Policy, profession and person: the formation of reflexive academic identities in an Irish Institute of Technology

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CONTENTS

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DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis is my own original work and that material has not been copied from any other work (my own or other people's, published or otherwise) without acknowledgement in the text.

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ABSTRACT

The study presented in this thesis explores the dynamic formation of academic professional identities in the Institute of Technology (IoT) sector of Irish higher education. In particular it investigates how national and institutional structures and policies impact on those identities in one IoT. The study further investigates whether and how such identities have been transformed by changes that have occurred at both national and local levels over the relatively short life span of the technological sector.

Life history interviews were undertaken with sixteen academics of different 'generations' and from four different broad disciplinary backgrounds, namely Business, Engineering, Humanities and Science, with a view to understanding how policy translates at the level of individual academic lives and to revealing how structures and agency interact and impact on professional identity formation in a specific national and historical context. A theoretical framework based on Archer's conceptualisations of structure, agency and identity informed the analysis of the data.

The research suggests that an identity shift has occurred over time, with the predominantly teaching-based identity which characterised those who entered lecturing prior the enactment of legislation for the technological sector in 1992 being replaced by a more complex and multi-layered professional identity built around a combination of roles in teaching, research and administration among those whose professional academic careers began in the post-1992 period. Individual lecturers are clearly influenced by the context in which they operate and by the policies that shape that context, which constrain them in the pursuit of some of their projects, while enabling them in the pursuit of others. The impact of structures and policies on individuals and their professional identities is not uniform however. It can and does vary from one individual to another and appears to be significantly mediated both by the stances individuals adopt towards the constraints and enablements their projects activate and by the actions of those at the meso (institutional) level who interpret and implement macro-level policies.

By providing insights into how individual academics are affected by national policies and structures and local efforts to interpret and implement these policies, the research seeks to influence both policy formation and policy implementation. In particular, it seeks to contribute to policy makers' understanding of the likely reactions to new policies of those for whom they legislate and of the reasons for these reactions, and to thereby encourage the generation of policies that enable rather than constrain.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AL	Assistant Lecturer
AnCO	An Comhairle Oiliúna (the Industrial Training Authority)
CEPs	Cultural emergent properties
CTE	Council for Technological Education
DES	Department of Education and Science
DIT	Dublin Institute of Technology
EI	Enterprise Ireland
FETAC	Further Education and Training Awards Council
H.Dip.	Higher Diploma in Education (second-level teaching qualification)
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HEI	Higher education institution
HETAC	Higher Education and Training Awards Council
IDA	Industrial Development Authority
IoT	Institute of Technology
IRCHSS	Irish Research Council for Humanities and Social Sciences
IRCSET	Irish Research Council for Science, Engineering and Technology
L	Lecturer
L1	Lecturer 1
L2	Lecturer 2
MCC	Manpower Consultative Committee
NCEA	National Council for Educational Awards
NIHE	National Institute for Higher Education
NQAI	National Qualifications Authority of Ireland
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PCW	Programme for Competitiveness and Work
PEPs	Personal emergent properties
PGCE	Postgraduate Certification in Education
PMDS	Performance Management and Development System
PRTLI	Programme for Research in Third -Level Institutions
RTC	Regional Technical College
SEPs	Structural emergent properties
SIF	Strategic Innovation Fund
SFI	Science Foundation Ireland
SL1	Senior Lecturer 1

TEA	Tertiary Education Authority
TSR	Technological Sector Research
TUI	Teachers Union of Ireland
VEC	Vocational Education Committee
WIT	Waterford Institute of Technology
WRTC	Waterford Regional Technical College

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCING THE RESEARCH

1.1 Introduction

This thesis reports on research conducted in the Institute of Technology (IoT) sector of the Irish higher education system between 2005 and 2008. The study aimed to explore the nature of academic professional identities in this particular context, to examine how they had evolved over the lifetime of the sector and to establish to what extent and how the national and institutional policies that structure this setting had affected them. Life history work was carried out with lecturers located in one institution to uncover the 'hidden transcripts' (Armstrong 2003 p.7) of individual academic lives and to understand both how structure and agency interact and impact on professional identity in this particular context, and how policy translates at the level of the individual lecturer.

