learning (EC 1996) and the Lisbon Strategy (EC 2000), especially with the White Paper on Adult Education and Taskforce on Lifelong Learning. In addition there is acknowledgement of the significant funding provided by the Commission through Community Initiatives to advance many adult education programmes during this period. The greatest explicit influence of the EU is seen through budget transfers, where after agriculture, education is the next biggest beneficiary. Over 74% of the European Social Fund was spent on the Irish Operational Programme for Human Resource Development 1994-1999, coming in at £195 million in 1997. This investment was recognised as one of a handful of contributing factors to Ireland's economic boom which started at the same time, and also contributed to the rivalry between the two government departments (Murtagh 2009), noted above. Interestingly, the EU Memorandum of Lifelong Learning (EC 2000) and the consultation process undertaken by the DES in 2001 at the request of the European Commission, are only referred to in the Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning, thus providing little overt, tangible evidence of its impact on Irish adult education policy makers. This remains the only widespread consultation carried out between the adult education community and the EU and received a large volume of interest from stakeholders, but has also been the subject of criticism (Brine 2006). Field (2003) has argued that the designation of 1996 as the European Year of Lifelong Learning was an indication of its centrality to EU policy and was the biggest influence on national policy making. Clearly it had the most influence on Ireland's rapid adoption of the concept.

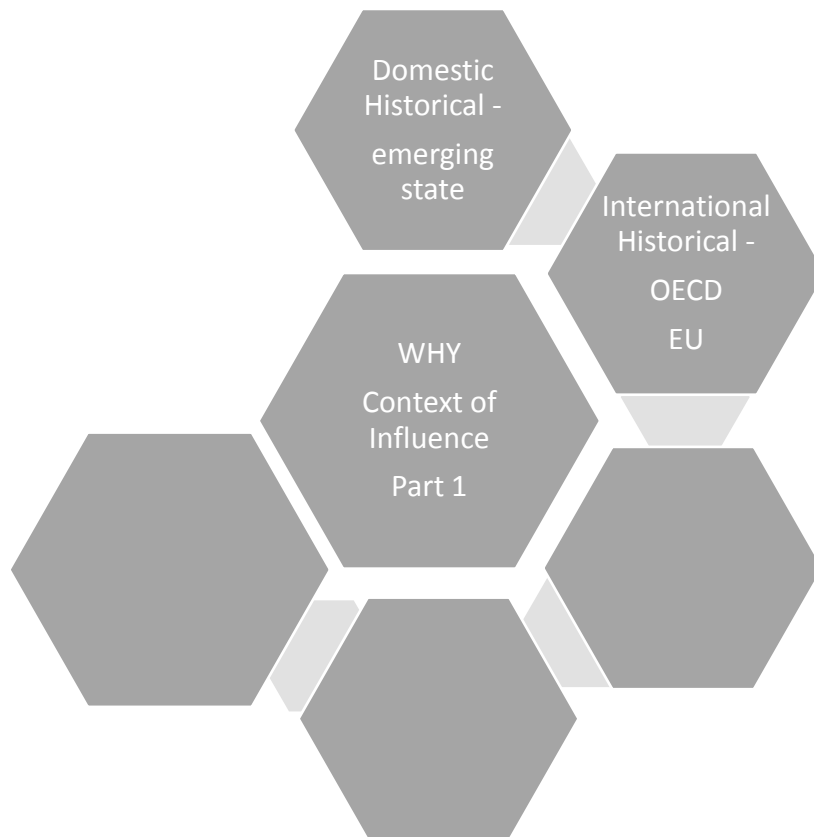
Murphy (1999) has argued that the EU has, since its inception, sought to influence education policy but that it was not until the Maastricht Treaty in 1991 that it had 'partial jurisdiction over educational matters' (p362) driven by the desire to orientate education to the needs of the economy and better position Europe to compete globally and meet the demands of multinational corporations. Murphy (1999) concludes that the policy of lifelong learning is

adopted by governments on the basis of its contribution to this agenda and that adult educators have lacked a critical analysis of EU developments. This thesis is, in part at least, a contribution to such an analysis but, as I show later, also goes beyond this in the creation of a policy toolkit for adult education lobbyists drawn from the critical tradition.

The positioning of UNESCO in lifelong learning policy supports Murphy's argument. UNESCO features only in the White Paper and only insofar as it has been a promotional voice for adult education for many years. It also promotes adult education coming from the humanist tradition, which relates to the philosophy and practice of many adult education stakeholders (NALA 2012; AONTAS 2013). My analysis here has identified that its influence has waned in Irish educational policy, as in other countries (Field 2011; Walters et al 1997), and new international forces are detected, most notably, the OECD and the EU. Once again, the context is the positioning by these organisations of Ireland in a globalised economy. It is argued that through the power of EU, coalesced with the influence of the OECD, adult education in Europe has been distorted and repurposed through a new version of lifelong learning (Mayo 2009; Murphy 1999; Rubenson 2009). This repurposing is fuelled by the dominance of globalisation and the neo-liberal agenda which has been felt internationally to varying degrees. In Ireland's case, the evidence here appears to suggest that the neo-liberal agenda provided the bulk of the State impetus for policy development during the period in question, albeit a little later than the UK and others.



Figure 3 Context of Influence of Adult Education Policy Part 1



### 5.3 Key implications from analysis of context of influence part 1

By the late 90's Ireland's socio-economic circumstance and influence from international bodies, as shown in Figure 3, provided the platform to finally build on the historical tradition, such as it was, of adult education. In broad terms, mass education was achieved and on a par with other trading partners. There only remained the legacy of those poorly served by an earlier limited state education system and, this combined with a desire to further enhance the productivity of the workforce, as productivity was heralded by economists as key to economic growth. This was the moment of unprecedented policy proliferation, inhabited by many competing interests seeking to interpret what they understood as adult education from each of the resulting documents. In an Irish context, drawing from my literature review, there are two main adult education cultures identifiable up to and including the 1990s: adult

education funded largely by the Department of Education and Science and training for the labour market funded by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. The latter has always operated from the dominant paradigm in adult education and training literature, a human capital, free market perspective which places the emphasis on the economic value of adult education and training and is ‘the dominant trend in the Western world’ . . . ., ‘mostly supported by a neo-liberal ideology’ (Walters et al 1997 p6). The analysis here suggests that, consequently, training has been traditionally ignored by many adult education stakeholders who only related to the humanist tradition of adult education evident in the White Paper on Adult Education and this perhaps, naïve understanding blinded them to the possible negative costs of bridging the education and training divide through the adoption of lifelong learning.

Each of the Irish policy documents was written during a period of relative economic stability, declining unemployment levels, increasing participation by women in the labour market and a reduction in certain types of employment opportunities. The policy commitment to address the risk of redundancy for individuals with lower educational attainment and less opportunity for employer-supported education and training features remarkably strongly in each document, with warnings of the implications of ignoring this area. I show later in this chapter that this consistent policy had limited impact. The National Skills Strategy provides significantly more detailed information about education and training levels within categories of employment as well as survey data representing employer demands for *types* of educated and trained workers. It colonises education and training within the language of the market, introducing the supply and demand model to how the education system is understood. The concept of human resource development is named explicitly as key to the National Skills Strategy and is accompanied by an explanation of how the authors understand the term and an acknowledgement that the term is contested. Within this context, and without explanation, there remains an acknowledgement of market failure in education and responsibility for the

state to support fully those consequently disadvantaged. Whilst this approach builds on the economic underpinning of training policy in Ireland since the 1990s, it is laid bare here as the conceptual driver of all funded, and thus valued, adult education.

By contrast, the White Paper on Adult Education identifies competitiveness as only one of six priority areas that adult education can contribute towards and this is further explained as meeting the needs of ‘the knowledge society’, a widely used but perhaps little explained and contested term. It recognises investment in human capital as relevant to firms and individuals and uses the EU and OECD context for validation. However unlike the National Skills Strategy and the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning, there are a further five areas that are developed by adult education, none of which would be described as solely economic in character. These are consciousness raising, citizenship, cohesion, cultural development and community development, each and all which could be referenced to include social, cultural and political characteristics. Taken altogether, the White Paper seems consistent with the State’s concern to ‘achieve economic prosperity, social well-being and a good quality of life within a democratically structured society’ (DES 1998 p16). The case for investment in adult education is therefore based on social and economic concerns as well as a recognition of its role ‘in creating a more democratic and civilised society’ (DES 1998 p16). The White Paper on Adult Education also draws on one of the main concerns identified during the consultation process following the publication of the Green Paper, namely that there needs to be balance between adult education for economic purposes as well as for social, personal and cultural purposes (DES 2000).

Whilst noting the dominant discourse of adult education for competitive advantage coming from EU policy, much of the EU and OECD literature also provides space and acknowledgement of the wider gains from investing in lifelong learning. As noted in the literature, the White Paper on Adult Education was seen by many commentators to not only

reflect the views of many adult education stakeholders at the time but also to be based on the interpretation of adult education from a humanist tradition. Field (2011) suggests that this wider agenda was popular up to the mid-1980s when many countries sought to extend education to adults but began to lose popularity with the rise of neo-liberalism. As a consequence of Ireland's socio-economic history, I suggest the country may not have been in the grip of neo-liberalism to the same extent as other countries, and the White Paper on Adult Education was conceived just in time to lay important foundations. Within a short space of time, the concept of adult education espoused by the White Paper on Adult Education weakens in each of the subsequent documents until it finally appears marginalised again in Irish adult education policy and more in alignment with policy in other English speaking countries. In reality, as shown in the literature review, in comparison to Ireland this development had already begun in most other Western European countries operating the Anglo Saxon model of lifelong learning.

## **5.4 The context of influence Part 2**

### ***5.4.1 Political factors***

As the shown in the context of influence part 1, and in the literature review, historically there has been a lobby for the development of the adult education sector in Ireland and, in particular, a desire to see a second chance programme for those who did not benefit from the school system since the late 1960s. The critical analysis here will explore the contemporary political context that surrounded the three policy documents in question.

#### 5.4.1.1 *The General Election of 1997*

AONTAS and NALA ran its first joint pre-election campaign in 1997 which saw key personnel, including me, meet with politicians from the main political parties at the time, calling for recognition and development of the adult education sector. As a result of NALA's participation in the UNESCO Confintea V in Hamburg in 1997, and a serendipitous conversation I had with members of the Canadian delegation, I became aware of the imminent publication of the IALS results and prepared a media campaign for the launch which would coincide with our pre-election campaign. Commitments to adult literacy were contained in the election manifestos of the main political parties, secured as a result of these campaigns. There was a desire amongst those involved in the adult education sector to see adult education recognised and resourced, after a long period of neglect, appropriately by the State. The social and cultural forces came through the community education movement, women's groups, social partnership and community and voluntary sector, all of whom contributed their views during the Department of Education and Science-led consultation after the publication of the Green Paper on Adult Education which will be detailed below.

The general election in 1997 saw the return of Fianna Fail to power after being ousted three years earlier, albeit once again in coalition with the Progressive Democrats. According to an opinion piece by Irish Times political correspondent Stephen Collins, there were low expectations that the minority administration would survive at the time (Collins 2016) and this may have led Ministers to rush work in order to secure a legacy whilst in power. A centre right party, Fianna Fail has been characterised as being populist and made up of people from all social classes. The party had been in government for the majority of the previous decades and remained in Government for the next 14 years. Apart from the aim of growing the economy, the desire to bring peace to Northern Ireland was chief amongst the objectives of

this Government, mirroring the ambitions of the newly elected Labour administration in the UK, with whom they worked closely.

During the 1990s, great strides were made towards the Northern Ireland Peace Process. In April 1998, just months before the publication of the Green Paper on Adult Education, the Good Friday Agreement was signed and created a North South Ministerial Council which was formally set up a year later. The Council works towards cooperation and action on areas of mutual benefit. Education is one of the six areas of cooperation under the body, with the bulk of the work programme under this theme concerned with the school system. The developments in adult education policy augmented adult education, alongside the more established areas of education, to be on the agenda for discussions between the two countries and consequently the White Paper on Adult Education uniquely contains a small chapter on cooperation with Northern Ireland. It identifies areas for cooperation and makes commitments to share progress on developments in the future. Throughout the period of study, there was a high degree of exchange of adult education policy at meetings between the 5 nations and their civil servants, to which I was invited.

#### *5.4.2 Economic factors*

All of the policy documents under scrutiny link education and training to economic growth in Ireland. Both the National Employment Action Plan (DETE 2000) and National Development Plan (Government of Ireland 1999) 'elevated lifelong learning to a pivotal role in labour market policy' (p17). Throughout the documents in question there is a focus on skills and upskilling the workforce and increasing the numbers of women in the workplace. Adult education is detailed in all documents as being essential as opposed to desirable.

Accordingly in the White Paper on Adult Education, the low participation rate in continuous

learning is highlighted as poor in Ireland in comparison to other EU countries at 7% and hence its proposals to solve the problem.

The low levels of engagement in lifelong learning remained a concern throughout the period, and to this day, and this was reinforced by reports from the National Competitiveness Council (NCC) connecting Ireland's competitiveness to its productivity levels and these productivity levels to the average national education profile (NCC 2006a, NCC 2006b). The NCC, set up in 1997 as a social partnership body which reports to the Taoiseach on issues to be addressed to enhance competitiveness, casts education as knowledge infrastructure requiring investment at all levels to enhance productivity growth. Their reports identified the countries' strengths as the increasing rates of school completion and attainment of third level education both surpassing the Lisbon targets whilst continuing to see annual budgetary increases.

There is a considerable amount written across the three policy documents regarding demographic change, especially around educational attainment and its impact, in Ireland and in comparison to other countries in the OECD. The widening gap between educational attainment levels of younger age cohorts and their older counterparts in the labour market in Ireland, and in comparison to other countries, is a common feature in all the documents over the period in question. Gender imbalances in terms of educational attainment and participation are identified in White Paper on Adult Education and the National Skills Strategy. The National Skills Strategy provides the most comprehensive use of demographic factors in setting out its case and these are combined to make up a dynamic skills framework. The framework aims to explain skills supply and demand, skills stock and factors that are influencing change. The supply of skills comes from two areas: the number of school leavers entering into the labour force and the numbers of people immigrating into Ireland, a new phenomenon in Ireland. The existing skills 'stock' is the dominant number of people with

skills available for the labour market. On the flip side, the framework details the skills demands of enterprise and the various factors that will impact on those needs. These factors range from changes in the global economy, outsourcing to China and other low cost economies, to the domestic economy and regional development. Depending on the outcome of these factors, including demographic factors, will determine the pressures on the system. This, in turn, dictates why Ireland has over the period in question evolved its adult education policy to a skills strategy, in line with Britain (Leitch 2006) and other EU countries.

In sharp contrast to the other two documents in question, the White Paper on Adult Education positions the economic gains of adult education alongside its other contributions to society, attempting to balance other benefits from investment in adult education. Both the Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning and National Skills Strategy state that they recognise the ‘social dividend’ (EGFSN 2007 p51) from investing in education and training across the labour force but there is a disclaimer that this will not be a focus of either document. Rather the marketisation of education especially in National Skills Strategy is very clear. The loss of wider societal and democratic benefits of adult education in the latter publications is illustrative of the value placed on such arguments in securing development in this area. Politically what is most influential and worthy of State support is the dividend to economic growth. The reasons for the apparent ideological difference between the White Paper on Adult Education coming out of the DES stable and the other two documents under the auspices of the DETE is worthy of further examination, later in the thesis.

### 5.4.3 *Educational factors*

#### 5.4.3.1 *Expanding the education and training system*

In 1995, the government issued a White Paper on Education, *Charting our Education Future* (Department of Education, 1995), following an extensive consultation process which



attracted ‘almost 1,000 written submissions’ (Coolahan 2007 p11), including from adult education stakeholders. This, although referencing the importance of lifelong learning, was mainly concerned with primary, secondary and higher education. The very small chapter on ‘further education’ as opposed to adult education, details the establishment of a Further Education Authority which will provide a national coherent developmental framework for ‘vocational education and training as well as adult and continuing education’ (DES 1995 p86). In effect, this provided a nod to the recommendations of the Murphy (1973) and Kenny (1984) reports mentioned earlier for a structure for the sector. Whilst involving the Department of Enterprise and Employment and FAS, the structure would be run by the Department of Education (DE). It was clarified, though, that ‘primary policy responsibility in relation to the identification and provision of job-specific and employment-related skills training will rest with the Department of Enterprise and Employment’ (DE 1995 p89).

The White Paper on Education contains an acknowledgement that as a result of the mass expansion of the education system since the 1960s, the Department of Education (DE) ‘has been unable to give the amount of attention necessary to policy analysis, policy development, strategic planning and evaluation of outcomes which should be its main concerns’ (DE 1995 p191). It continues that it has embraced the feedback on this issue from the OECD Review of Irish Education (1991) and will devolve authority as is the case in other OECD countries.

This opened the way for the DE to develop adult education through setting up and devolving authority to a further education authority, as it had done with the establishment of the Higher Education Authority on a statutory basis in 1971.

In 1997 the new Government changed the name of the Department of Education to the Department of Education and Science (DES). Other developments in the DES at this time included the production of the first White Paper on Early Childhood Education: *Ready to Learn* (1999). Early years education and adult education are often seen as the two ends of the

continuum of lifelong learning. In Ireland, in comparison to many other countries in the EU, both of these areas were considered under-developed. Similar to the lobby for statutory recognition for the adult education sector, there was a lobby to see early years education also established on a national statutory basis. Both of these areas needed significant policy and funding commitments and in effect were competing interests for the DES budget. The White Paper on Adult Education concludes that ‘together the two White Papers draw attention to the official recognition by the State that its educational commitment now extends to include not only those in school, college or training, but also that part of the population which has yet to go to school and that which has left the initial education system’ (DES 2000 p24). There was not the same generosity of spirit extended in the Early Childhood Education White Paper. Each of these policy documents aimed to extend the concept of mass education to those outside the formal education system. This is an example of policies that are ‘intertextual’ (Taylor et al, 1997) as their development is influenced by the same broad economic and social contexts. Interestingly both documents shared the establishment of an authority as a key part of the policy and both failed to achieve this objective.