This chapter presents an introduction to the research. It explains the motivation behind the study and outlines the research questions addressed. It provides a short description of the institutional setting in which the research was conducted and a brief introduction to the participants. The methodology and methods used in the study are discussed. The chapter also touches on the position of the researcher in and in relation to the research and concludes with an overview of the structure of the thesis.

1.2 The motivation for the study

The research was prompted by my personal experiences as an IoT lecturer and by the desire to understand both my own professional identity and how this identity is influenced by the fact that I practise my profession in the highly structured and regulated context that is the IoT sector. My reading of existing literature on academic identity had suggested that policy and structures can have a profound influence on what higher education lecturers are able to do and to be, but no one appeared to have investigated this issue in the Irish IoT context. My own experiences suggested that establishing a coherent and acceptable sense of oneself as an academic professional in this particular setting can be challenging, and that the professional identities that develop in this context differ from those formed in other kinds of higher education institutions both in

Ireland and abroad. I hoped that an investigation of this specific context might allow me to contribute something original and interesting to the literature in this field of knowledge.

The research was also motivated by a strong personal belief that those in positions of power need to listen to the voices of those affected by their decisions and actions in order to ensure the continued appropriateness of those decisions and actions going forward. I am hopeful that a better understanding of how individuals are affected by national policies and structures and local efforts to interpret and implement these policies will have benefits both at the level of the individual and at the meso (i.e. institutional) and macro levels. By showing how their policies actually affect real people, I hope to contribute to policy makers' understanding of how those for whom they legislate are likely to respond to new policies and structures and why they are likely to react in this way, thus enabling them to factor these issues into the policy making process and to generate policies that enable rather than constrain. By revealing how other lecturers have been influenced by, and have managed to influence, the structures in which they operate, I hope to enhance my own and my fellow IoT lecturers' understanding of our context and of our capacity to make a difference to it as well as our understanding of our identities as academic professionals in the IoT sector.

1.3 The research issue and research questions

Henkel (2000) defines academic professional identities as a 'mix of individual and community values, linked to particular forms of knowledge or epistemological frameworks and a sense of worth or self esteem which are worked out predominantly in the roles and tasks of research, teaching, administration and management' (p.255). The overall purpose of the research study was to explore the particular academic professional identities that have developed in the IoT sector of Irish higher education. The study sought to trace the evolution of these identities and to establish whether and to what extent the professional identities of lecturers recruited in the first two decades of the sector's existence differed from those of the individuals recruited in the 1990s and the early 2000s. The influence of macro (i.e. national) and meso (i.e. institutional) level policies and structures on the activities and ultimately on the professional identities of IoT lecturers was of particular interest.

The key questions that the research hoped to address were the following:

(i) How are IoT lecturers and the professional identities they form affected by the structures and policies that shape the environment in which they practise their profession, and how do these individuals react to these structures and policies?

(ii) What are the implications of such reactions for the individual lecturers and for their professional identities, as well as for the broader context in which they operate?

(iii) What individual values and 'concerns' (Archer 2000 p.2) characterise IoT lecturers and how have these values and concerns developed and evolved over time?

(iv) How are these values expressed in everyday practice? How do IoT lecturers perform and prioritise the various dimensions of the lecturing role, and how are they and their professional identities influenced by the various communities to which they belong?

1.4 Locating the study

Given that institutions within the IoT sector differ, in some cases considerably, in terms of size and stage of development, as well as in terms of how they have interpreted and implemented policy and how they have reacted to the various changes that have occurred in the Irish higher education environment in the course of the last four decades, a decision was taken to limit the study to one institution. The participants in the study were drawn from a variety of academic departments and schools at Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT). This section provides a brief introduction to the research site. A more detailed account of the technological sector and of WIT is presented in Chapter 5.

Located in one of the Ireland's Gateway cities, WIT is the larger of two IoTs serving the South East region of the country, which is home to 11% of the Irish population (South East Regional Authority 2004). One of the original Regional Technical Colleges (RTCs), when it first opened its doors as WRTC in 1970, it was charged with providing technical and vocational education for up to 200 students in the region. It initially offered two-year National Certificate and three-year National Diploma programmes in three academic schools (Business, Engineering and Science) as well as courses leading to the examinations of professional bodies and apprentice training. Operating under the terms of the 1930 Vocational Education Act, the college was answerable to the City of

Waterford Vocational Education Committee (VEC). It was dependent on the Department of Education for its funding as well as for approval for the majority of its activities, and its graduates received awards from the National Council for Educational Awards (NCEA), which had been established to validate the academic programmes of all non-university higher education institutions in the State.