#### 5.4.3.2 *International Adult Literacy Survey and the EU*

The publication of the Irish results of the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) (Morgan et al 1997) provided the first ever published results for adult literacy levels in the country as well as a comparative analysis in relation to many other OECD countries. As already noted, Ireland’s results, released in a general election year, were unfavourable and dented the image of its education system and its contribution to the labour market. Whilst there was shock at the results, the educational attainment levels as the nearest available proxy to adult literacy levels, had featured in the OECD’s annual *Education at a Glance* publications, and the large number of adults in the labour market with less than upper secondary education featured in the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment’s

White Paper on Human Resource Development (DETE 1997). The IALS report only concentrated on the population over 16 in the labour market and consequently the results were not bolstered by the results of the better performing primary and secondary school system, traditionally the feature of the OECD's comparative surveys in Ireland. To counter this, the better performance of younger cohorts in IALS was highlighted in the national report on IALS supplied by Morgan et al (1997) and a subsequent academic paper drawing on the findings (Denny et al 1999) which concluded that the adult literacy problem was a largely a legacy problem of the poorly funded education system of the past, in contrast to the discourse of the OECD and organisations seeking increased investment adult education opportunities.

Despite this, the IALS is the only survey referenced in each of the policy documents under scrutiny for this study, a testimony to its perceived value and to the fact there was no other adult literacy survey carried out during the period. Nor was there any other comparative data on adult education participation. My analysis here suggests that there are other reasons for its perceived dominance. Although not referenced in any of the policy documents under consideration in this study, the Human Development Report (UNDP 1999) used the IALS to compile its Human Poverty Index in the composition of ratings for seventeen industrialised countries. Along with a high long term unemployment rate, Ireland had a higher than average functional illiteracy rate and scored second last to the United States in the Human Poverty Index of 17 industrialised countries. This was in stark contrast to the gains Ireland was making on other indices. Indeed Ireland's social partnership agreements are credited in the report as a successful mechanism for reducing poverty and inequality in the country.

According to Nolan (2002), it was the functional literacy element which resulted in Ireland's low scoring, despite the country's recent economic growth. Ireland was faring badly in comparative surveys, resulting in negative coverage in *The New York Times* (Clarity 1999) and this was interpreted at a political level as impacting on its competitiveness image. In

1998 Ireland was ranked 18<sup>th</sup> in the Human Development Index and noted as having the fastest progress since 1975 (UNDP 1999). By the time of the 2004 report, Ireland was the second best rated country on the Human Development Index, falling to 5<sup>th</sup> in 2008.

Increasingly at EU level, lifelong learning policy is in evidence during the 1990s. The EC's White Paper on Education and Training, *Teaching and Learning: Towards the Learning Society* (1995) sets out the importance of learning throughout life in order for all citizens of Europe to become employed and maintain employability as well as fully participate in society. In 1996 EC adopted *Strategy for Lifelong Learning* which highlighted the 'institutional and policy challenges posed by a lifelong learning commitment' (DES 2000 p55). There is a reference in the Green Paper on Adult Education that the Dutch, Finnish and British Governments have individually published government papers supporting the concept of lifelong learning. In the Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning the key non-national texts referenced as context for the report are the EU Employment Strategy, the Lisbon Strategy and the Memorandum of Lifelong Learning. In the National Skills Strategy, there is clarity that the public education and training system, through the Irish state, has signed up to the European Employment Strategy 1997 as well as the Lisbon Strategy which contain employment, education and training objectives. The contemporary influence of EU policy appears to be consistently maintained throughout the three policy documents in question and reinforces the findings of others of the pivotal influence of the EU on adult education in numerous countries (Field 2011).

By contrast, UNESCO, is briefly referenced as a promoter of lifelong learning only in the White Paper. The Irish Government sent an official delegation, including me, to the Confintea V in Hamburg in 1997 which was themed Adult Learning: A Key for the Twenty – First Century. It included Des O'Loughlin, head of Adult Education in the DES at that time and directly involved in the creation of the White Paper on Adult Education, as well as a

senior civil servant from the Department of Foreign Affairs who was there to inform Ireland's overseas donor programme. There was no confluence between the officials regarding the substance of the meeting, denoting the distinction between adult education for developing and developed countries, a dichotomy which remains today (Jarvis 2009). The resulting declaration of the meeting which would reinforce a broad based rationale for the adoption of adult education is not referenced in the White Paper on Adult Education, despite it having great meaning to the attending Irish adult education stakeholders.

#### *5.4.3.3 The education and training divide*

All three of the documents under scrutiny reference problematically the fact that education and training are divided between two government departments and a number of key providers and make recommendations how to improve or resolve the situation. In each case, it is noted that this is a structural weakness and there is a need for an overarching framework for lifelong learning. This point had been raised as far back as the Murphy Report (1973) and in all significant related Irish policy documents (Kenny Report 1984, White Paper on Education 1995 p.73), as well as in the UK policy literature.

There is a degree of contemporary critique of this position in all papers but only in the White Paper on Adult Education is the lack of action on creating one national statutory body categorised as an 'omission' dating back to 1973. The question of one single entity coordinating adult learning becomes more pointed over the period in question and particularly in the final document under consideration. The White Paper on Adult Education clearly states that it 'bridges the traditional divide between education and training' but does not 'provide a policy blueprint for the training aspects of the field' (DES 2000 p27), as this work is on-going under the National Employment Action Plans and the work of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning. The Taskforce raises its concern 'that fragmentation of effort' could

undermine their strategy and ‘particularly stresses the need for coordination between the DES and DETE’ (DETE 2002 p9). By 2007 the National Skills Strategy is recommending the development of an integrated policy approach between the DES and DETE and the providers under their auspices.

Only the Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning references the systemic change and restructuring in the public sector, noting the introduction of a new managerialism, concerned with quality and effectiveness. The Strategic Management Initiative (SMI) began in 1994 and was concerned with the modernisation of the Irish Civil Service, in line with business models. Part of the process was improving intra and inter departmental working, for which, despite reported cooperation, there was a need between the two departments involved in adult education.

Figure 4 Context of Influence of Adult Education Policy Part 1 and 2



## **5.5 Implications of analysis of part 2**

There is a significant overlapping of contemporary influences on the creation of all three policy documents, ranging from references from the same international bodies to contributing to wider national economic and social development, captured in Figure 4 above. The growing involvement of employers, trade unions and, to an extent, the non-profit sector in adult education policy formulation is a constant whilst all documents emanated during a relative period of political stability.

Without question, the needs of the economy and role of adult education in contributing to it, dominates the narrative throughout the policy documents in question. The fact that it does so with increasing emphasis during the period leads to the implication that the future of the Irish economy, particularly as the Celtic Tiger waned, became an even more pressing concern. It also suggests there was a growing momentum to embrace neo-liberalism, having such exposure to its main protagonists in the UK and the USA. What starts in the White Paper on Adult Education as a broadly based blueprint to contribute to developing a strong economy and pluralist democracy, akin to earlier DES policy documents, is condensed in the other two documents under DETE into a narrower, economic imperative to maintain a position in a globalised competitive international market. According the National Skills Strategy, successful policy at this level automatically brings the wider social benefits yet, despite this rhetoric, uses extensive academic as well as other research and policy publications to validate only its economic case. Each of the documents is managing and neutralising social problems according to their own agenda (Ball 1997).

Littered throughout the documents are references to the challenge of the new millennium and the role lifelong learning would play. The homogeneity of these documents captures the

dominant discourse of lifelong learning. Regarding the White Paper on Adult Education, there is an attempt to provide an historical perspective often missing in policy documents, including the other two documents examined in this study. And yet, critically, this historical perspective is careful not to criticise previous governments or departments for a lack of progress. Instead, this is a task left to the OECD which softens the blow by comparing Ireland's under development of lifelong learning alongside its trading neighbours in its 'Education at a Glance' series.

The fact that two government departments are developing policy papers which overlay and tolerate each other's existence in an overlapping policy space, with surface level acknowledgements of each other, is problematic and therefore warrants more attention in terms of its impact. It raises the question that if Irish policy making is seen as a centralised endeavour, it appears to lack the necessary controls, as envisaged in the SMI, to address a situation where two government departments are competing for overlapping territory and dominance. Do these departments have different ideologies related to whoever is the Government Minister at the time? Are their purposes distinct or in fact the same and it is a matter of one winning out? I attempt to answer these questions and explore their implications in the concluding chapter but, for now, the next stage of the analysis is concerned with the context of policy production. As I have shown, there are economic and political forces influencing adult education policy and it is necessary to understand these in order to do advocacy work. But according to Rubenson & Beddie (2004), they do not 'mechanically determine' (p153) it – 'people (politicians, intellectuals, civil servants) set policy directions, and these people can be influenced' (Rubenson & Beddie, 2004 p.153).



## **5.6 Context of policy production**

The context of policy production relates to how each of the texts were constructed and developed over time, including who was involved and the political ideology underpinning them. As one might expect, and in keeping with Ball's notion of 'cannibalised' texts, each of the three documents was ultimately produced by a number of different people, in three distinct settings and using three different approaches but there is some overlap. The micro politics inside the state will be closely examined. Policy as a settlement, meaning the degree to which it represents a compromise, will be explored.

### ***5.6.1 Key players and their consultation mechanisms***

#### *5.6.1.1 The politicians 1997-2007*

The appointment of Micheal Martin as Minister for Education in 1997 followed his stint as opposition spokesperson on education during the previous government administration, a time when, as I showed above in relation to the lobbying roles of NALA and AONTAS, he met and became familiar with adult learning lobbying organisations and supported the adoption of lifelong learning by committing to 'provide funding for adult education, especially literacy' (Fianna Fail Election Manifesto 1997 p14). A secondary teacher by profession, he was 36 and the youngest member of the Cabinet. Willie O'Dea, 45 and qualified as a barrister and accountant, was appointed Minister for State at the Department of Education with responsibility for adult education as well as school transport. This was O'Dea's second junior ministry, having served two years in the early nineties in the justice portfolio which better matched his professional training. More significantly for the adult education sector, this was the first time adult education had a Minister of State and its creation signalled policy development for the area. Whilst the appointment of a junior minister was very welcomed by adult education stakeholders, it must be noted that junior ministers do not attend Cabinet

meetings and consequently their power is somewhat circumscribed and dependent on the relationship with, and support of, the Minister for Education, and, to a degree, other cabinet Ministers. This difference was possibly not well understood by adult education lobbyists. Both Ministers were on the ascendancy in terms of their political careers and oversaw large increases in spending and reform in education and adult education during their tenure as well as subsequent promotions in cabinet reshuffles. In the Green Paper publication, both Ministers featured, with Michael Martin going first but without a title to his piece, followed by Willie O'Dea who wrote the foreword. According to the key official responsible for the publication, each Minister was unaware of their colleague's contribution in advance of publication.

Less than two years later, only O'Dea featured in the White Paper on Adult Education as Martin had moved on at the start of 2000, as a result of a cabinet reshuffle, to be the new Minister of Health. Consequently, and unknown to adult education stakeholders at the time, the championing of adult education by Martin was lost as he was no longer responsible for the implementation of the White Paper published later that year. Arguably, commitment to it began to wane under his successors, of whom there were three in the space of seven years. They all had their own more mainstream education agendas largely regarding schools and higher education, none of which seemed to chime with an interest in adult education. By 2004 Martin re-emerged in the adult learning arena when he took on the role of Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, commissioning and launching the first ever National Skills Strategy (EGFSN 2007).

A similar pattern of change also affected the Minister of State with responsibility for Adult Education. After the general election in 2002, O'Dea was replaced by Sile de Valera, a demotion from the senior ministry she previously held: adult education was to be her last post before resigning early from politics, a decision that she announced a year before her

departure, adding further to her political weakness. Consequently, and unlike her predecessor and successor, de Valera was not concerned with either getting re-elected or leaving a political legacy. Instead she oversaw the review and unprecedented suspension of the National Adult Learning Council (NALC), and all that went with it, undermining the adult education structure as it attempted to co-exist with the report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning and the establishment of the Inter-Departmental Steering Group on Lifelong Learning. As I recall it, there continued to be relatively quiet times for adult education at the macro level in the Department of Education once we all stopped meeting as NALC, but a set of smaller developments was supported by de Valera. I developed a good working relationship with all the Junior Ministers for Adult Education and despite the macro difficulties, was able to press ahead with NALA's adult literacy agenda. One development in which I was involved concerned supporting NALA in its call for the establishment of a workplace basic education fund, but not through her Department. In June 2004, Minister de Valera used her influence to secure a meeting for me and a colleague with Mary Harney, Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment which resulted in the first fund for workplace basic education being announced in the ensuing Budget. Following on from that success, de Valera also supported the establishment of the first national intensive tuition in adult basic education (ITABE) programme which NALA had been lobbying for over a number of years. Both programmes remain in place today. The final incumbent as junior Minister for Adult Education during the period of my study came in 2006 with the appointment of Sean Haughey, his first junior ministry. After the general election the following year, he continued in the role under a new title, adult education being replaced by lifelong learning, which now also covered the training dimension in the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, providing a symbolic bridge between the education and training divide.

Mary Harney, leader of the Progressive Democrats (PDs), was appointed the first female Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister) and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment in 1997 and held both posts until 2004 when she became Minister for Health. She was also Ireland's representative to the European Council of Ministers. Harney spent most of her working life in full time politics and was a very successful at elections, giving her the current record for the longest-serving female member of Dail Eireann. The PDs were a liberal party which embraced low taxation and deregulation of the market. Harney took over the Department shortly after it published the White Paper on Human Resource Development (DETE 1997), which had highlighted the comparatively low levels of education of Irish adults within an OECD context and signalled its negative impact on the economy and the labour market. It outlines a range of actions to be taken to address the training needs of young people, women, unemployed and workers and to ensure state training is meeting the needs of industry. As the White Paper on Human Resource Development had not originated from Harney but from the prior Fine Gael and Labour administration, it is possible she did not have the same connection to the policy, but she did have considerable political weight at Cabinet and it fitted her ideology.

In 2000, at the same time the White Paper on Adult Education was being launched by Minister O'Dea, Minister Harney oversaw the setting up of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning, but is not referenced in its report, unlike the coverage of her ministerial colleagues in the White Paper on Adult Education. This may be indicative of the degree of significance of the work of the Taskforce to Harney at a political level, but also a reflection of the useful space a social partnership policy gave a government department and its Minister. Murtagh (2009) maintains that the setting up of the Taskforce was an attempt by DETE to assert control over the lifelong learning agenda which it felt was infringed by the DES Green Paper in 1998. In reality, and as previously mentioned, that breach had already occurred further

back in the 1995 White Paper on Education (DES). As noted above, in 2002 Harney supported the establishment of a workplace basic education fund which was announced later that year in the budget line. NALA had started lobbying for such a fund years earlier, convening a workplace basic education strategy group in 2001 which included the social partners (Workplace Basic Education Strategy Group 2002) and drew from the policy context of the White Paper on Adult Education and fed into the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning. Harney's support appeared to be secured on the simple but critical statistic that a third of the Irish workforce had low levels of educational attainment, a point she was surprised by and asked the senior civil servant present to validate, which he reluctantly did whilst cautioning the Minister not to open what he termed a 'Pandora's box'.

Apart from the elected politicians, the other key players involved in the narrative of these policies were the less explicitly but significantly powerful civil servants in the two key Departments and secretariat to the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs who had responsibility for consultations, writing and publication of the three documents in questions.

#### *5.6.1.2 Officials involved in the White Paper on Adult Education*

The first Principal Officer (3<sup>rd</sup> in line down from Secretary General at the top of a government department) in the adult education section in the DES came in 1999 with the appointment of Margaret Kelly. At the time, Kelly had spent all her career in the DES, having joined straight after school, and had over 20 years work experience, crucially including time in the European Structural Funds section. Until her departure from the adult education section in 2003, Kelly was the key departmental driver in the production and implementation of the White Paper on Adult Education and was also a member of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning. The Assistant Principal Officer, Des O'Loughlin, had been in post at the commencement of the Green Paper, also having served all his career in the DES, coming in

after finishing school, and remaining in the section for the duration of this study. As is the norm in the Irish civil service, civil servants are not specialists and have to acquire knowledge of their portfolio in a short period of time. They are not named as authors in the publication of government policies and normally do not speak to media. O'Loughlin kept a note of his meetings which were given to Murtagh, perhaps as an alternative distraction, from the large volume of official documents he requested from the DES under the Freedom of Information Act.

As a result of the size of the task of creating a policy for adult education, a relatively new area in traditional education policy circles in Ireland, O'Loughlin requested and secured the advisory services of National University of Ireland Maynooth (NUIM) and its Professor of Education, John Coolahan, a seasoned policy advisor to the DES since the 1990s and considered 'education's everyman' (Holden, 2009). Back in 1991, the Minister for Education invited Professor Coolahan to advise and write a Green Paper on Education and his involvement in this policy process continued until the White Paper on Education was published in 1995, by which time he was working with his third Minister for Education from a different political party (Walshe 1999). On this occasion and having regard to the subject matter, Coolahan's colleague at Maynooth with responsibility for adult education, again a relatively under-developed area in academic terms, Tom Collins, took up the main academic advisory task. Collins was a very popular choice amongst the adult education community and would have garnered trust from adult education advocacy groups with whom he had an association.

The DES established a team around the creation of the White Paper which included the political advisors to Minister O'Dea and Minister Martin, as well as an official from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE). According to Murtagh (2009), the resulting White Paper was the product of a number of individuals, both in the DES,

DETE, and NUIM, as well as information drawn from the extensive consultation process. More specifically Collins wrote the history section, which is referenced earlier as a unique feature in comparison to other contemporary policy documents, whereas his academic colleagues contributed to the chapter on community education (Murtagh 2009). The inclusion of the ESRI / FAS Report No 7 referenced in the White Paper's dedicated workplace education chapter stands out as a source and is explained by the section being written by the officials in DETE. NALA was asked by the DES to propose an adult literacy strategy and this was broadly adopted as submitted, although the Agency's involvement was not made common knowledge or revealed to Murtagh during his interviews with the writers.

In contrast to the other two documents under scrutiny, the White Paper on Adult Education was preceded, as would be the norm, by a Green Paper which initiated 'a wide-ranging consultation process' (DES 1998 p2). Its purpose was 'to provide the consultative backdrop to the publication of a White Paper on Adult Education' (DES 1998 p6). The consultation process started after the publication of the Green Paper in November 1998. Through national advertisements, the DES issued an invitation to the public for written submissions. A total of 171 written submissions and 76 oral submissions were received (DES 2000). In addition there were six regional consultative sessions around the country at which over 400 people participated and a final day in Dublin Castle at which the main issues raised during the consultation process were presented (DES 2000).

The consultation process served many functions, including providing further justification for the White Paper on Adult Education through demonstrating the level of interest in adult education and giving it some much needed political value. The White Paper on Adult Education states that the 'the location of Adult Education policy themes within the emergence of a lifelong learning focus in policy, especially at European level' (DES 2000 p69), was most appreciated. No questions or considerations for training providers are

formally recorded in the White Paper on Adult Education's chapter summarising the outcomes from the consultation process, whilst there is coverage of higher education and the workforce as sub headings. The traditional education and training dichotomy is declared an out-dated scenario but the following chapters are subtle in how the White Paper on Adult Education is reforming this. There is an attempt, though, to bring together the needs of the workplace and the more learner-centred approach which dominates adult education up to this time in order to address the education and training divide conceptually and structurally. The plan to create local adult learning boards highlighted the tensions surrounding the VECs and non-statutory providers co-existing at local level. The naming of this tension in the document is interesting and demonstrates how power issues between local level stakeholders are named, perhaps in an attempt to force a solution, whereas the national level power struggle over the education and training divide between the two Government departments is not played out through the document.

#### *5.6.1.3 Officials involved in Taskforce on Lifelong Learning*

As the White Paper on Adult Education was being drafted, and to the displeasure of officials in the DES (Murtagh 2009), the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning was first proposed as part of the social partnership process in 1999 and its terms of reference and membership outlined in the subsequent agreement (Government of Ireland 2000). In addition to the key government departments of DETE and DES, implementation bodies and the Social Partners were to be fully involved and a Reference Group made up of enterprise and learning interests would also be established as a resource. It was to complete its work in 6 months.

The chair of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning was Ned Costello, a young Principal Officer in the Labour Services Unit of DETE with responsibility for training. He became an Assistant Secretary General in DETE in 2002, just before the Taskforce concluded its work and by



2007 had left the civil service to lead the Irish Universities Association. As head of training for the labour market and Chairperson of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning, Costello was a key figure in the development of adult education during this period. The main Taskforce consisted in total of 21 members, made up of 9 civil servants from 8 government departments, 3 individuals from higher education, 3 from employer bodies, 1 from enterprise policy, 1 from the state training agency and 2 each from the trade union and community and voluntary sectors. There was no member of the VEC sector, the largest provider of adult and further education, in this main group, a notable omission, similar to the very low references to FAS in the White Paper on Adult Education.

The Taskforce also established two sub-groups ‘to identify the critical issues in two areas’ (DETE 2000 p6) – one on Access and Barriers to Lifelong Learning and the other on Work and Workplace Learning. The Access group was chaired by a senior official in the Higher Education Authority and 4 other members were drawn from higher education, making it the single biggest interest group of the 17 member sub-group. Broadly equal membership was divided between the following sectors: further education and training, the community and voluntary sector, employers and unions. By contrast, higher education had only 2 representatives on the Work and Workplace Learning group which was dominated by employers and training providers and was chaired by a trade union representative. The composition of the two groups provide a further lens into their concerns. Access was about widening access to higher education, and not creating access to adult education, while the Work and Workplace Learning group was about existing workers’ training needs. The composition set the parameters.

A further sub-group on Implication of Free Fees for Part-Time Students was also set up, as only full-time students were eligible for free fees for under graduate degrees and its two page report is an appendix to the document. It met and provided its report the day before the TLL’s

final meeting in May 2002 and had only 7 members, 5 from the civil and public service and one each from the union and employer bodies.

The work of the Taskforce well exceeded its original 6 month timeframe but, more significantly, even with an extended timeframe of over 2 years, it was unable to fulfil its terms of reference. This was explained in its final report as follows:

‘...as the work of the Taskforce and its sub groups progressed, 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 systemic and structural issues which will underpin the framework for Lifelong Learning cannot be captured by such a reductionist methodology’ (DETE 2002 p6).

In carrying out its work, the Taskforce did not have a public call for submissions and, in effect, was dominated by the state and the business world. According to the report, its work was however ‘conditioned’ (DETE 2002 p6) by the EC Memorandum on Lifelong Learning (EC 2000) and the national consultation process on its themes. Whilst crediting the Green and White Papers on Adult Education for improving the ‘profile’ (DETE 2002 p6) of Lifelong Learning, they are situated as a backdrop to the work of the Taskforce, as opposed to a live policy in implementation mode that needed to be dovetailed with. To separate the Taskforce out from the White Paper on Adult Education, it is clarified that it followed on from the social partners’ commitments to ‘Lifelong Learning and upskilling’ (DETE 2002 p6).

#### *5.6.1.4 Officials involved in the National Skills Strategy*

In 2005, nine months after Minister Michael Martin took over the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE), he requested the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs

(EGFSN) to ‘identify the skills required for Ireland to become a competitive, innovation-driven, knowledge-based, participative and inclusive economy by 2020’ (EGFSN 2007 p2). The task was to undertake research which would ‘underpin the development of a National Skills Strategy’ (EGFSN 2007 p2), a commitment made in a subsequent social partnership agreement. In *Towards 2016* (2006), a particular emphasis in the development of the skills strategy is on the skills needs of the economy up to degree level. In addition there is also specific reference to the role of the state in supporting the strategy in the case of market failure and for the low skilled.

The EGFSN had been established in 1997 under the auspices of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment as a result of a recommendation in the White Paper on Human Resource Development (DETE 1997) and continues today to advise the government on the future skills needs of the economy. Its membership has evolved to include representatives from the traditional social partners, as well as individuals from the private sector. During the period in question, the EGFSN had three chairpersons, two from the private sector and one from academia, with Ann Heraty as Chair when the National Skills Strategy was published. During the Celtic Tiger, Heraty built up a recruitment company, Computer Placement Limited (CPL) and became the first female CEO of an Irish company floated on the stock exchange. Civil and public servants attend meetings of the EGFSN and act as advisors, whereas academics and individuals from the private sector and trade union movement are members. At the time the EGFSN was supported by a six person secretariat headed up by Martin Shanahan in Forfas, the national policy advisory board for enterprise, trade, science, technology and innovation, along with a six person Skills and Labour Market Research Unit based in FAS. At the time of the publication of the National Skills Strategy the Group consisted of 12 people.

As part of its normal operating procedure when devising reports, the Chair of the Group, under guidance from the secretariat establishes a sub-group to take forward the work. The sub-group was normally chaired by a member of the EGFSN and its membership drawn from the EGFSN as well as outside individuals with the requisite knowledge, mirroring the main composition of the Expert Group. The sub-group of the EGFSNs that worked on the compilation of the National Skills Strategy was made up of 11 members, nine from the civil or public service, with the trade union and employer representatives bodies taking a seat each. All but 2 were also members of the EGFSNs, including its chair, the Assistant Secretary of DETE, Dermot Mulligan. The Principal Officer with responsibility for training policy in DETE, Pat Hayden, an advisory member of the Expert Group of Future Skills Needs, also sat on the sub-group which oversaw the drafting of the National Skills Strategy. Although there was a representative from the DES, the Principal Officer came from the Higher Education section and not Further Education. The Higher Education Authority was also represented, as was FAS the state provider with responsibility for training. There was also a 13 member Reference Group mainly made up of representatives bodies involved in the implementation of further education and training and employer representative bodies. There were no representatives of the community and voluntary sector on either group.

As part of the work in compiling the report, the EGFSN received 26 submissions. These were mainly from higher education and further education providers, professional interest groups and employer groups. There were only two submissions from the community and voluntary sector, AONTAS and NALA. There were also consultative meetings, according to the document but no further detail on who these meetings were with or the outcome from them is provided. According to the authors, the report is derived from 'primary research, literature reviews and widespread consultations' (EGFSN p19). *Towards 2016* (EGFSN 2006)

references specific groups who will inform the research, all coming from an enterprise or workplace context.

Figure 5 Context of Policy Production in Adult Education Policy



### 5.7 Implications arising from the context of policy production

Figure 5 gives a snapshot of the many layers to the context of policy production, reflecting the complexity of the process that to some may appear straightforward. For example, Murtagh (2009) maintains that it was a serious mistake by the DES not to involve the social partners in the formulation of the White Paper but he does acknowledge the significant support the White Paper received from the community and voluntary sector. In fact, half the

22 members of the Community Platform and 4 out of 5 members of the Community Pillar made a written and oral submission to the White Paper on Adult Education. In contrast, only one employer group made a written submission and only two unions, both of whom represented teachers working in the adult and further education sector and were the regular 'education partners' that liaised with the DES. In addition, a different employer body and union, again representing teachers, made an oral submission. Almost 41% of all submissions came from the community and voluntary sector. Clearly the more traditional elements of social partners did not demonstrate a lot of interest in the White Paper on Adult Education, in contrast to the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning and the National Skills Strategy. I contend that this may have related more to the degree to which they interpreted the White Paper on Adult Education as concerned with the educationally disadvantaged and not central to their labour market concerns. Including the social partners formally in a policy team creating a White Paper, as suggested by Murtagh (2009), would have been a radical departure from the traditional design of such policy papers and, to date, is unprecedented in the White Paper policy production process. It is also possible that the DES was sceptical of too big an involvement of those singularly representing labour market interests in an education enterprise that had a broader societal purpose.

By contrast, the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning was designed to ensure 'full involvement of the Social Partners and relevant implementation bodies' (DETE 2002 p55), thus representing a different policy animal. The Taskforce on Lifelong Learning was also advised to 'draw on the resources of a Reference Group comprised of representatives of enterprise and the learning community' (DETE 2002 p55). The Taskforce represents a move away from the traditional departmental design of policy to a more overtly political, timely and fluid process. The sense is that change was required quickly to meet the demands of the booming economy and this policy approach was designed to deliver possibly quicker and more explicitly by

virtue of the direct involvement of the dominant key stakeholders. This was a social partnership policy process and to an extent seemed to hone in on its core areas of concern as dictated by its 21 core members (9 were from 8 government departments, 7 were drawn from the three elements of Social Partners, 3 from higher education, 1 from training and 1 from enterprise policy advisory body). This was evidenced by the fact that both reference groups were evenly divided between the Social Partners and the implementation bodies.

After being given the task of conducting the research for the National Skills Strategy, the EGFSN's normal design and procedure for the production a report was applied. Whilst the EGFSN includes 2 members normally associated with the core social partners, i.e., employers and trade unions, members are appointed by the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation and are usually drawn from business, workers, education and enterprise categories. It is an independent body supplying the Minister with recommendations and whilst not part of the structure of social partnership, it did share some similarities with it, namely acting as a collation of key stakeholders involved in moving a policy agenda forward. *Towards 2016* (Government of Ireland 2006) noted that the social partners are on the sub-group feeding directly into the research. Here the social partners are confined to covering 'Government, IBEC/CIF and ICTU' (Government of Ireland 2006 p87), confirmation that the community and voluntary pillar were not considered key to these developments.

By the early to mid-2000s, there were signs of difficulties in social partnership and in effect it came to an end in 2009, following the collapse of the economy. The 'corporatist partnership approach' had started twenty three years earlier to address significant problems in the Irish economy through collective agreement. As the economy developed, so too did the role of social partnership in economic and social policy development in Ireland during the period. Within this, the state was dominant and the community and voluntary partners were seen as weak and having limited impact (Moran 2010). I would argue there has been little critical

analysis of the influence of the community and voluntary sector, and in particular those pursuing an adult education agenda. This thesis is a small contribution to that area and hopefully will encourage more research in the future.

There is a small overlap of people and organisations involved in the formulation of the three policy documents. Whilst this might be expected with regard to public providers and their representatives (FAS, IVEA, HEA) and civil servants (DES, DETE), it is worth noting that it goes beyond this category. IBEC and ICTU, core members of social partnership, are involved, albeit to differing degrees in all three policy documents. The only other organisation, consistently present and in social partnership as a member of the community platform, is NALA. Even reflecting on this spread of interests, there remains clear state controlled policy making (Taylor et al 1997).

Each of these policy documents dealt with adult education from different perspectives and understanding and consequently had different terms of reference and audiences. They all took around two years to produce and had some form of involvement of stakeholders other than civil and public servants with responsibility for producing them, resonating with the idea of Ball's cannibalised texts (1994). For example, the community and voluntary sector, as well as citizens, are most in evidence in the contribution to the White Paper on Adult Education but far less so in the other two documents which are dominated equally by the traditional social partners and the wider civil and public service. As one might expect, this latter group normally held power through the roles of chairperson or project manager, authorship and editorial control, and by their sheer number of representatives. The White Paper on Adult Education treats adult education as a societal issue, it is adult education for all, and this is reflected in the 'who' and the 'how' of the production process that was open to all. In significant contrast, the other two documents treat adult education as solely an economic consideration. It is treated in the Taskforce as a consideration for those concerned with those



with the labour force without higher education and in the National Skills Strategy, the dominant concern is those in employment who are required to upskill to meet the needs of the economy. Consequently business and its interests are privileged over others.

Crucially, the direct voice of those impacted by these policies, namely learners and the wider citizenry, are poorly represented in each of the production processes, with the exception of the White Paper on Adult Education which had a Green Paper document for public consultation, held a public event and published the outcome of the consultation process. The White Paper on Adult Education also contains a chapter on the consultation process initiated with the publication of the Green Paper on Adult Education in late 1998 and a summary of its outcome. Neither of the other two documents declare concerns and interests raised during consultations, giving less transparency in the process but also the impression that there were no outstanding areas to include.

## **5.8 The context of practice**

The context of practice relates to the intentions and contested meaning of the values and principles espoused in the three policy documents as well as the differing social realities they represent. As noted above and flowing from the analysis of the first two contexts, what is meant and understood by adult education appears key to understanding why and how these documents came about. It is likely that this too will feature in this section.

### ***5.8.1 Analysis of the text of the White Paper on Adult Education***

In his foreword to the White Paper, the Minister of State with responsibility for adult education draws on the Green Paper: *Adult Education in an Era of Lifelong Learning* (DES 1998) and its contents to set the scene. It presents adult education as a contributor to the

public good on many fronts and as a critical part of the lifelong learning continuum, delivering on increased competitiveness, employment and social inclusion. Politically it frames the discourse in a human resource development context of supplying a well-educated and adaptable workforce to the wider new knowledge society. There is also a nod to its importance to social and cultural development. Overall, the Paper acknowledges that adult education is the last area of mass education to be developed in Ireland (DES 2000 p.10, 22). The subsequent White Paper on Adult Education: *Learning for Life* 'marks the adoption of lifelong learning as the governing principle of educational policy' (DES 2000 p.12, 24, 30). Much is made of this breakthrough and yet it is not clear what this means in practice, let alone policy, in particular outside adult education. Doona's case study of lifelong learning in higher education only reveals a symbolic adoption of the concept (2007).

The overarching aim of the White Paper is 'to provide a template for the development of the Adult Education sector' (DES 2000 p26) which includes the 'Government priorities and the framework for future development' (DES 2000 p27). Adult education is defined as 'systematic learning undertaken by adults who return to learning having concluded initial education or training' (DES 2000 p27). Adult education is situated within an overall vision for society. *Learning for Life* 'advocates' for a holistic approach to the development of a national programme of adult education, recognizing it's 'contribution to the six priority areas of:

1. Consciousness raising
2. Citizenship
3. Cohesion
4. Competitiveness
5. Cultural development
6. Community building' (DES 2000 p28).

Whilst there is no reference to the theoretical framework underpinning the document, it resonates with the earlier UNESCO vision for adult education. Downes et al (2006) in their analysis of the White Paper link it to the liberal-progressive tradition espoused by Eduard Lindeman which ‘ascribes a social role to adult education in supporting the democratic order’ (p31). Other classic and widely-cited influences in adult education include Paolo Freire, Jack Mezirow, Carl Rogers and Malcolm Knowles, all of whom have written about the contribution of adult education to the 6 areas above, but none of whom are quoted. Tom Collins, who, as mentioned earlier, wrote this section, was the head of the Department of Adult Education which provided the bulk of the post-graduate training in adult education, as well as the academic base for adult education study in Ireland. The section could be viewed as an academic text which drew on the 1980s UNESCO vision of lifelong learning and was finally making its way into an Irish policy text and, for those familiar with the ideology, namely adult education practitioners, lobbyists and academics, it represented a victory in policy terms, albeit making the White Paper on Adult Education even more of a ‘cannibalised text’ (Ball 1994).

Three core principles underpin this framework for adult education: lifelong learning as a systemic approach, equality, and interculturalism. The section on lifelong learning as a systemic approach is three pages long and situates adult education within the traditional family of education, early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary and, consequently, redefines how all education will be viewed into the future. The qualities that characterize good adult education practice are those shared with good school education and are outlined in *Learning for Life* as including:

- ‘an holistic curriculum.....’;
- a view of the student as a self-directed, self-motivated learner;

- a recognition of the student as the centre of the learning process,.....- i.e., learning as *construction* rather than as *instruction*.....;
- A core learning objective of preparing the learner for a life of learning rather than for a terminal, end-of-learning examination;’

The White Paper ‘challenges educational systems to be adaptive’ (DES 2000 p32) so that they can meet the needs of learners throughout their life, when and where it suits them best. The section goes on to say that the achievement of ‘Adult Education within a lifelong learning framework, raises profound and fundamental challenges’ (DES 2000 p32) to all parts of the ‘education and training system’ (DES 2000 p.32). Further sections outline the principles of equality and inter-culturalism but are considerably shorter at two and three paragraphs respectively and situate adult education as a key contributor to the building of both.

This broad and ambitious vision of adult education captures the academic and philosophical approach to adult education to date in Ireland, much of which has evolved in practice on a piecemeal and poorly funded basis. This text had aspirational rhetorical appeal which enabled it to get buy-in from adult education stakeholders. Academically and at practice level, the Irish evidence base to back up the claims that adult education can not only be a key contributor to the development of skills and the resultant effect on the economy, but also to the development of social, cultural, and civil society is limited and, as a result, the document relies heavily on its vision mantra. This section is tempered by the frequent use of the word ‘challenge’, being used 12 times in 8 pages whilst referring to those who maintained the status quo: education providers, the wider education system and Irish society.