By the time the study began in 2005, the institution had expanded its course portfolio to include ninety-two full-time programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate level in six academic schools (Business, Education, Engineering, Health Science, Humanities and Science) as well as a significant suite of part-time courses in adult and continuing education and supervision for a growing number of research postgraduates. It had also expanded its activities to include research as well as teaching, actively and strategically engaging with the expanded remit granted to the technological colleges under the 1992 Regional Technical Colleges Act. It had over five and a half thousand full-time students, of whom approximately 4% were pursuing postgraduate studies, and in the region of four thousand part-time students on its register (Waterford Institute of Technology 2005). It had been removed from the control of the City of Waterford VEC in 1994 and re-designated as Waterford Institute of Technology in 1997. Over a period between 1998 and 2003, it had also been delegated authority by the NCEA's successor, the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC), to make its own awards to doctoral level in the School of Science and to Masters level in the remaining areas.

Operating under the terms of the 1992 Regional Technical Colleges Act and the amendments to this Act, it remained answerable to the Department of Education and Science until 2006, when responsibility for the IoTs was transferred to the Higher Education Authority (HEA) under the Institutes of Technology Act. In the same year, as part of a long running regional campaign to secure a university for the South East, WIT made an application for university designation under Section 9 of the Universities Act. At the time of writing (December 2008), a ministerial decision on whether to proceed with a Section 9 review is still awaited.

1.5 Introducing the research participants

Sixteen members of academic staff at WIT participated in the study. These respondents were drawn from the four longest established academic schools in the institution, namely Business, Engineering, Humanities and Science, with each school being represented by four lecturers. Eight of respondents had joined the staff at WRTC in the 1970s and 1980s, while the remaining eight had started to lecture at the Waterford college in the 1990s and in the early years of the new century. All sixteen were full-time permanent members of staff, at either Lecturer or Senior Lecturer 1 level, and all but one were qualified to masters level[1] when originally interviewed, while four held doctorates and a further four were close to completing their doctoral studies.

1.6 The research approach

As the research sought to understand the impact of macro and meso-level forces on the professional lives and identities of individual lecturers, it required a methodological approach that would foreground the individual experiences and interpretations of each participant while also acknowledging the part played by factors outside the individual in shaping those experiences. The version of life history methodology advocated by Goodson and Sikes (2001), in which individuals' life stories are collected and then set against the contextual background in which the lives in question have been lived to create life histories, was chosen for the study as it seemed appropriate on a number of different levels. Its fundamental belief in the need to give voice to research participants, in the value of individuals' stories and in the capacity of such stories to facilitate an understanding of the broader social and historical contexts in which these individuals have lived resonated both with the research questions that the study hoped to address and with the 'interpretive' (Usher 1996) epistemology that I brought to the research process.

Data collection involved individual biographical interviews with the various lecturers who had agreed to participate in the study as well as contextualisation interviews with members of the executive management team at WIT and the collection and analysis of relevant national and local documentation. The biographical interviews were largely unstructured 'grounded conversations' (Goodson and Sikes 2001 p.28), in which

[1] This individual has completed a masters degree since she was initially interviewed for the research.

individuals were invited to tell the stories of their professional lives. The tales gathered at these interviews were set against the contextual backdrop constructed on the basis of the contextualisation interviews and the documentary analysis, and interpreted using the conceptual tools provided by Margaret Archer's work on the interplay of structure and agency (Archer 1995, 2000) and the reflexive formation of personal and social identities (Archer 2000, 2003, 2007)

1.7 Positioning the researcher in relation to the research

While some view researchers as 'reasonable men searching for causal laws with the goal of predicting and controlling nature, and doing so themselves almost like machines without reference to their values or their own experience' (Oakley 1998 p.717), from the perspective of the interpretive epistemology underlying the current study, 'the researcher is a central figure who influences, if not actually constructs, the selection, collection and interpretation of data' (Finlay 2002 p.212). In order to fully understand the research, it is therefore necessary to understand the researcher and her position in relation to it. This section aims to facilitate such understanding.

As I began the research, my sense of my own professional identity was rather confused. Having decided at an early age that I wanted to teach, I had studied French and German at university and then started a PGCE course. The discovery, in the early days of the PGCE, that I was terrified of teenagers, meant I had to re-assess my career goals. I completed a Masters and then worked as a tutor in a French university. This experience encouraged me to consider a career in higher education and helped me to secure a post in a Regional Technical College when I decided to return to Ireland. By the time I started the research reported here, I had been working in higher education in Ireland for nine years and was employed as a full-time permanent lecturer in German at WIT. It had taken me several years, and several chameleon-like changes, to secure a permanent position: I had started out as a temporary lecturer in French at WRTC, then worked as a temporary lecturer in German at another RTC and as a contract lecturer in French at a university before finally securing my permanent appointment. Having been obliged to maintain a certain flexibility in my professional identity so that I could compete for available positions, I hoped that permanency would allow me to focus on deepening my expertise in one area and to finally become a 'proper' lecturer.

This expectation was soon shattered however. Based in the School of Humanities and in what one manager affectionately referred to as the 'Department of Miscellaneous' (officially the Department of Languages, Tourism and Sports Studies), most of my time was dedicated to 'service teaching' across several academic departments outside my own school. While I thoroughly enjoyed, and indeed continue to enjoy, working with students and colleagues in Engineering, Science and other areas, the need to 'fit in' in so many different contexts meant that my chameleon days were far from over, and although I came to identify strongly with many of the groups with whom I worked, it was hard to develop a consistent and coherent professional identity from membership of so many diverse communities. The need to ensure that I taught the eighteen hours per week stipulated by my contract meant that my initial timetable contained a wide, varied range of courses and that time for other activities that I wanted to engage in, from research to student support, was very limited. I did get to teach mainly German, although most of my students were non-linguists from a range of different disciplinary backgrounds, but I was also allocated hours teaching French to postgraduate engineering students. It seemed that I would have to sustain a flexible generalist identity, rather than develop a more specialised one, at least for a while.

Over time, developments conspired to make my job more, rather than less, diverse. A perception that it was difficult to obtain good grades in languages led to a decline in the numbers of students studying them at second-level. Those who did take languages at Leaving Certificate and beyond tended to favour liberal arts programmes in universities over the more applied programmes offered at IoTs. Efforts to develop arts programmes in the IoT sector were firmly quashed by the Department of Education on the grounds that they constituted 'mission drift'. Efforts to encourage colleagues in other disciplines within the institution to include language electives on their programmes enjoyed some success in the late 1990s, but the advent of modularisation saw many such electives eliminated as everyone struggled to adapt courses to new structures that proved to be less flexible than those of the pre-modular era.

The decline in the number of students taking languages had several consequences for language lecturers like myself and for our professional identities. With increasing frequency we found ourselves teaching and supervising in areas with rather tenuous connections to our particular fields of specialism (in order to 'fill' my timetable, I have been asked to deliver modules in communications and intercultural studies, to supervise undergraduate theses on marketing and postgraduate work on the internationalisation of education, for example) and picking up new courses at extremely short notice practically

every semester. We found ourselves having to canvas Heads of Department for teaching hours and having to aggressively 'sell' our electives to both colleagues and students. These actions and their outcomes were often quite demoralising. The need to re-establish languages within the institution meant that we were almost constantly involved in course development, and as panel after panel deemed our electives irrelevant in the context of specialist programmes in other disciplines or vetoed our own specialist programmes because of the need to prevent mission drift, morale and self-confidence plummeted. The suggestion that our futures would depend on our willingness to re-orient and re-invent ourselves through re-training did little to help as we struggled to come to terms with increasingly fragile and vulnerable professional identities.

As I began my research, I was conscious that my desire to understand the impact of macro and meso-level structures on individual IoT lecturers' professional activities and identities was motivated by my own personal and in recent times not always entirely positive experiences. I knew that I would have to be aware at all times of the potential influence of my own background on my assumptions and interpretations. I would have to work hard to ensure that my own sense of lacking control over and being constrained by the context in which I was working did not prevent me from seeing alternative perspectives that might arise in my participants' stories. I would have to avoid the temptation to jump to conclusions based on my own experiences and to allow the stories to speak for themselves and to surprise me As the thesis will show, the capacity of the participants to exercise agency and to develop the kinds of professional identities they wished to develop in, and often in spite of, the structures in which they operate both surprised and inspired me. While I, as the researcher, undoubtedly impacted in various ways on the research, it must be said that, by helping me to understand how even the most constraining structures can be mediated by the actions and reactions of reflexive agents, the research has also had a significant impact on me and on my sense of personal and professional identity.