The White Paper provides ‘a range of comprehensive proposals’ for ‘Second Chance and Further Education’ (DES 2000 p.84) which ‘address the low levels of educational attainment

of Irish adults' (DES 2000 p108) and fall under four pillars. The first, and the top priority, is the National Adult Literacy Programme. This Programme was premised on an already begun investment in response to the results of the OECD IALS study and developmental stage of the adult literacy service which would now be expanded and diversified. The second pillar is the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) which was designed to act as a 'progression bridge ..... from the adult literacy service' (DES 2000 p.93) as well as an entry point for those wishing to return to learning who did not have a higher education qualification, is a natural corollary to the investment in adult literacy. BTEI provides free education on a full-time and part-time basis according to defined eligibility criteria. The third pillar is to provide a National Adult Basic ICT Skills Programme through the BTEI, with the final pillar concerned with mechanisms to boost self-funded adult education. The second chance and further education pillar represents the most detailed and costed set of practice-based proposals in the White Paper and, whilst consistent with the vision for adult education is not solely dependent on it, in contrast to the community education area which followed.

There is a small chapter dedicated to community education which is initially concerned with situating it as a non-statutory enterprise, separate and distinct from education in the community provided by the institutions of the state, and in part outlined above. It describes community education 'in a more ideological sense as a process of communal education towards empowerment, both at an individual and collective level' (DES 2000 p110). As the bulk of this type of community education in Ireland has been developed through community based women's groups, the Paper draws on a feminist critique of community education which details further the approach to this type of education, all of which is captured in a detailed list of its key characteristics. The extent to which the chapter is taken up with an exposition of community education is in sharp contrast with the two small proposals to support the development of community education: the appointment of 35 Community Education

Facilitators and ring fencing 10% of BTEI funding for the development of non – statutory community education providers. In this regard the chapter, like others to follow, is more symbolic and is perhaps telling of the lack of commitment to the area in terms of resourcing. The rhetoric appealed to community education stakeholders who saw the distinct chapter as illustrative of recognition that would in time yield resources. The symbolism acts as an important rhetorical tool in building support for the propositions in the document. There is no reference material to support the area of community education from either the EU or the OECD and no straightforward argument made about its contribution to the economy, unlike the framing of the second chance pillar described above.

Even more starkly the chapter on Workplace Education contains no proposals, rather a number of ‘soft’ recommendations regarding partnerships, flexibility in course delivery, a working group on tax relief and work with the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland on Accreditation of Prior Learning assessors. It is clearly a reflection of the DES using adult education to enter the training area albeit under a different title. This broadly supports and builds on earlier recommendations from reports of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, amongst others. A chapter on higher education is concerned with mature student access to higher education and makes only one key recommendation – the establishment of a Targeted Higher Education Mature Student Fund.

The White Paper’s commitment to address problems with the training for adult education practitioners centres around the establishment of an inter-agency working group and Forum of Adult Education practitioners, both safe options requiring no funding or challenge to the status quo. In addition, priorities for the Educational Adult Guidance and Counselling Service are set and the importance of evaluation and the role of the Inspectorate to the adult education sector is noted. The specific adult learning needs of marginalised groups are all outlined with some recommendations and a small number of minor proposals.

The final chapter of the White Paper is concerned with national and local structures upon which many of its earlier proposals for implementation depend. The need for a national statutory coordinating body for adult education is cited as far back as the Murphy Report in 1973 and the Kenny Report in 1984 and is one of the trickier concerns the White Paper set out to resolve. It proposed to address this issue by establishing a structure to be enacted under the Education Act (1998). The terms of reference of the National Adult Learning Council (NALC) remain unchanged from the Green Paper, but it notes that they will be 'revisited in light of the review of organisational structures and roles within the Department of Education and Science' (DES 2000 p186). In a nod to social partnership, NALC will be made up of representatives from the following groups: 4 from the community and voluntary sector; 5 from employer bodies; 4 from unions; 3 from training providers (including FAS); 3 from Higher Education; one from the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) and 2 each to be nominated by the Ministers of Education and Science and Enterprise, Trade and Employment. The Minister for Education, in consultation with the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, will have the responsibility for appointing the Chair. The structure of, and very broad representation on, NALC are very similar to that put forward in the White Paper on Education (1995) which called for the establishment of a Further Education Authority under the DES, a proposal not included in the 1992 Green Paper issued under the previous government.

The NALC will have four units, one covering workplace learning whose role will involve liaison with the NQAI but has no reference to FAS, the employment training agency (DES 2000 p189). In the research unit there are over 16 separate entities identified for strategic links: strikingly FAS, the key agency with responsibility for workforce training with its own Skills and Labour Market Research Unit is not one of them. However later on in the chapter, under the role for adult education organisers in coordinating community interests, FAS is

finally mentioned but its relative absence is indicative of the poor cooperation between the DES proposals and this powerful agency. Community education will also have a unit. At the local level, 33 Local Adult Learning Boards are the proposed structure for providing a ‘strategic area based approach’ (DES 2000 p192) to adult education. These boards would mirror the partnership approach of the national structure.

### ***5.8.2 Analysis of the text of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning***

From its establishment, the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning, formed as a result of a commitment in the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (Government of Ireland 1999), could not fulfil its original terms of reference. Although confined to adults, the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning instead of using the definition of adult education contained in the White Paper on Adult Education, took the definition of lifelong learning drawn from the EC: ‘all learning activity undertaken through-out life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and /or employment-related perspective’ (DETE 2002 p6). This broad based definition had emerged out of the EU wide consultation on the Memorandum of Lifelong Learning and in *Making a European area of Lifelong Learning a Reality* in late 2001, noted earlier. Despite being welcomed by some adult education practitioners (Keogh 2004), the Taskforce added the proviso that this definition would be viewed in a broad context encapsulating ‘individual development, active citizenship, social inclusion and the economic well-being of society as a whole’ (DETE 2002 p6). It is not clear how this added to the definition but it may have been an attempt to assuage some members’ fears of a narrowing of the interpretation of lifelong learning to be related only to the labour market as opposed to whole of society.

The Taskforce created its own ‘aspirational’ vision for Lifelong Learning, that is a balanced partnership between citizens (the White Paper uses the term adult learners) and the State



putting in place the necessary conditions for people to participate in lifelong learning which ‘thus enrich lives and develop a more prosperous, more inclusive society’ (DETE 2002 p7). In contrast to the White Paper which places emphasis on change by the education system, the state and wider society and the role adult education can play for the development of society, the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning includes an emphasis on ‘individuals and enterprises to make learning....a reality’ requiring ‘a balancing of rights and responsibilities’ (DETE 2002 p7) with Government cast as an *enabler*. Field (2003) noted similar developments in UK policy. ‘The aim of the Taskforce is to highlight the fundamental issues which need to be addressed in the move from the traditional view of training and education to that of Lifelong Learning’, the former described as ‘anachronistic’ (DETE 2002 p8). The White Paper on Adult Education had already declared ‘the adoption of lifelong learning as the governing principle of education policy’ (DES, 2000 p12) and declared that it bridged ‘the traditional divide between education and training’ (DES, 2000 p27).

The Taskforce set out a five pronged strategic framework and noted with very strong emphasis the need for ‘coordination’ and ‘coherence’ between and within the ‘Departments of Education and Science and Enterprise, Trade and Employment’ (DETE 2002 p.9). Most interestingly, though, the Taskforce recommended ‘that Government establish an overarching structure’ (DETE 2002 p10) to realise its strategic framework clearly challenging the existing structure of the National Adult Learning Council (NALC) named as the national structure in the White Paper and established in 2002 by Minister O’Dea just before the general election. Murtagh (2009) argues that this recommendation was an attempt by DETE to be the dominant government department in adult education and went against the advice of the DES who wanted NALC named as the only national coordinating structure.

Most of the Taskforce’s other recommendations related to activities already underway, including the creation of the National Qualifications Framework as a result of the Education

Act (1998) and the expansion of a comprehensive Basic Skills programme. Ostensibly it welcomes all the developments in this space and its recommendations are designed to add pace to implementation and support increased investment. Further in this vein are recommendations to go beyond the scope of proposals in the White Paper on Adult Education, firstly by calling for a single national source of learning information linked to an integrated guidance system and secondly to enhance delivery, access and funding, a call for special funding provision across the higher education sector to increase access by non-traditional groups. In respect of adult guidance, the DES established the Adult Education Guidance Initiative (AEGI) under the coordination of a body under its aegis the National Centre for Guidance in Education. Practitioners involved in the AEGI saw their role as the provision of educational guidance and information to participants in designated further education programmes. At the same time, and in parallel, FAS was providing careers information from its database of courses and there was no integrated database of information, a situation that is only being addressed in 2016.

The final chapter is concerned with the workplace and whilst highlighting the importance of all workers' upskilling, states that the upskilling of people who are lower paid must be a key priority. The White Paper on Human Resource Development (1997) had proposed the very same thing. The work of organisations like Skillnets, Enterprise Ireland and FAS is also outlined and, whilst all of these bodies fall under the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, they are urged to work in a coordinated and comprehensive fashion, clearly hinting tensions between these state funded training providers.

The issue of paid learning leave is given the greatest attention in this final chapter, outlining the majority consensus for such provision in Ireland and noting that only employers have expressed strong opposition to the idea. As a result, no action was taken due to the power of their veto which conveniently removed the Government from any blame. In looking at Dail

records, paid educational leave was the main question raised in relation to the work of the Taskforce. Drawing from the two page report of the sub-group on implications of free fees for part-time students in higher education, it was noted that an argument made by Margaret Kelly in DES against a further extension of free fees in higher education would be the impact it would have on spending at lower levels of adult education and training, with the primary beneficiaries continuing ‘to be from higher socio economic groupings’ (DETE 2002 p64). The tension over who pays, and how much, between the State, the employer and the individual is evident in the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning, whilst this problem is at the forefront in the White Paper on Adult Education, whose rhetoric, as previously discussed, situates the state as the prime funder and challenges it to meet adult education needs, whilst naming employers and individuals as contributors to the costs of workplace learning.

### *5.8.3 Analysis of the text of the National Skills Strategy*

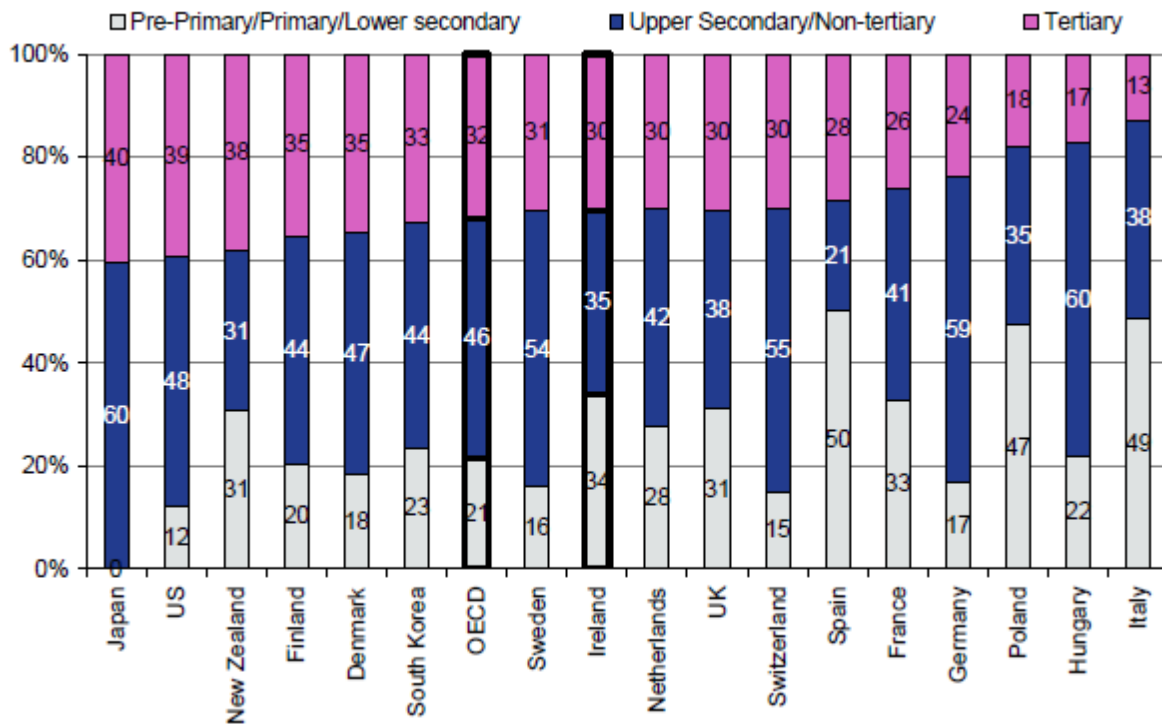
Four and half years after the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning, the National Skills Strategy was published. The vision for the Irish economy and society is to be a knowledge economy and to ensure the correct policy measures are created to achieve it, the necessary research has been conducted and is outlined in this confident report. The National Skills Strategy draws on a commissioned Irish academic text to outline the main characteristics of the knowledge society and also provides the reader with a vision for a successful society agreed by the social partners. The report provides a narrower focus of the study on ‘skills for economic development with specific focus on the enterprise sector’. There is a slight tension in the introductory text as it attempts to focus primarily on the ‘skills for economic development’ (EGFSN 2007 p20) whilst acknowledge, ‘the wider societal issues’ (EGFSN 2007 p20).

Once this section (less than a page) is out of the way, the rest of the report reads in a much more liberated style as it concentrates on the economic outlook facing Ireland and the role of

human capital as a driver of productivity, namely the influential idea that people who develop their human capital through education and training earn more money and are more productive. 16 points are compiled from academic papers to evidence the returns on investment in human capital. There is only one which notes that investment in education and training will not deliver ‘dramatic results’ (EGFSN 2007 p25) if pursued in isolation. By contrast ‘real change’ is achieved through an ‘all-encompassing approach to social policy’ (EGFSN 2007 p.25). The report also ‘defines skills as proximate to human capital’ (EGFSN 2007 p26). There is acknowledgement that the term ‘human capital’ is opposed by some who think it ‘objectifies human beings as mere factors of production’ (EGFSN 2007 p26). According to the authors, this is not how it is used in this report – it rather ‘denotes the high value placed on a person’s skill levels which are relevant for their participation in both the economy and society’ (EGFSN 2007 p26), the former being the exclusive focus on this publication. The report acknowledges the White Paper on Adult Education and the report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning, amongst others which outline education and training policy recommendations and notes that some are progressed, others not, but ‘which remain valid’ (EGFSN 2007 p32).

In line with most of the language used in this document, the reader is given ‘the current stock of skills within the economy’ (EGFSN 2007 p63) and the projected future skills supply and demand. This is examined within the age cohort of 25-64 with specific attention on those aged 25-34. A particular grouping which means Ireland compares badly with other OECD countries, as shown in Figure 6, is the number of people in the labour force who have not completed upper secondary education. With the comparative figures for the younger cohort equally worrying, the report concludes ‘that deficiencies in Irish educational attainment cannot be entirely written off as a legacy of prior policies’ (EGFSN 2007 p66), as previously had been the case.

Figure 6 Educational attainment of the population aged 25-64 by highest level of education, 2006



Source: OECD, Education at a Glance, 2008; National Competitiveness Council 2008

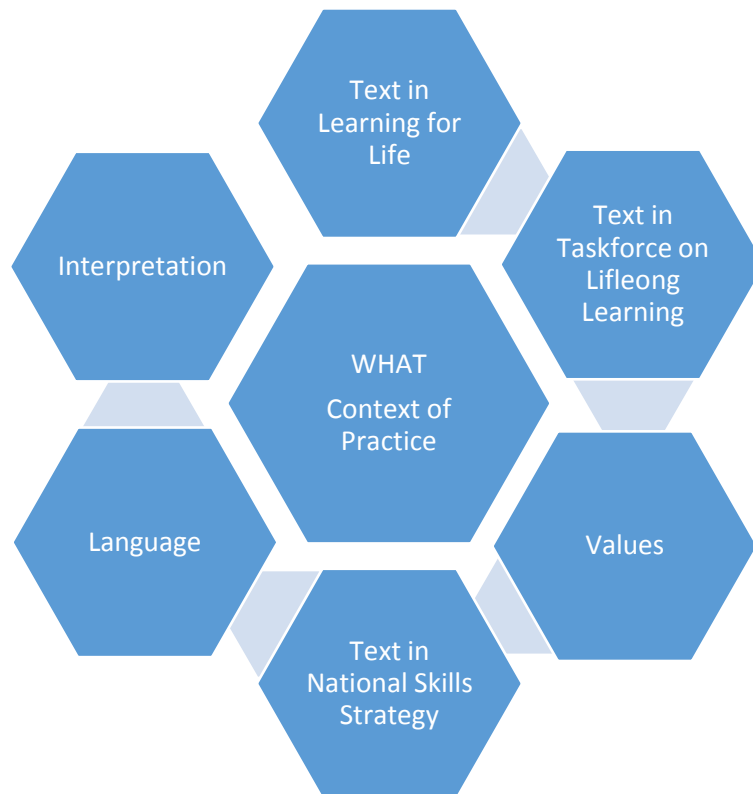
The EGFSN puts forward a policy change scenario titled the ‘New Economy Vision’ aimed at upskilling large numbers of the labour force by 2020. Included in their arguments are the ancillary social benefits that people with low educational attainment will accrue from upskilling. In many cases the argument for upskilling the labour force, especially those with low levels of attainment, is based on the unfavourable position of Ireland in comparison to other OECD countries.

Reference is made to the need for an implementation mechanism under both DETE and DES to coordinate activities of a range of education and training providers and an annual progress report should issue. This provides evidence that the overarching structure set up as a result of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning is not seen as providing the necessary coordinating function and essentially was a temporary political settlement to address the rivalry between

the departments. The EGFSN does not suggest a mechanism in contrast to the previous two documents, drawing a distinction between providing research evidence for what is required but not for how to achieve it, the very issue that has undermined adult education. In another twist in this approach, the report states that a particular group for attention are those who are low skilled and educationally disadvantaged. The challenge is beyond simply increasing the funding of education and training; instead ‘policymakers need to focus on ways of improving educational and training outcomes’ (EGFSN 2007 p104). This shifts the argument from a critical analysis of what the level of investment is in this area to one critiquing the effectiveness of the current education and training system and suggesting that more should be achieved from existing resources, a discourse that persists in similar contemporary policy documents.

A very strong case is put forward for the state to invest in upskilling the low skilled as they are ‘less likely to be offered, seek or avail of training. There is a greater need, therefore, for positive intervention at the low skilled level by the State’ (EGFSN 2007 p144). This is the dichotomy of the report – how to support the low skilled employed, as well as the higher skilled employed, attain a further higher education qualification. It is also one of its contradictions. Integrated policy features strongly in this report, with DETE and DES as the two departments most in focus, with a call for ‘‘learner’ and ‘enterprise’ centric’’ (EGFSN 2007 p106) policy initiatives as opposed to policy overly influenced by providers under their remit. There is no evidence to back up this recommendation, rather it is assumed unproblematically to be a known good.