1.8 The structure of the thesis

The eight remaining chapters provide a detailed account of the research study. In Chapter 2, existing work on academic professional identities and on the impact of various contextual factors on the formation and transformation of such identities is reviewed. Chapter 3 focuses on the three concepts that are central to the study, namely identity, structure and agency, and outlines the core issues at the heart of the theoretical

framework applied in the analysis and interpretation of the research data. In Chapter 4, the choice of a research methodology is justified and the research process, including the challenges that arose in the course of the study, is described in detail. Chapter 5 provides an overview of the context in which the research participants operate, while Chapters 6 and 7 present their professional life stories. Chapter 8 analyses these life stories and the participants' 'quests' for identities as academic professionals through the conceptual lens provided by Archer's social realist theory. In Chapter 9, the key findings of the research are highlighted and the implications of these findings are discussed.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

While the purpose of research is to generate new knowledge and understanding, the process of research generally involves building on existing knowledge and understanding. The study presented in this thesis, which sets out to investigate the formation of academic professional identities in an Irish Institute of Technology and to understand how these identities are influenced by the macro and meso forces at play in this particular context, draws on the work of researchers who have considered these issues in other contexts and from a variety of different perspectives. This chapter reviews the research literatures on and theorisations of academic professional identities. It considers work investigating the impact of policies and structural and contextual factors on these identities that informed and, to a significant extent, shaped the current study in the planning and data collection phases of the research process. As there was something of a paucity of studies on academic identity formation when this study began, the chapter also examines the burgeoning work that has emerged in this particular field since then.

2.2 Academic identities: the patches and patterns of professional patchworks

Identity, as the next chapter will show, is a complex concept. In their efforts to describe and explain how individual identities are formed and shaped, researchers have drawn on many different metaphors. One of the more compelling of these is Griffiths' (1998) description of identity as a 'patchwork made over time, of patches upon patches, continually worked over but with no possibility of being thrown out or erased in order to start afresh' (Griffiths 1998 p.338 cited in Walker 1998 p.338). In this section, existing research on academic professionals will be examined to establish what kinds of 'patches' make up the 'patchworks' that are academic professional identities and what kinds of patterns emerge as the individual 'patches' are combined.

Each individual's patchwork features patches from a variety of different sources: some are related to biological characteristics such as sex and ethnicity, while others, such as

class, are related to social and historical location. One very strong source of identity for many people is the occupation or profession. Individuals' sense of self is often formed in and shaped by the context in which they work, by the tasks they carry out and the roles they fulfil in their working lives. This is true of any profession, but Kogan et al (2000) argue that the concept of identity 'has been of central, symbolic and instrumental significance in the lives of individual academics' (p.162) and Henkel (2000) claims that 'not only has academic life provided the conditions for strong identities but also the building of strong identities that are, nevertheless, embedded in defined communities, has been central to the dynamic of academic life in the Western world' (p.13).

Whether it is possible to speak of a professional identity for academics is in itself a thorny issue. Professional identity in the strictly literal sense is linked to a profession. Accountants, doctors and lawyers, for example, are members of established professional bodies that regulate how they are trained, how they work and the ethos, codes and value sets that define them as professionals. Academics, however, have no such unified 'profession' with which to identify. They are not 'united across disciplinary boundaries and extramural professional obligations' (Kogan et al 2000 p.132) and their primary allegiances tend to be to their disciplines rather than to the academic profession as a whole (see, for example, Henkel 2000).

Yet academics are not without what Kogan et al (2000) describe as 'integrating forces' (p.132) which bind them together – institutional loyalty for example – and they have, at least traditionally, enjoyed the 'autonomy and status [which] are the defining characteristics of occupations that lay claim to being professions' (Nixon 1996 p.7). So while the academic profession may not be as clearly defined as other professions and may not be as strong or clear a source of identity as these other professions, it is 'at least not a non-profession' (Kogan et al 2000 p.156) and thus it would appear to be acceptable to speak of academics as having a professional identity, even if this is not true in the strict literal sense of the term 'professional'.