Figure 7 Context of Practice of Adult Education Policy



### 5.9 Implications from the context of practice

The three documents, shown in Figure 7, represent a significant shift in both the understanding and implementation of adult education. A broad based, lifelong and lifewide concept of adult education is infused throughout the White Paper on Adult Education, declaring an ambitious role for adult education in building Irish society. It shares the space with a number of other concepts, namely adult education for consciousness raising, citizenship, cohesion, competitiveness, cultural development and community building. In contrast the meaning and language of adult education is altered in the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning and the broad based concept of adult education for wider societal benefit is lost to a narrower vision of lifelong learning for the labour market, albeit still recognising a social inclusion dimension within it. Finally the National Skills Strategy abandons the concepts of

adult education, lifelong learning and social inclusion to offer recommendations aimed squarely at only upskilling those in employment so as to deliver on economic competitiveness, but to be achieved ‘through a combination of adult education and training’ (EGFSN 2007 p96), or that which is funded by the State. Appendix 4 provides further illustration of the conceptual shifts as identified through the use of language.

### **5.10 Context of outcomes**

The context of outcomes is concerned with the first order effects of the implementation of the policy, largely defined as the explicit goals of the policy text. The second order effects are concerned with the achievement, or not, of social justice goals.

As I signalled in the introduction, none of the policy documents in focus for this study have ever been formally evaluated and neither have the proposals they contained. There has been monitoring of their implementation, primarily under the auspices of the Department which produced the report. Further reports of progress are made as part of the implementation of the National Development Plan and Social Partnership agreements. Whilst there is an Inspectorate within the Department of Education, its remit does not extend to adult education, despite this being envisaged in the White Paper on Adult Education.

As there are many similar proposals between the White Paper on Adult Education, Taskforce on Lifelong Learning and National Skills Strategy, it follows logically that these policy proposals were either not implemented fully or only partially implemented. As a starting point, I will examine those which were achieved before moving on to those which never moved beyond the text.



### 5.10.1 *Outcomes from the White Paper on Adult Education*

The White Paper was very well received by those working in adult education (Connolly 2014) but, in time, the reaction to the document was overshadowed by great disappointment regarding the non-realisation of many of its proposals as well as reflection by one adult educator that upon close scrutiny you can see ‘provision dominated by an economic imperative and a service driven by labour market demands’ (Curtis 2004 p8).

The Second Chance and Further Education programme was the most comprehensively achieved objective of the White Paper, aided by the availability of the European Social Fund (ESF) and continued political prioritisation, as evidenced by its position in the NDP (Government of Ireland 1999). The National Adult Literacy Programme rolled out as outlined, surpassing its investment and participation targets (Bailey 2006). The Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) was also established in 2002 as a progression path for those in adult literacy and other adults wishing to return, which was expanded over time. There was no discrete Adult ICT Basic Skills programme as part of the BTEI programme but many basic ICT courses were funded under it. A review of the Post Leaving Certificate sector was carried out and reported in 2003 (McIver). The capital budget for adult education was increased and there was greater flexibility allowed to schools in the running of self-funded adult education classes. All these programmes ostensibly expanded existing provision operated by the Vocational Education Committee (VEC), building on adult education developed before 2000 as a result of the ESF, but continuing as a series of programmes with no infrastructure (Keogh 2004). Fleming (2004) remarks that these developments also came with conditions concerned more with bureaucracy than evaluating the experience of learners on the programme. He notes that adult education, or a version of it, is now pitched in a

competition for resources within the wider education community and beyond, as opposed to having adult education as a right. This, he states, needs to be reclaimed in line with the original intent of the White Paper on Adult Education.

In terms of community education, the key proposal to establish 35 Community Education Facilitators was fulfilled but instead of remaining independent as envisaged, these new actors became staff of the VEC. There was ring fencing of the BTEI funding for non-statutory groups, although this was not sustained into the longer term, as the funding was ultimately given to the VEC which had the responsibility of administering the grant to local community education groups in their area. According to Liam Bane (2003), instead of community education influencing the adult education sector, it got colonised by it, a point echoed by Connolly who claims 'it has been co-opted to the neo-liberal project of the individualist, market-led national skills strategy' (2014 p52).

The National Adult Learning Council was established in Easter 2002 and held a number of meetings, at which I was present, with a temporary secretariat from the Further Education section of the DES. The following year under a new Principal Officer, Pauline Gildea, in the section, the NALC was suspended whilst the DES conducted a review of its functions. The outcome of the review was never published and NALC was never reconvened. It was finally formally sacrificed by the DES to the cull of state agencies undertaken across all departments as a result of the economic crash in 2008, by which time all hope of that structure ever coming back had long gone. Consequently, the work to be carried out by NALC never occurred and the key driving mechanism for realising the potential of adult education as outlined in the White Paper never came to pass. As a corollary, the Local Adult Learning Boards were also never established and so could not employ Community Education Facilitators, who as noted above, were instead employed and managed by the local VEC instead, a beneficiary of this loss. The additional Adult Education Officer posts required for

the expansion of adult education at local level never materialised either. The lack of a local democratic structure that the Local Boards would have supplied in terms of funding and direction, significantly compromised non-statutory community education groups who had sought to maintain their autonomy from, and yet instead would be beholden to, the VECs.

Overall, there was a significant increase in the budget for second chance adult education in the years following the publication of the White Paper, especially from the Exchequer whereas previously it had depended on the ESF. This increased funding, and subsequently much of what was implemented from the White Paper, had already been agreed in the National Development Plan (Government of Ireland 1999) and the social partnership agreement, whereas proposals singularly aired in the White Paper fared less well in the implementation stage. This was particularly the case for voluntary community education groups.

The White Paper on Adult Education tangibly increased the learning opportunities for people with limited educational attainment. The prioritisation of the National Adult Literacy programme was a significant development in this regard as was the ‘concentration on fee relief on those most at risk’ (DES 2000 p14). The document acknowledged that ‘the education system had failed people’ (DES 2000 p69) and that considerable structural change would be required to better meet the needs of all learners. This went further than the previous Education Act 1998 which only acknowledged the inequities within the mainstream education system (Maxwell and Dorrity 2010). Ryan (2014) argues that the intent of enshrining the concept of lifelong learning as guiding principle for all education was to change mainstream education and ‘explore how to better serve the educational needs of those who do not benefit’ (p137), but concedes this was not achieved.

The White Paper positioned adult education ideologically as a means by which to widen access to education for marginalised groups as well as build the concept of lifelong learning and whilst this was taken through to inform the two other policy documents under examination, I suggest that adult education became only valued for its contribution to the economy, losing its balance between its role and purpose for Irish society. For example, Fleming asserts that overarching government priorities positioned learning for the development of the economy, despite the ‘rhetoric of social inclusion and equality’ (2004 p15).

#### *5.10.2 The outcomes of Taskforce on Lifelong Learning*

At one level the most significant outcome of the Taskforce was the establishment of an overarching structure to coordinate, review and report on the implementation of its framework. This Steering Committee, chaired by DETE, was made up of DETE and DES officials only and merely met to update on progress (Murtagh 2009). The framework captured a number of developments in the adult education and training sphere and gave them a temporary priority status. The National Framework of Qualifications was launched in 2003 almost meeting the recommended target date in the Taskforce report of the end of 2002. Small scale workplace basic skills programmes drawing from the fund established by Mary Harney, were extended to all regions and a statutory agencies like FAS and Enterprise Ireland provided increased financial support for workplace learning opportunities. The CSO created a module on lifelong learning within the Quarterly National Household Survey.

Keogh (2004) points out that the EU concept of lifelong learning, embraced by the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning, placed the individual and their learning at the centre of policy as opposed to the systems and pedagogy required for adult education which had been central to the White Paper on Adult Education. According to Connolly, this ‘shifted the orientation of

community education away from its emancipatory potential' (Connolly 2014 p61) for all, narrowing the focus to people in the labour market who needed to upskill. The EU emphasised the importance of partnership and the need to move beyond the education and training divide. In effect the Taskforce may well have been more significant as a process than a set of recommendations, as it offered the first explicit iteration of a social partnership approach to lifelong learning, bringing people together who otherwise would not have met.

Building on the direction provided by the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (Government of Ireland 1999), and working within the context of the labour force, the Taskforce brought a renewed focus on the upgrading of skills of people in lower paid employment, following the White Paper on Human Resource Development (1997) but there is little evidence that this focus translated into significant tangible gains for these workers. Instead, it was used as leverage, an example of which was provided earlier, when in 2004 NALA successfully lobbying the then Minister for Enterprise Trade and Employment Mary Harney seeking the establishment of a dedicated fund for workplace basic education.

### *5.10.3 The outcomes of the National Skills Strategy*

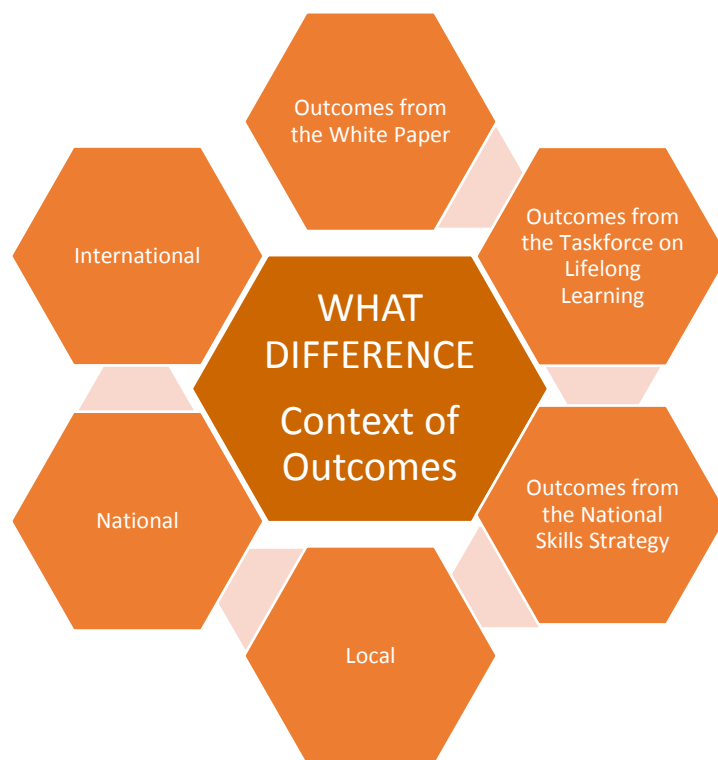
The National Skills Strategy outlined a new economy vision which is centred on the upskilling of 500, 000 adults in the labour market over a thirteen year period at an indicative cost of €457 million. It did not prescribe how this challenge should be achieved but did provide 'some overarching guidance' (EGFSN 2007 p13). This included, once again, the need for an implementation mechanism under the DES and DETE but did not provide a design for a successful structure. This was not forthcoming but more significantly the intent of the National Skills Strategy has been severely undermined since the economic crash and the demise of FAS in 2008, following an investigation into its governance arrangements. Following this, it was mooted that the targets within the National Skills Strategy would have

to be reviewed and this process begun in 2015, leading to a new National Skills Strategy (DES 2016). Despite the recession, the EGFSN annual report on progress against the National Skills Strategy targets has shown gains, most notably in the higher education attainment levels amongst those in the labour market. By contrast, the progress regarding the lower level target was noted as being disappointing and annually there is concern recorded about reaching the target within the timeframe of 2020. Based on the latest available figures, there is a 10% gap in achieving the target of 7% of workers with lower secondary education, in comparison to a 5% gap in the achievement of the further and higher education attainment levels. It remains to be seen what solution will be put forward to upskill those with low educational attainment and how, if at all, the new phenomenon of an oversupply of higher education graduates in certain areas will impact on the outcome.

The National Skills Strategy continued a policy emphasis on the low skilled and educationally disadvantaged in the labour market. It states that ‘as a principle’ (EGFSN 2007 p14), individuals who did not possess a qualification equivalent to NFQ Level 4 should be assisted by the State to attain this level of qualification without incurring tuition costs and with additional support costs if pursued full time. It stopped short, though, of making recommendations on paid learning leave or other mechanisms to achieve this. It was recommended that for those workers with higher educational levels that is, above level 6 on the NQF, the State, along with the employer and the individual should make up the costs. As the economy turned in late 2007 and unemployment began to rise, there was a considerable shift in Exchequer funding away from workplace education and training towards education and training initiatives aimed at supporting the growing numbers of people becoming unemployed. As mentioned above the relatively small Workplace Basic Education Fund (WBEF) set up by Government in 2004 under the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment with a budget of €2m for 2005 and increased to €3million in 2007 (NALA

2009), has been maintained to date. It continues to provide free basic education tuition to workers particularly operating in the private sector. There is no other incentives provided by the State for workers with low levels of educational attainment in comparison to their colleagues with higher educational attainment who can claim tax relief on higher education tuition fees.

Figure 8 Context of Outcomes of Adult Education Policy



### 5.11 Implications from the context of outcomes

I am conscious of Ball's questions about when is it valid to draw conclusions about the effects of policy (Ball 1993). Although this research is concerned with the period of policy production up to 2007, I am assessing the outcomes of the policies against a longer timeframe and across a number of levels, as illustrated in Figure 8 above.

The initial reaction to the White Paper was very positive and, only over time as many of its proposals did not materialise, did the mood amongst adult education stakeholders change to one of despondency (Maxwell and Dorrity 2010). By way of contrast, adult literacy, a constant throughout all the policy documents under scrutiny, made dramatic gains. The budget increased from €1 million in 1997 to €30 million in 2007 with the number of participants over the same period increasing from 5,000 to 38,000. A further commitment to increase the number of places in the adult literacy service by 7,000 was contained in the National Development Plan 2007-2013 and over this period, participation continued to rise, peaking at around 55,000 people in 2013 (NALA 2014). Further gains for adult literacy were achieved through its prioritisation in the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning and, to an extent, in its inclusion in the text of the National Skills Strategy, both influenced by the EU rhetoric of basic skills and key competencies.

In 1999, 35% of those in employment in Ireland had less than upper secondary educational attainment. By 2005, this had dropped to 27% and year on year this pattern has continued with a 1-2% decrease per annum. Some of these gains are attributable to retirements, the inflow of school leavers and other factors beyond the unknown contribution of the adult education sector. Even so, if this pattern of change continues, the movement of people with the lowest level of attainment up one level on the NFQ target set under the National Skills Strategy will not be reached. By contrast, if the pattern of change observed in attainment at third level continues, it is likely to surpass its target.

In 2011, the European Commission produced a report on Ireland's action plan on adult learning. The document was compiled from a country expert analysis of existing literature and includes feedback from the Department of Education. The following is an extract:



‘In summary, looking back at the [above] historical developments with an impact on adult education and adult learning in Ireland since the European Year of Lifelong Learning in 1996, it is clear that they have been led by implicit ideologies of economic development coupled with a focus on equity and social inclusion through the provision of compensatory and second-chance learning opportunities for adults without upper secondary qualifications. A focus on the role of adult education as an instrument of social cohesion and active citizenship has also underpinned developments, but to a lesser extent than the economic and social inclusion focus’ (GHK 2011 p.6).

‘Substantial increases in Exchequer revenues prior to the recession helped to provide the fiscal resources to support the implementation of new policies, processes and practices’. (GHK 2011 p.6)

Following a request from the Troika, a time sensitive review of the state-funded further education and training sector and its contribution to the addressing unemployment was carried out by a well-regarded researcher from the National Economic and Social Council, in the summer of 2013. The first review of its kind, it made several comments on the performance of the sector. In terms of programmes addressing social inclusion, the report acknowledged the contribution of adult literacy and community education programmes, which between them cater for over 100,000 participants. Drawing on the Census 2011 data, the author noted that 18% of those at work had a junior certificate level or less as their highest educational attainment level. This corresponds with the findings from the PIAAC study carried out around the same time which found that 18% of those aged 16-64 scored at the lowest level of literacy. The report recommended that the scale of provision be increased in light of the considerable challenge that remains to reach the 2020 target of 7%. In relation to BTEI, the author noted that the original purpose of the initiative was to be an access route

to existing full time provision in ETBs and a link from the part-time tuition offered in the adult literacy service. It evolved instead into a stand-alone programme in its own right catering for both unemployed and employed people with little known about its impact on their career trajectory. In relation to VTOS, the report identified poor alignment with the labour market and limited knowledge of employment outcomes. In terms of overall impact of policies to realise lifelong learning, the author concluded there was ‘an absence of a strong tradition of lifelong learning’ with participation rates in Ireland less than half those of the best EU countries’ (Sweeney 2013).

## **5.12 Context of political outcomes**

The context of political strategy is concerned with the evaluation of the outcomes at first and second order level and the presentation of alternative approaches.

### ***5.12.1 Achievements and failures of adult education policies 1997-2007***

One political party led two governments during the period in question which coincided with the greatest economic boom ever experienced in Ireland. At the macro political and economic level, the conditions for growth in adult education were more than favourable. Over the decade there was an identifiable level of political support for adult education, resulting in a significant increase in the resourcing of and participation in adult education, in line with broader economic growth and public spending. Whilst funding was available to satisfy demands placed upon each of the two government departments, there was lack of political will to tackle the problem that the development of adult education was impeded by the divisions between these two government departments, neither of whom would willingly cede their areas development to the other. As a consequence, adult education developed along

parallel lines of education and training, as evidenced by the three adult education policy documents in short succession. Whilst each of the documents in turn reference and acknowledge each other, they do not explain why they each exist in respect of the other and do not provide any detail on the implications of each document to the next. This in and of itself has caused confusion, was inefficient and undermined efforts to advance adult education policy.

In part, there is an explanation to be found in that two government departments were operating in the lifelong learning area, DES having mainstream education as its stronghold and DETE overseeing the training for the labour market space, for both employed and unemployed people, and both funding two large but very different entities in each case as their primary delivery agent: VECs in the case of the DES and FAS in the case of DETE. Despite a superficial recognition in each document of the importance of working together, in reality Ministers, department officials and their agencies did little to bring about this working arrangement. Each department had a political taskmaster who wished to have their leadership recognised and the glory for developments they had seemingly brought about, especially during a time of increased Exchequer resources. It was a time when it appeared easier to add to existing state funded operations rather than reform them. Inter-departmental and inter-agency work makes logical sense but it appears that its realisation is complex. Consequently, in order to bring about an institutional end of the education and training divide, FAS, now disgraced, was abolished and its training provision added to that of the VECs to create Education and Training Boards under the stewardship of the newly created further education and training authority SOLAS. Training responsibility moved from Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment to the renamed Department of Education and Skills which has oversight of SOLAS. This was achieved as a consequence of the economic crisis and a senior, experienced left of centre politician becoming the Minister for Education who decided

to grasp this opportunity for unprecedented reform and a political legacy, before his approaching retirement.