The next issue that needs to be addressed is the question of whether there is in fact 'a' (i.e. one) professional academic identity. Nixon et al (1998) contend that we need to take cognisance of the fact that 'in this sprawling and diverse system, there is more than one way to construct an academic professional self, more than one set of choices' (p.292) and suggest that we should speak of academic identities rather than academic identity. The academic world in general is characterised by diversity: it is made up of many different contexts (different systems, institutions, disciplines) in which people

with often vastly different backgrounds carry out increasingly varied tasks (from the traditional tasks of teaching, research and administration to 'new' managerial and entrepreneurial roles). Against such a background, the idea that academics might construct a consistent professional patchwork to a set pattern seems rather unlikely. Even the construction of an individual professional patchwork involves stitching together a potentially very diverse set of patches, melding very different values and roles into a viable overall sense of the professional self, so it would seem that any attempt to define an academic professional needs to consider academic identities in the plural rather than look for any singular unified definition of what constitutes professional identity in the academic world.

So what is the nature of these academic professional identities, how are they formed and what are the different influences on them? The definition provided by Henkel (2000) in her work provides a good starting point: she takes academic identities to be 'a complex and heterogeneous mix of individual and community values, linked to particular forms of knowledge or epistemological frameworks and a sense of worth or self esteem which are worked out predominantly in the roles and tasks of research, teaching, administration and management' (p.255). What follows examines the various components of this definition in more detail.

Academic identities, like all identities, are partly composed of personal 'patches' representing individual traits and values. Academics as human beings have biological characteristics such as sex and ethnicity that are a fundamental part of their identities. They are also personally located within social structures which form part of who they are: they are members of families, of communities, of social classes and so on, all of which help to define their value sets and their sense of who they are. They each come to their professional careers with 'a unique narrative history' (Henkel 2000 p.16) that provides the background on which the professional patchwork is created.

These individual traits and values are influenced and augmented by the values of the various communities of which academics, in their professional lives, are a part. Malcolm and Zukas (2000) highlight the fact that academics actually belong to multiple communities and that these communities may be very distinctive and strongly distinguished from each other. Kogan et al (2000) support this argument, asserting that 'intellectual principles are grounded in different practices in academia and hence into different experiences of being an academic' (p.145) and identifying 'the discipline, the enterprise and the department as the key communities or institutions in which individual

academics engage in the project of identity building' (Kogan et al 2000 p.163). The degree to which these different communities play a role in the professional identity formation process of any given academic varies however: Kogan et al (2000) describe these three communities as 'an asymmetrical and incommensurate triangle or framework of influences' (p.163).

Of the three communities identified by Kogan et al (2000) it appears that the most powerful influencing community has been and remains the disciplinary community. This community and its values are among the earliest influences on the developing academics: indeed 'academics are inducted into the profession through training in a discipline' (Kogan et al 2000 p.166). In this induction period and beyond, the discipline is the 'primary organising influence on academic lives' (Kogan et al 2000 p.163). Henkel (2000) points out that 'the social organisation of the academy is based on the primacy of knowledge' (p.18) and knowledge is centred in the disciplines. The discipline is the main influence on the individual academic's epistemology, providing her with a clear definition of what counts as knowledge and how that knowledge is produced. It is however 'a social as well as an epistemological construct' (Henkel 2000 p.189) which provides the individual with a community of like minded colleagues with whom to interact and engage in intellectual work. Disciplines vary not only in how they conceptualise knowledge but also in how they conceptualise the role of the academic: some attach far more importance to the research role than to the teaching role, for example, while others stress the need for a balance between teaching and research. Henkel's (2000) study with academics in the U.K. does point up differences between disciplines 'in terms of the epistemological and social coherence of identity that they offer their adherents and in the extent to which they frame the agendas of those adherents' (p.190) but even so, her study and others confirm that many academics still see themselves as rooted in their disciplines, indicating that the discipline plays a significant role in the construction of academic professional identity.