There is also evidence of tensions within each of the two government departments. In the Green Paper both the Minister for Education and Science and the Minister for State at the DES wrote forewords in the text. This was decreased to one foreword by the Junior Minister in the White Paper as the senior Minister had moved to a new department and his replacement was new to the portfolio. The Ministers of Education and Science and Enterprise, Trade and Employment as well as the respective Ministers' of State, changed during this period and their political ideology, favoured agendas and career path all impacted on the course of adult education. There was also considerable change in key official personnel in the two departments, again each with their own ideology, favoured agendas and career route.

Between the two key departments, different levels of civil servants were involved in lifelong learning. There was little evidence of an Assistant Secretary in the Further Education area, with nobody of that level attending the launch of the White Paper and the Principal Officer Margaret Kelly being seen as the key driver. After Minister O'Dea left office in 2002 and a new Fianna Fail-led coalition government took power, the mood soon changed in the DES. Margaret Kelly, who had championed adult education, was moved sideways and a new Principal Officer, Pauline Gildea, was installed to initiate the fateful review of the National Adult Learning Council. In DETE the equally strong Principal Officer overseeing the training area was promoted to an Assistant Secretary whilst chairing the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning.

The competition between the major adult education and training providers and lack of formal partnership arrangements ensured that conditions for working collaboratively at local level

were fraught. For a start, both providers operated on different structural basis, with FAS having a central authority as well as 8 regions and VECs covering 33 local areas and with no central authority. How business was conducted was also very different, with VECs developing colleges of further education based on a variation of the second level school system to provide post leaving certificate courses by teachers, combined with a set of second chance education programmes, some of which had evolved from community based volunteers. FAS on the other hand employed instructors to deliver apprenticeship training out of large training centres and largely outsourced other training requirements to private trainers on a competitive tender basis. In effect there were two departments overseeing the implementation of policy in the lifelong learning through two major providers operating two very different models of delivery. According to Sweeney ‘there have been elements of duplication and rivalry in how VECs and FAS have developed their provision at local level’ (2013 p13). Now they have been legally merged, on the surface at least as opposed to in practice, after a rapid process precipitated by the Troika.

During this prolific policy period, there were a number of important reviews initiated by DES who appointed experts to examine aspects of the VECs. None of these are referenced in any of the three documents analysed in this study. In 1998, the Rochford report made recommendations regarding the amalgamation of the 33 VECs. This was followed by a further review and in 2000 the Cromien report was published which made recommendations regarding the powers of CEOs and the governance structures underpinning the VECs. These recommendations were taken up in the Vocational Amendment Act 2001. A further report by Rochford was published in 2003 concerning staffing levels alongside a report on the PLC sector drafted by another consultant McIver. The bulk of these recommendations were ignored by the government of the day as VECs, made up of local councillors lobbied to avoid amalgamation whilst pressing for additional staff and funding to develop their services.

The Troika, a supreme power, provided the impetus and guise to the Irish government to address the educational and training divide, ending the long running saga in one fell swoop. This reform was premised on achieving greater alignment between further education and training and the labour market, and was not concerned with the wider purposes of adult education which have all but disappeared from the discourse. So what now for adult education? Can reflection through the elements in Figure 9 offer a pathway?

Figure 9 The Context of Political Outcomes



### 5.13 An alternative vision for Irish adult education policy

Throughout the period, there is little sense that adult education has managed to sustain its fragile broad-based identity, once thought secured by the publication of the 2000 White Paper on Adult Education but largely stripped back and re-purposed in the latter two documents. I would argue that adult education failed to make the necessary links to secure allies both in

and beyond the education and training world, but within which it has had to justify itself and compete for resources. The battle to achieve a broad-based adult education system was achieved symbolically through the publication of the White Paper on Adult Education but not advanced in the two subsequent documents and, as Murtagh (2009) has argued, the rivalry between the Government departments had a detrimental effect on its sustainability. Following the in-depth analysis in this study so far, I would suggest there were other, greater forces at play which determined its fate in this battle. Adult education now sits under one government department and the problem of rivalry no longer exists, yet some would argue that despite apparent clearer political, legislative and institutional arrangements, adult education is in as difficult a place in terms of its identity and meaning as ever (Murray et al 2014). This has come about as adult education is now within the newly created further education and training sector and greatly confined to labour market concerns, as indeed increasingly are other sectors of the education system.

There therefore appears little space for the broad-based concept of adult education within the current frame of reference unless this is re-examined in the context of, and connected to, the concerns of other areas of government policy. These include some more traditional areas of educational disadvantage, equality, community development but also digital inclusion, population health, environmental awareness, political engagement, consumer awareness, to name but a few. All the current policy documents relating to these areas are explicitly dependent on the capacity and agency of the adult population to make critical choices based on the information they contain, and all expect citizens will educate themselves appropriately. One more optimistic reading of this situation is that it presents multiple opportunities for adult education of the citizen in addition to adult education for the worker.

## CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 6.1 Introduction

This thesis has aimed to undertake a comprehensive and forensic exploration of adult education policy documents in Ireland, over a decade of the so-called Celtic Tiger, and their subsequent impact, including a contemporary post-script of the state of adult education today. The recession which hit Ireland at the end of my study period curbed future policy development in adult education for a further five years and then brought about an historic reform of the adult education sector, leading to the creation of further education and training sector. The duration of the study over a 10 year timeframe and my insider position within adult education policy-making in Ireland, has offered a unique political and professional perspective from which to critically analyse adult education policy documents rather than interviewing key policy stakeholders, most of whom were subjects in two other academic research projects on this topic.

I therefore set out to conduct a critical policy analysis of adult education policy in Ireland between 1997 and 2007, prompted by the fact that the first ever dedicated adult education policy emerged at this time, becoming the start of what seems to have been a deluge of policy documents on the topic during this period. None of the documents have ever been formally evaluated and generally there is a dearth of adult education policy research in this area, both in Ireland and internationally. I hoped this thesis would benefit future adult education policy development as a source of policy learning. The research questions I sought to establish were:

- 1) What national and global influences are evident in policy making for adult education between 1997-2007?
- 2) How did these affect a series of 3 policy documents on adult education that emerged in close succession after a long period of no development?



- 3) What policy actors were involved in their production and implementation and why?
- 4) What has been the impact on the system of adult education and policy makers?
- 5) What is the likely future trajectory for the adult education system and what are the alternatives?

In order to answer these questions, I chose a policy trajectory approach through which to analyse three key policy documents which emerged during the period in question. This enabled me to examine each document through five contexts, establishing why and how they came about, the characteristics of the policies and their impact on adult education. In this chapter I draw on the findings across the contexts to elicit conclusions as to the policy trajectory of adult education in Ireland from 1997 to 2007. I then go on to argue that academics, policy actors and those leading lobbying organisations need to understand much more about three key areas of policy making: national and global influences, adult education policy actors and processes.

In a context framed by these influences, actors and processes, my thesis set out to show that this type of in-depth historical documentary analysis challenges many interpretations of the characteristics of adult education, the status quo, and lends itself to policy learning for all adult education stakeholders. Crucially, it also provides an Irish case study to add to the international literature, filling a gap identified in the literature review. Specifically, using a critical approach in my analysis provides a new basis for proposing a ‘policy toolkit’ for policy actors who undertake the type of advocacy and lobbying work that I and my own lobbying organisation does. Other organisations that would benefit from this toolkit include AONTAS, the national adult learning organisation, professional and practitioner representative bodies involved in adult education, as well as key personnel with responsibility for adult education and lifelong learning within academia, the community and voluntary

sector and the trade union movement. I outline below how critical policy analysis can be used to generate this practically useful toolkit.

## **6.2 National and global influences and their impact on adult education**

A brief history of adult education in Ireland situates its origins in community level developmental organisations responding to the needs of an emerging nation with a limited education infrastructure. Efforts to build adult education over the decades were foiled by governments' bigger priorities and concerns which left adult education a marginal issue, labelled the Cinderella of the education system. By the late 1990s, a series of events conspired to see adult education become a centre stage concern in education policy. Chief amongst these were international policy developments as evidenced in a number of research publications from UNESCO and the OECD, and the policy direction of the EU which promoted the concept of lifelong learning since the late 1980s. The focus on developing lifelong learning in international policy recommendations drove development in Ireland in similar ways to those which occurred in the UK and other European countries (Slowey 2004; Doona 2007). This was broadly welcomed by adult education stakeholders. Set against a backdrop of unprecedented economic growth, and a new political regime, Ireland finally set about enshrining its adult education sector in a wide ranging and ambitious policy, namely the White Paper on Adult Education. This document attempted to suture together the theory and practice of adult education in the country up to that time and situate it within a broad interpretation of the lifelong learning, nationally and internationally.

In parallel, and inspired by the same global developments and international policy recommendations, another policy process concerned with lifelong learning and developing training for the labour market began, through the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning and the

National Skills Strategy and a narrower interpretation of what lifelong learning meant. It is my contention that this interpretation was more in line with the re-emerged concept of lifelong learning in EU policy, promoted as a necessity for economic development in the face of the threat of globalisation to the European project. From this perspective, the perceived impact of globalisation provided an opportunity for adult education Ireland to ride the wave of enthusiasm for lifelong learning policy development coming from the EU but when the tide went out, the national and local conditions necessary for aspects of adult education to survive and flourish, especially areas beyond the concerns of the labour market, had not been put in place.

This meant that the purposes of adult education to support those outside the labour market had to rely on the national policy commitment to social justice in the form of second chance education only, and resume lobbying for the wider benefits of adult education and their contribution to society as whole to be recognised. More recently, work I have undertaken in NALA has involved making links with other national policy areas, like health, community development and active citizenship, all of which were beyond the scope of this study. The increased funding and development of adult education and training during this time, whilst amplifying the critical need for an overarching coordinating structure for the sector, became an unwitting driver of the policy proliferation at national level, as two Government departments and their respective stakeholders sought to claim the lead role and the resources that came with it. Neither were ultimately successful and, arguably, adult education has been the victim. The National Skills Strategy dominated the adult education policy space by the close of 2007, solidifying the human capital purpose of adult education, with FAS the main implementation body with responsibility for training in the labour market and the upskilling agenda, all under the auspices of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. The influence of globalisation initiated and enabled adult education to flourish, but once the

Department of Education lost its political support for adult education development, those concerned with training for the labour market and a narrower interpretation of the impact of globalisation, took hold of the adult education agenda and there it has remained, albeit now within a new institutional architecture under the Department of Education and Skills.

The wide consultation process which surrounded the development of the 2000 White Paper has never been replicated in adult education to date, and the respective consultative processes surrounding the other two policy documents had no public element, only inviting those whom the system deemed needed to be heard, the social partners and the institutional providers.

Those increasingly excluded were the non-statutory, community and voluntary interests and the people and communities they represented, as well as the liberal adult education stakeholders looking for recognition of the wider purposes and benefits of adult education.

In the adult education developments starting in 2012, which arguably involved the biggest structural reform of the further education and training sectors, the Department of Education and Skills held a one day consultation meeting with around 100 participants, mainly providers, following receipt of 150 submissions concerned with the creation of the new further education and training authority, all within the space of 3 months. This was described as a 'thorough consultation process with all stakeholders in the further education and training system' (DES 2012 p18). This study has revealed that government-led consultations on policy in adult education narrowed in their scope and representation over the period, increasingly limiting who is allowed to be represented by whom, who is heard, what meaning and value is placed on their views and what their impact is. This resonates with Ball's notions of silenced and marginalised discourses and voices (Ball 1994).

### **6.3 Adult education policy actors and processes – local and global**

It is clear then, that adult education policy developments during the period in question were instigated by globalisation and interpretation by the EU of its impact on the region and its nations. As the OECD established and maintained the link between adult education and productivity in the workforce, it led officials to advise governments and the EU to develop their lifelong learning systems and this was firmly enshrined in the Lisbon Strategy and benchmarked thereafter. Within this frame, but without full understanding of it, adult education stakeholders saw an opportunity to achieve equal status within the education system that would see the sector recognised within Ireland, as they had lobbied for in the previous decades. As other countries acted on this advice, something noted in the White Paper, greater pressure was placed on an Irish government to finally act. Two key national conditions existed for success, one political and one economic. The timing of the general election and subsequent hegemony of one political party for over a decade, and a handful of supportive politicians who remained in key positions of power, clearly influenced the flow of adult education policy, in and out of the two key government departments and its subsequent fortunes. This was greatly aided by Celtic Tiger economy and the confidence it gave for increasing investment in public services, abetted by the support of the social partners, along with the ESF. In the review of the implementation of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), which occurred around the same time as the implementation of the policy documents analysed in this study, Collins et al (2009) similarly found that EU developments, including the Lisbon Strategy and funding, had been key drivers. Significantly, two further drivers of the NQF's success absent from the adult education policy story were legislation and continuous consultation during the implementation stage. Its overall success rested on being centrally driven by the National Qualifications Authority of

Ireland, with sustained leadership, something adult education ultimately lacked without a functioning National Adult Learning Council.

#### **6.4 Dominant discourses in adult education policy**

A policy trajectory analysis of the three policies in this thesis has revealed an uncomfortable narrative for adult education in Ireland. In the struggle by national and local adult education stakeholders to establish the place of adult education in the Irish education family, the policy texts examined above exploited the juggernaut of global lifelong learning concept which had emanated from the liberal tradition, believing that the European policy rhetoric would secure the future of adult education. However, although the EU lifelong learning juggernaut had been realigned to fit within an emerging global human capital agenda and had lost its original broader interpretation, at the level of policy rhetoric, there always appeared space for social capital principles. Overtime, the space for social justice arguments for adult education contracted and only exist in the frame of social inclusion policies which are themselves economically premised. The 2014 publication of the first strategy for further education and training in Ireland has been contentious as it appears to reinforce this position with emphasis on greater alignment of further education with labour market needs identified in conjunction with employers (Sweeney 2013; McGuinness et al 2014).

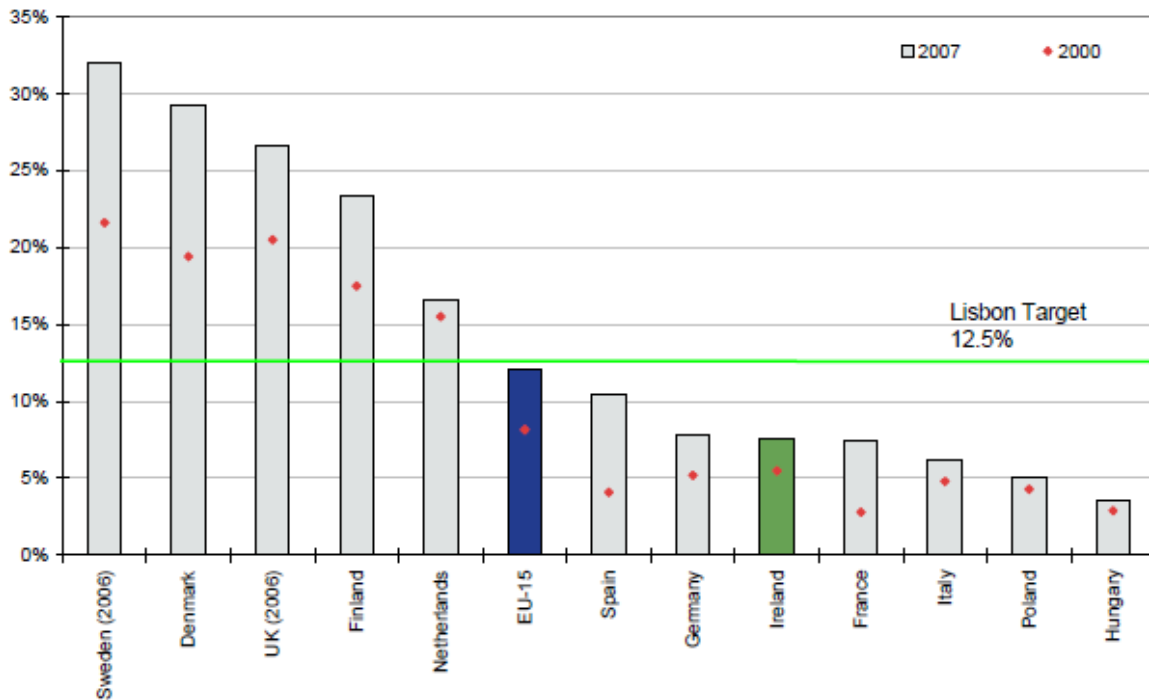
#### **6.5 Impact on adult education**

From the late 1990's the investment in adult education increased in line with enlarged spending across government. This resulted in large increases in participation rates in adult education programmes operated by both FAS and VECs along with the development and

expansion of a second chance adult education infrastructure within the VEC system, the latter largely sustained during the economic crash and the subsequent reform process, unlike FAS and its budget. Although ultimately resolved as a result of the direction of the Troika, the failure to provide an institutional structure to coordinate adult education damaged the profile and impact of adult education and its capacity for further development. Existing under the DES, the system generated poor quality data and, unable to evidence its impact, was left exposed and vulnerable during a period of cost cutting and reform. It is not possible to ascertain the extent of the damage caused but the low standing of adult education in Ireland, like in other EU countries, features strongly in the current further education and training strategy, leading to the conclusion that the previous decades' gains in profile for adult education have not been sustained. By comparison, the review of the implementation of the National Framework of Qualifications highlighted its success over the same period as an outcome of the adoption of the lifelong learning as a governing principle in education policy in Ireland and one which has greatly benefitted adult education, despite continued 'inconsistencies in the alignment of public policy and lifelong learning' (Collins et al 2009).

In 2003, the EU set the benchmark of lifelong learning participation among adults at 12.5% by 2010. Ireland's rate in 2004 was 6.1% against the EU 28 score of 9.1%. By 2007, Ireland achieved its highest rating to date at 7.6% in comparison to the EU 28 score of 9.3%, with only 9 countries surpassing the EU target (Brozatis et al 2010).

Figure 10 1 Life-long Learning 2000 and 2007 (as a % of 25 to 64 year olds)



Source: Eurostat, Structural Indicators. (National Competitiveness Council 2008 p111)

In effect, despite an improvement in Ireland's lifelong learning participation performance, it never bridged the gap between Ireland and the EU average, as shown in Figure 10. Not surprisingly given Ireland's recent economic woes, the latest available evidence suggests that the gap is widening (EGFSN 2015) continuing a trend in Ireland and throughout the EU (Brozatis et al 2010). More significantly, a quarter of lifelong learning participants in Ireland are aged under 30 and 60% are third level graduates, again perpetuating a EU-wide trend identified during the 2000s which showed far greater participation rates amongst highly qualified and younger people than their lower qualified and older counterparts. Clearly within adult education, there are insufficient resources in second chance programmes as opposed to opportunities to add to educational attainment achieved through mainstream schooling and higher education. Desjardins (2015) points out that such inequality in participation in adult learning 'reflects the broader structural social inequalities in income, educational attainment



and more generally the distribution of qualifications' (p.15) Whilst there are wide disparities between countries in this regard, as evidenced in Green's models of lifelong learning outlined in the literature review, there are also alternatives. Ireland has the policy rhetoric of lifelong learning but to date has failed to put in place 'effective institutions and governance structures' or sufficient financial resources (Desjardins 2015).

Adult education, as envisaged in the White Paper, and the ideology underpinning it, are hard to fully evidence as the implementation of recommendations in the White Paper was incomplete and much of its vision was not carried through into either of the subsequent policy documents, itself a damaging blow. Internally in the DES, there is some evidence that the lack of political support for this vision after publication resulted in its decline whilst inter-departmental rivalry between the two government departments, also undermined this wider vision. This appears to be a phenomenon not unique to Ireland during the period of the study. Brozatis et al and others highlight how the adoption of the Lisbon Strategy has not translated into national and local actions, noting that 'the dichotomy between political discourse and reality remained striking' (2010 p26). The blame for this is laid at the door of each nation who have 'complex, fragmented, incomplete and/or isolated adult learning systems lacking capacity to ensure quality services' resulting in 'low participation rates of adults in lifelong learning'. This seems to capture well the position in Ireland during the 2000s based on my analysis and highlights the importance of policy learning for the future of adult education, nationally and at European level.

Based on concerns regarding the failure of adult learning policy, the European Commission has set about establishing an analytical framework for the analysis of adult learning policies and their effectiveness in Europe, as a support to member states in their formulation and implementation of 'effective adult learning policies' (ICF 2014, p4), based on existing evidence. This is in and of itself a further indication of the difficulties across the EU of the

realisation of effective adult learning policies. Not surprisingly, the authors of this report have been unable to find any robust evidence of ‘the effectiveness of co-ordinating adult learning policy with other national policies’ or ‘evaluations of over-arching strategies or legislation’ in adult learning, despite the fact both these ‘governance’ factors are recognised ‘by policy makers’ as important elements in ‘effective adult learning’ (ICF 2014 p14). Consequently they will be a part of the forthcoming framework, representing the only area not backed up by evidence. At the same time, the EU is also funding a comparative research analysis of adult learning policy initiatives in order to produce a policy making toolkit, aimed at supporting policy makers to formulate, implement and fund more effective adult learning policies. See <http://www.regionalproject.eu/index.php> for more details.

## **6.6 Proposing an advocacy toolkit for adult education lobbyists**

In the light of EU proposals for a toolkit, the Irish case study of adult education policy over a 10-year period in this thesis has highlighted the implications of not fully appreciating the policy trajectory approach and its importance to the advocacy area, and within that, the national and international influences, policy actors and processes. In the Irish case, significant effort by advocacy bodies and other stakeholders went into the realisation of the White Paper on Adult Education, from the lobbying of a new Government, engagement in the consultation process, through to the effort to realise its implementation. There is little evidence that key stakeholders ever doubted that the bulk of the White Paper on Adult Education would be realised once it was published and the National Adult Learning Council was established. My thesis shows the factors that led to a naïve understanding of the policy process and its non-linear, political nature by those, including me, who were disappointed with its final outcomes.

As stakeholders were ill-prepared to challenge the unravelling of the White Paper and its ultimate demise, my thesis therefore illuminates a significant gap in policy learning for adult education stakeholders and a unique opportunity to draw from critical policy theory. A cursory search of adult education advocacy resources on how to lobby in Ireland and internationally, reveals a similar pattern. What is typically being supported in advocacy resources is the process of getting an item on to the policy agenda. Yet the importance and value of staying with the policy until it is realised and evaluated is ignored. In addition, mainstream policy makers interviewed as part of a three year Irish advocacy research programme, believed that lobbyists from the community and voluntary sector often displayed a 'simplistic analysis' of the policy area they were attempting to influence (Walsh et al 2013).

To bridge this gap, I believe critical policy analysis in this study has a direct practical application as the basis for a toolkit which sets out more clearly how policy is more than a series of uncomplicated stages and establishes policy not only as a text but as a process, both of which are contested and contestable. This would be useful to adult education policy advocates who arguably concentrate their efforts on influencing adult education policy development and often neglect the other aspects of the policy process. Furthermore, the case study in this thesis has highlighted the significant impact of globalisation on adult education in Ireland as in other countries and the necessity to look beyond the national level in terms of understanding the international discourses influencing policy development and rhetoric. The complexity of the policy process necessitates greater policy learning and preparation to increase effectiveness of advocacy work, something I have achieved through carrying out this academic research exercise, the detail of which is captured in Appendix 2 and 3. Drawing on that learning, then, I propose a more robust approach to advocacy, akin to a robust research exercise, as a necessity for all policy actors.

The following sections outline the headings and indicative content for an advocacy framework that attempts to fuse the theory and the practice through a practical application of critical policy analysis. Whilst unearthing the underlying influences of policy and their implications, critical policy theory demands action whilst all the time recognising the very steep challenge that it entails. This can create a degree of paralysis when it comes to take action. The toolkit attempts to support taking action to challenge the status quo, thereby fuelling hope and optimism.

#### *6.6.1 Identifying who and how policy is made*

The first part of the policy trajectory is concerned with understanding who is involved in influencing policy and how is policy made, a key element of an advocacy toolkit. This involves identifying at the outset of the lobbying process, the key people and organisations, where they are situated in terms of their political position and the hierarchy of power in which they operate. In the case of politicians, and their advisors, although this may be more apparent due to party level political manifestos, even parties have members who represent more conservative or more liberal dimensions. In terms of the civil service and statutory organisations, it is possible to elicit what is influential through some accessibly written text that illuminates their use of language and reference material. Community and voluntary advocacy organisations will have their own lobbying positions and consequently should also be lobbied with a view to agreeing collaboration and support on areas of mutual interest. This entails critically analysing contemporary and historical international, national and local level policies with a view to determining what they are really saying (Ball 1994). The toolkit will provide reference material and links to more easily located academic research papers and a way of appraising them as to their ideological position.

Getting an item on the policy agenda involves direct work with politicians, both those in government and opposition, and is focused on securing a position within the wider agenda of the political party. In areas that are understood to contribute more to the public good than the public purse, then the case of the value of the area and the evidence of this becomes critically important, especially as most states are seeking to reduce public expenditure. The value of adult education to society is less well established and consequently its role and contribution to society wide policies needs to be better highlighted through existing research and building relationships with a wider set of policy makers beyond education, the labour market and welfare. Areas of complementarity include population health and community development, but also the cultural heritage, the environment and sustainability and personal finances.

Research on the importance of language and meaning provides many useful opportunities to both critically appraise and challenge draft policy texts and offer alternatives during consultation phases. The toolkit would provide examples of techniques used in the field of discourse analysis and outline how they could be applied in lobbying during the policy making process. It would also supply a visual map of policy processes and actors.

In addition, the relationship between policy and legislation should also be explored. Policy that is not underpinned by legislation may be vulnerable to changes arising from a new government or an economic shock. Lobbying to bring about policy as well as enshrine it in legislation brings greater security to the realisation of objectives.

### ***6.6.2 Implementation and outcomes***

The advocacy toolkit would provide a resource by which to critically analyse the policy process as the policy is being implemented. It would highlight the layers of possible interpretation and misinterpretation of policy as it undulates between the macro, meso and micro levels. In support of advocacy organisations, the toolkit would highlight the

importance of evidence gathering during the implementation phase, a feature of Ball's trajectory, in order to critically evaluate the degree to which a policy is realising its expressed objectives and outcomes. It would also enable policy advocates to challenge the efficacy of the policy during implementation and explore what alternatives could be pursued.

Finally, the toolkit would provide a process by which to evaluate the policy, as a source of policy learning as well as for generating future advocacy content. This would also entail self-reflection on the part of the advocacy body as all stakeholders need to acknowledge their role in the process and outcome.

### ***6.6.3 Testing and dissemination of the toolkit***

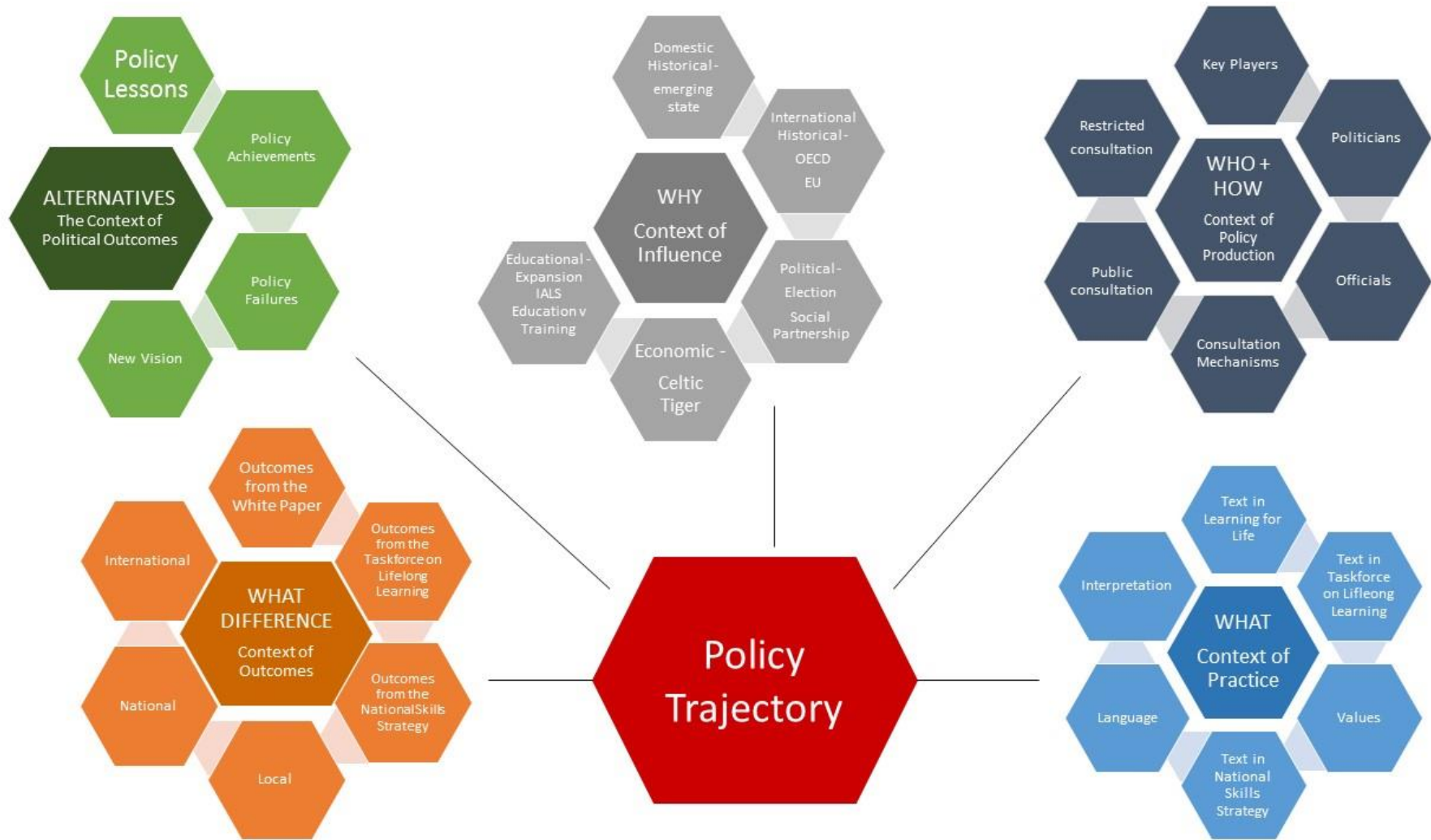
As part of a legacy project of the Advocacy Initiative (Walsh et al 2013), I was one of six mentors who supported an organisation apply an advocacy indicators framework to their advocacy work. As NALA explores future advocacy plans and collaborations, a similar approach to testing the toolkit could be offered to NALA members and Figure 11 offers a useful visual for explaining the approach.

In my role as policy lobbyist within NALA, I am involved in national networks of charitable organisations concerned with social justice advocacy, within which access for vulnerable people to adult learning opportunities is an issue. I am also regularly working with national associations primarily involved in adult education policy and practice. The latter group consists of disparate collections of adult education professionals, learners and academics.

Whilst there is little connection between these two groups, they are united by their desire to see adult education develop in Ireland. I see them both as an audience for the toolkit, albeit to be engaged separately.

Outside of Ireland, I am involved in the European Basic Skills Network (EBSN), involving policy level stakeholders, as well as EPALÉ, a multilingual open membership community for academic, policy makers and practitioners interested in adult learning in Europe. In conjunction with both these groups, I am leading out on an online Special Interest Group aimed at enhancing knowledge on the creation and implementation of national policy for basic skills provision. The aim of this thematic group is to provide information, create joint knowledge and promote development on a policy level. It is envisaged that the toolkit could be a resource to be trialled as part of this work. A further potential audience are the members of Research and Practice in Adult Literacy (RaPAL) and its structure could also offer a conduit for dissemination, discussion and development of the toolkit.

Figure 11 Policy Trajectory Approach to Adult Education





## **6.7 Strengths and limitations of the research**

I believe that combining an insider policy position with a thesis has given me a unique, privileged, binocular vision of adult education in Ireland. The study has laid to rest an over-emphasis in Irish academic literature on the lack of funding as the core barrier to the realisation of adult education policy and its implementation in Ireland. It is not just about the supply of funding as much of this would suggest, but rather about what is chosen as worthy of investment. This case study has evidenced that adult education's struggle for recognition has revolved around its perceived usefulness to enhance competitiveness and social inclusion within the confines of the labour market context, at a time of great wealth and accelerated development in Ireland.

Like in other countries, the study has also highlighted the narrowing of influence of certain adult education stakeholders on policy developments in Ireland in face of growing dominance of market agendas on adult education, pushed by the EU and OECD and justified by globalisation. These forces have also provided opportunities for Ireland to expand its second chance adult education provision, in contrast to England where they are under threat.

Ireland's location within Green's typology of lifelong learning is now clearer and goes some way to explain the gap between the apparent concern with the low skilled and the lack of positive discrimination measures to bring learning opportunities to them. The locating of Ireland's approach to lifelong learning has also identified areas requiring change to move to a model more befitting of realising adult education policy and its social justice concerns.

The study has shown that policy advocates were fixated on 'getting on the agenda' which, when achieved, serves politicians and lobbyists at the time but disarms lobbyists from paying attention to implementation. This is a contributing factor to the demise of the White Paper on Adult Education. The critical policy approach as enabled me to reveal this and I'd like to

bring that approach to bear on the toolkit, addressing the criticism of critical approaches that are just being critical and not helping practically.

The limits of the research relate to the extent to which the findings are generalizable, considering the unique economic and social context in Ireland during the 1990s and into the following decade. As noted the thesis falls heavily on a critical policy documentary analysis which, as I noted in chapter 3, may be criticised because it represents a road less well travelled along.

### **6.8 What further research is required?**

As has been highlighted, there is a need for more Irish-based research in adult education policy, particularly more critical research that seeks to challenge that which is rhetoric and that which is real. This is particularly the case with respect to the EU as it seeks to consolidate after recent Brexit vote in the UK. In a context where the wider benefits of adult education are denoted by their lesser contribution to the labour market, the potential and increasing role of adult education to other policy areas could be usefully explored. In light of the influence of globalisation on adult education policy nationally and internationally to date, more research in this area would aid authentic ‘policy learning and as opposed to policy borrowing’ (Raffe 2011).

### **6.9 An alternative model of lifelong learning in Ireland to advocate for**

This ten year study has peeled back the veneer of adult education policy in Ireland and revealed its increasingly narrowed interpretation as of value only to the economy, effectively hollowing out the meaning of adult education. This has occurred with adult education

stakeholders at best unaware of this movement during the Celtic Tiger era and subsequently paralysed by the crash that followed. Ireland, whilst having its own historical and socio economic portrait of adult education, has an established culture of influence from the EU and the OECD and, as has been shown, is not unique in this regard.

A new guiding vision for adult education is required, one which captures its broad potential to enhance Irish society, but which captures the contemporary position of Ireland as it emerges out of a major economic crisis and debates the possibilities now for the re-building of Irish society. This vision would include the more common elements of compensatory education as well as traditional further education and training and their key role in tackling inequality and workforce development. Beyond the labour market, people want to contribute to their society and adult education can usefully contribute to wider policy areas concerned with health, the environment, politics and community development. Alongside those arguing for a new model to underpin Irish society (Healy & Reynolds 2014), I suggest that Ireland needs to realign its model of lifelong learning to take account of the gains identified in Green's Nordic model, outlined in the literature review, as a result of those countries higher level of investment and social spending enabled by high taxation.

Green initially puts forward two models of knowledge economy – neo-liberal or Anglo Saxon (shareholder) and the core-European social market model (stakeholder). Both of the models are associated with different skills formation strategies but ultimately both models deliver uneven results in social and economic terms with the returns of the latter dominating. Green shows how different models of lifelong learning support different models of the knowledge society and explains why lifelong learning is an important key to social cohesion and economic competitiveness. If one accepts this premise, then the emphasis falls on developing a lifelong learning model in Ireland that would better realise the policy aspirations explored in this thesis.

A new model of lifelong learning for Ireland would of course encapsulate that which is already pre-ordained in our new Further Education and Training strategy and the current Action Plan for Jobs, incorporating enterprise and welfare policies, but it would make explicit the connections to other cross-government areas like Healthy Ireland, the population health strategy, amongst others premised on the population learning throughout life. This could be lobbied for as one element of a new ‘investment centred’ social partnership model which would aim to broadly build the economy and society (O’Riain 2014).

Lifelong learning in Ireland, with a particular emphasis on adult learning, has not been the subject of serious investigation by Irish academics. This has created a dangerous vacuum when it comes to providing an alternative discourse to the hegemony of the status quo. This thesis has generated a composite set of factors which are determining the model of lifelong learning presently and are likely to be influencing it into the future unless alternatives are presented and lobbied for. Building on this, the toolkit is presented as an evidence based approach to altering the future policy trajectory for adult education within an appropriate model of lifelong learning. It is hoped that this will equip those wanting to bring about change, in a new era of social partnership, to be more effective in their mission.

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**Appendix 1 Glossary of Abbreviations and Acronyms**

AEGI Adult Education Guidance Initiative

AEO Adult Education Organiser

AONTAS National Adult Education Organisation

ASTI Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland

BTEI Back to Education Initiative

CEF Community Education Facilitator

CIF Construction Industry Confederation

CORI Conference of Religious in Ireland

CSO Central Statistics Office

DE Department of Education

DES Department of Education and Science / Skills

DETE Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment

DSFA Department of Social and Family Affairs

DfEE Department for Education and Employment

EEC European Economic Community

EC European Commission

EGFSN Expert Group on Future Skills Needs

EHRDOP Employment Human Resources Development Operational Programme

EI Enterprise Ireland

EPALE European online adult learning platform

ESF European Social Fund

ESOL English for Speakers of Other Languages

ESRI Economic and Social Research Institute

ETB Education and Training Board

EBSN European Basic Skills Network

EU European Union

FÁS Foras Áiseanna Saothair

FET Further Education and Training

Forfas national policy advisory board for enterprise, trade, science, technology and innovation

FF Fianna Fáil

GDP Gross Domestic Product

GNP Gross National Product

HEA Higher Education Authority

IALS International Adult Literacy Survey

IBEC Irish Business and Employers Confederation

ICF Inner City Fund

ICTU Irish Congress of Trade Unions

IUA Irish University Association

IVEA Irish Vocational Education Association

LALB Local Adult Learning Board

NALA National Adult Literacy Agency

NALC National Adult Learning Council

NAPS National Anti-Poverty Strategy

NDP National Development Plan

NEAP National Employment Action Plan

NESC National Economic and Social Council

NESF National Economic and Social Forum

NFQ National Framework of Qualifications

NQAI National Qualifications Framework of Ireland

NSS National Skills Strategy

NUIM National University of Ireland, Maynooth

OECD Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

OP Operational Programme (of NDP)

PD Progressive Democrat

PLC Post Leaving Certificate Course

PIAAC Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competences

PISA Programme for International School Assessment

PLC Post Leaving Certificate

RaPAL Research and Practice in Adult Literacy

TLL Taskforce on Lifelong Learning

Skillnets enterprise-led training

SOLAS Further Education and Training Authority

SME Small and Medium Enterprise

TUI Teachers' Union of Ireland

UK United Kingdom

UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

USA United States of America

VEC Vocational Education Committee

VTOS Vocational Training and Opportunities Scheme

WP White Paper on Adult Education Learning for Life



Appendix 2

Timeline of key moments 1997-2007 as denoted by new legislation, national and international policy and research publications & key people & events

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
<p>Universities Act – ‘facilitate lifelong learning through the provision of adult &amp; continuing education’</p> <p>National Competitiveness Council est.</p> <p>EGFSN est.</p> <p>Information Society Commission est.</p> <hr/>	<p>Education Act ‘promote opportunities for adults, in particular adults who as children did not avail of or benefit from education in schools, to avail of educational opportunities through adult and continuing education’</p>	<p>Qualifications (Education &amp; Training) Act – ‘facilitate lifelong learning through the promotion of access and opportunities for all learners’, through the establishment of a national qualifications authority.</p>	<p>Education (Welfare) Act – minimum education standards for children only</p> <p>National Training Fund Act – establishes a levy on employers to fund upskilling of labour force</p>	<p>Vocational Education (Amendment) Act – reform of governance in VECs</p> <p>Teaching Council Act – to promote, develop and regulate the teaching profession</p>	<p>National Education Welfare Board est.</p>	<p>Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Bill</p>	<p>Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act – ‘advise all educational institutions concerning best practice in respect of the education of adults who have disabilities</p>	<p>Disability Act places statutory obligation on public services to be accessible to people with disabilities</p>	<p>Teaching Council (Amendment) Act</p> <p>Teaching Council established</p> <p>Institute of Technology Act bringing IOTs under the HEA</p>	

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
<p><i>White Paper on Human Resource Development</i> (DETE) - Upskilling workers, esp. low skilled, needed to grow economy</p> <p><i>National Anti Poverty Strategy</i> Targets to reduce educational disadvantage</p> <p><i>Green Paper Community &amp; Voluntary Sector and the State</i></p> <p>NEAP</p>	<p>Green Paper: <i>Adult Education in an era of Lifelong Learning</i> (DES)</p> <p>NEAP</p> <p>Houses of the Oireachtas – First report of the Joint Committee of Education &amp; Science on literacy levels</p>	<p><i>White Paper on Early Childhood Education: Ready to Learn</i> (DES)</p> <p><i>National Development Plan 2000-2006</i> €52bn expansion of lifelong learning opportunities)</p> <p>White Paper Supporting Voluntary Activity to a review of funding</p> <p>NEAP</p>	<p><i>White Paper on Adult Education: Learning for Life</i> (DES)</p> <p><i>Partnership for Prosperity &amp; Fairness</i> commits to lifelong learning</p> <p>Employment &amp; Human Resource Develop. Op.Program 2000-06 (DETE)</p> <p>NEAP</p>	<p>NAPs/incl 2001-2003</p>	<p><i>Taskforce on Lifelong Learning</i> (DETE)</p> <p>Programme for Government – commits to review of employment training for disadvantaged</p> <p>1<sup>st</sup> FAS <i>Statement of Strategy</i> 2002-2005 – increase employment skills &amp; mobility</p>	<p><i>Sustaining Progress</i> 2003-2005 – commits to implement recommendations of Taskforce on Lifelong Learning</p> <p>National Employment Action Plan</p> <p>NAPs/incl 2003-2005</p>	<p>VEC required to produce Education Plans</p> <p>Enterprise Strategy Group</p> <p>FAS Budget for Training increases to 35m in 2005 from 8m</p> <p>DES Annual Report</p>	<p>Statement of Strategy 2005-2007 (DES)</p> <p>DEIS: An Action Plan for Educational Inclusion (DES)</p> <p>FAS Training Strategy (FAS)</p>	<p>National Development Plan 2007-2013:</p> <p><i>Towards 2016 – Ten-Year Framework Social Partnership Agreement 2006-2015</i></p> <p>FAS 2<sup>nd</sup> Statement of Strategy 2006-2009</p>	<p>National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016</p>

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
<p><i>Education 2000: International Adult Literacy Survey: Results for Ireland</i> (ERC/DES) reveals high levels of literacy problems in the workforce</p> <p>CSO Labour Force Survey</p> <p><i>Information Society Ireland – Strategy for Action</i> (DT)</p> <p>Budget for adult education estimated at 0.01% of education budget</p>	<p>EGFSN: <i>1<sup>st</sup> Report Responding to Ireland Growing Skills Needs – focus on IT training in HE</i></p> <p>Rochford Report 5 VECs amalgamated</p> <p>ESRI/FAS Manpower Forecasting Structures Report no 7</p> <p>Guidance in Adult &amp; Continuing Education (NCGE) – draws heavily</p>	<p>ESRI: National Investment Priorities for the Period 2000-2006</p> <p>NESC: Opportunities Challenges &amp; Capacities for Change’ supports lifelong learning for both its contribution to social &amp; economic development.</p> <p>Information Society Ireland: Building a Capacity for Change:</p>	<p>Cromien Report (devolution of power to CEO in VECs from DES)</p> <p>EGFSN: 2nd Report Responding to Ireland Growing Skills Needs – focus on construction &amp; apprenticeships</p> <p>DES Consultation on the EU, A Memorandum on</p>	<p>EGFSN: <i>3<sup>rd</sup> Report of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs – Responding to Ireland Growing Skills Needs</i></p> <p>Report of the Action Group on Access to Third Level Education recommends a variety of</p>	<p>Census of Population</p>	<p><i>The National Framework of Qualifications: an overview</i> (NQAI)</p> <p>Rochford Report (VEC reform)</p> <p>McIver Consulting, Report of the Steering Group to the PLC Review established by the DES</p>	<p>Reading Literacy in Disadvantaged Primary Schools (ERC)</p> <p>Eivers et al Education Disadvantage</p> <p><i>Information Society Commission -Learning in the Twenty First Century: Towards Personalisation</i></p>	<p>Further Education &amp; Training in Ireland: a quantitative analysis (FETAC)</p> <p>FAS/EGFSN – National Skills Bulletin</p> <p>Mid-term review ESRI</p> <p>Literacy &amp; Numeracy in Disadvantaged Schools: Challenges for Teachers &amp;</p>	<p>Houses of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Education and Science Fourth Report Adult Literacy in Ireland – recommends new strategy and substantial increase in budget</p> <p>Census of Population Ex-ante evaluation</p>	<p><i>National Skills Strategy: 5<sup>th</sup> Report</i> (EGFSN)</p> <p>Monitoring Ireland’s Skills Supply: Trends in Education/Training Outputs</p> <p>FAS – <i>National Skills Bulletin</i></p> <p>Education Trends: Key indicators on Education in Ireland</p>

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
	<p>on the UK model, particularly Scotland</p> <p>Trading Qualifications for Jobs (ESRI)</p>	Lifelong Learning in the Information Society	Lifelong Learning	<p>approaches</p> <p>Shiel et al, Ready for life? The Literacy Achievements of Irish 15 year olds with comparative international data (ERC)</p>		<p>Benchmarking Education &amp; Training for Economic Development in Ireland (EGFSN)</p> <p>EGFSN: 4th Report— Responding to Ireland Growing Skills Needs focus on bio-pharma</p>		<p>Learners (DES)</p> <p>Early Childhood Care and Education NESC</p> <p>Report of the Forum on the Workplace of the Future: <i>Working to our Advantage</i> greater support for lifelong</p>	<p>of the NDP (ESRI)</p> <p>Skillnets, Building skills &amp; competitiveness: Training networks 2002-2005</p> <p>Monitoring Ireland's Skills Supply: Trends in Education/Training Outputs (EGFSN)</p> <p>FAS – National Skills Bulletin</p>	<p>and Europe (DES)</p> <p>Annual Report 2006 (DES)</p> <p>Ready for tomorrow's world? The competencies of Irish 15 year olds in PISA 2006 (DES/ERC)</p>

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Education at a Glance (OECD) <i>Literacy Skills for the knowledge society: further results from International Adult Literacy Survey (OECD)</i> <i>Towards a Europe of Knowledge (CEC)</i> Guidelines to assist nations realise potential of education and training for employment Fryer, R.H. Learning for the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century:	Rubenson, Kell, Adult Education and Training: The Poor Cousin-An Analysis of Reviews of National Policies for Education (OECD)  Education at a Glance (OECD)  The Learning Age: A renaissance for new	Lifelong Learning – a new learning culture for all (DEL)  A Fresh Start – Improving Literacy & Numeracy (DfEE)  Nice Treaty  Human Development Report UNDP	Education at a Glance (OECD)  Literacy in the Information Age (OECD)  Lisbon Strategy  Open Method of Coordination  EU, A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning	Making a European area of lifelong learning a reality (EC) provides wide scope of lifelong learning and calls for increased resourcing  Knowledge & Skills for Life: first results from PISA	European report on quality indicators of lifelong learning (EC)  Education Council Resolution, Lifelong Learning Guiding Principle for Education & Training Development  Copenhagen Declaration commits nations to	Education & Training 2010: the achievement of the Lisbon goals hinges on urgent current reforms (CEC)	Skills Strategy Northern Ireland (DEL)  EC, Progress towards the common objectives in education & training. Indicators & Benchmarks  Key Competencies in Adult Learning (DGEC)	Recommendation of the European Parliament & of the Council on Key competencies for lifelong learning (EC)  Key Competencies for Lifelong Learning: A European reference framework (EC)	World Bank Institute – Skills, Training, Policies & Economic Performance: International Perspectives  Implementing the Education and Training 2010 Work Programme: 2005 Progress Report	Education at a Glance (OECD)  How what you know shapes your life (OECD)

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
First Report of the National Advisory Group for Continuing Education & Lifelong Learning	Britain (DEE)			2000 (OECD)  World Development Report: attacking poverty (World Bank)  Final Report of the European High Level Taskforce on Skills & Mobility – Commission Action Plan followed	FET cooperation  UNDP, Human Development Report 2002  Education & Training in Europe: diverse systems shared goals for 2010			Promoting Adult Learning (OECD)  Beyond Rhetoric: Adult learning policies & practices (OECD)	(Ireland) (EC)  Education at a Glance 2006 (OECD)  Leitch Review of Skills: Prosperity for all in the Global Economy	

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Election / New Government Micheal Martin Minister for Education First Minister for Adult Education – Willie O’Dea Department of Education adds ‘Science’ to title DES Sec Gen Don Thornhill Assistant Principal Officer Des O’Loughlin head adult education DES	Launch of the Green Paper on Adult Education 24/11/98 by Minister O’Dea New Sec Gen in DES John Dennehy Budget Tony Blair 1 <sup>st</sup> UK prime Minister to address Dail Eireann Good Friday Agreement National Centre for	Margaret Kelly First Principal Officer (PO) to head up the new Further Education Section Launch of the Adult Education Guidance Initiative Budget John Dennehy Chairs OECD Education Committee Skillnets est.	Taskforce on LLL meets 3 times Michael Woods Minister for Education Training Levy Junior Minister O’Dea launches White Paper on Adult Education August Budget	NQAI est. FETAC est. NTAC Budget AONTAS pre-election campaign on the 3 Rs – Nice Treaty rejected	Launch of NALC Easter 2002 by Willie O’Dea Noel Dempsey Minister for Education O’Dea to Dept. of Justice Launch of BTEI New Minister for Adult Education Sile de Valera	Pauline Gildea new PO NALC Suspended in June Budget	Micheal Martin Minister of DETE Mary Hanafin Minister for Education Budget Ireland hosts EU Presidency	Breda Naughton new PO in FE section in DES New Sec Gen Brigid McManus Budget Don Thornhill Chair of National Competitiveness Council	Sean Haughey new Minister for Lifelong Learning DES & DETE Budget	General election 24 <sup>th</sup> May New Government Budget for adult education up to 2% of education budget

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
<p>Mary Harney Minister in DETE</p> <p>DETE Sec Gen Paul Haran</p> <p>Ned Costello DETE Principal Officer over training</p> <p>UNESCO Confintea V in Hamburg</p>	<p>Technology in Education est.</p>	<p>EGFSN new chair</p>			<p>Education Disadvantage Committee est.</p> <p>LLL Inter – departmenta l steering group est. by DETE</p> <p>Centre for early Childhood Education &amp; Care est.</p>					



## Appendix 3 Grid on policy trajectory of 3 policy texts

	Context of Influence (historically)	Context of influence (contemporaneously)	Context of policy production	Context of practice	Context of outcomes
White Paper on Adult Education 2000 DES  Context rich Social Justice Collective	Education for all OECD positions education as key to successful economy Challenges of Globalisation Social Justice Knowledge society EU Lifelong learning	Celtic Tiger New Government Adult education lobby Competitiveness OECD IALS EU Lisbon Strategy Mass education nearly achieved	Minister Martin 1997-2000 Minister O'Dea 1997-2001 Margaret Kelly Dr T. Collins Green Paper Public Consultation Submissions	2 <sup>nd</sup> Chance Education Community Education Access to higher education Workplace learning Supports - Guidance Structures	10 fold increase in adult literacy funding BTEI established CE Facilitators Adult Education Guidance Initiative NALC set up but later disbanded
Taskforce on Lifelong Learning 2002 DETE  Context barren Individual	EU Growth and Competiveness EU Employment Strategy Social Partnership Social Inclusion	Ageing Labour Force Pace of change SP Agreement National Employment Action Link between low pay & low skill	Minister Harney 1997-2004 N. Costello 8 Government Depts. State Providers Employers / Union Community	National Framework of Qualifications Basic Skills Info & Guidance Access & delivery Workplace Structures	Political endorsement and support for existing initiatives Overarching Coordinating Group
National Skills Strategy 2007 EGFSN DETE/DES  Context rich Social efficiency	Multi-nationals Globalisation Knowledge economy Productivity Technology Market	Immigration Skills Shortages Competitiveness Human Capital EU / OECD	Minister Martin 2004-2007 Heraty Chair EGFSN S. Shanahan + 11 EGFSN Secretariat Members & Advisers Invited submissions	New Economy Targets by 2020 48% at Level 6-10 45% at Level 4-5 7% at Level 1-3 Implementation Mechanism	Annual monitoring Achievement 2015 46.9 % at Level 6-10 38.5 % at level 4-5 14.7 % at Level 1-3 Troika / reform of adult education

## Appendix 4 Grid on terms used across the 3 policy texts

	White Paper on Adult Education 224 pages	Taskforce on Lifelong Learning 67 pages	National Skills Strategy 136 pages
Terms relating to my research	OECD 51 / Europe 25 Challenges 46 /Change 32 International 28 Technology 21 / information society 8 Productivity 0 Knowledge economy 0 Knowledge society 2 Human capital 1 Competitiveness 18 /Competition 6 / Global /globalising 6 globalisation/ global economy Social Inclusion 7 Skills shortage 3 / Immigrants 5 Mobility 4	OECD 5 / Europe 9 Challenges 7 /Change 26 International 15 Technology 6 / information society 3 Productivity 4 Knowledge economy 1 Knowledge society 1 Human Capital 1 Competitiveness 7 /Competition 6 / Global /globalising/ globalisation 1 / global economy Social Inclusion 3 Skills shortage 0 / Immigrants 0 Mobility	OECD 72 / Europe 53 Challenges 33 /Changing 106 International 65 Technology 30 / information society 8 Productivity 90 Knowledge economy 19 Knowledge society 0 Human Capital 40 Competitiveness 17 /Competition 6 / Global /globalising/ globalisation 4/ global economy Social Inclusion 7 Skills shortage 3 / Immigrants 5 Mobility 6
Other terms	Quality assurance 13 Accountability 3 Curricula 7	Quality assurance 1 Accountability 0 Curricula 2	Quality assurance 4 Accountability 1 Curricula 10