The second of Kogan et al's (2000) influential communities is the enterprise. This term, which is borrowed from the work of Burton Clark, reflects the nature of the world in which higher education now operates, but in the Irish context, the enterprise is more commonly referred to as the higher education institution. All academics, whatever their personal or disciplinary backgrounds, work in institutions and are influenced by their structures, procedures, philosophies and locations within the overall systems of higher education of which they generally form a part. The organisation of the institution into departments, faculties and other units and the nature of its management structures

(collegial or openly hierarchical) impacts on the power of the disciplines in a given location and can serve to strengthen or to weaken these, and thus to strengthen or weaken their potential as sources of identity and identification. The procedures in place in an institution directly shape the context in which academics operate and set parameters on what the individual academic can do and can be. The history and philosophy of the institution, what Henkel (2000) describes as its 'institutional sagas' (p.20) are also significant: whether an institution has traditionally seen itself or indeed now sees itself as primarily a research institution or a teaching institution, for example, can have a tremendous impact on what is valued in that institution and on the significance attached to the different academic roles there. This can also be influenced by the location of the institution within the higher education system. The position of an individual institution within a hierarchy of institutions or particularly within a given sector of a stratified system influences the priorities it espouses and the kinds of activities it chooses (or is allowed) to pursue, all of which filters down and ultimately influences what academics within the institution can become.

The third community in Kogan et al's (2000) framework of influences on academic identity is the department. The significance of the department as a source of professional identity varies from one institution to another however. In some cases the department is synonymous with the discipline and influences professional identity formation in a similar way to the discipline, while in others, departments are not necessarily clear disciplinary communities but rather constituted to suit overall institutional imperatives. In this latter case, the degree to which the department impacts on the professional identity of the individual academic appears to depend on the extent of the department's power within the institution. Kogan et al's (2000) case studies of academic institutions in the U.K., Sweden and Norway suggest that one effect of recent higher education reforms in these countries has been to increase the status of the department: they found that 'the department is now increasingly important to academics as a source of symbolic power as well as of tangible influence and command of resources' (p.191) and that 'the relationship between the department and the discipline and between the department and the individual are now more critical to the dynamics within which academic identities are created and pursued' (p.191), findings which suggest that in future the role of the department in this context will have to be examined in greater depth.

Other communities also have an impact on academic values and thus on academic professional identities. The views and values of the wider academic community of

which the individual academic is a member are particularly influential. A belief in academic freedom and in the need for academic communities to be self-regulating is to be found at the heart of otherwise diverse academic 'patchworks', as is an idea of 'higher education as education in a discipline' (Henkel 2000 p.256). Kogan et al (2000) point out that academics' professional identities are influenced by a broad set of 'dominant values [which] tend to be knowledge driven, convinced of the value of research and of creation and dissemination of new knowledge' (p.166) and Walker (2001) stresses the fact that academics are educators and that educational values are thus a fundamental part of any academic identity.

Academic identities are also influenced by the values of the wider society of which academics form a part. Academics operate within institutions that are usually dependent on the state and are thus susceptible to any changes that occur at the level of the state. Changes in how the state sees the purpose and value of higher education and its relationship to the economy, who it thinks should participate and who it feels should have a voice in decisions relating to the higher education system have been shown to leave their mark on academic institutions and academics in the U.K. and other countries in recent times (see for example Henkel 2000, Kogan et al 2000 and Sachs 2001). Finally academics also operate within society and thus are subject to the same influences as all other members of society: they too are affected by the 'dislocations in structures and processes in society' (Henkel 2000 p.13) in the era of late modernity and these lead to challenges for them as they work to form their professional identities.

Henkel's (2000) definition of academic identities emphasises values and the fact that academic identities are a mix of individual and community values, and it is clear from the preceding discussion that academics form part of a wide range of diverse communities which influence their values. Academic identities are based on values but it is important not to overlook the fact that these identities are 'worked out predominantly in the roles and tasks of research, teaching, administration and management' (p.255).

Kyvik (2000) emphasises the link between role and professional identity. He defines role as 'a social position or task which is constituted by regulations, norms and expectations to the holder of the position' (p.35). In line with this definition 'the role of the faculty member and the work tasks defined for this position is the sum of the formal regulations and informal norms and expectations of this faculty member from the state, the institution, students, colleagues and society at large' (p36). From a review of the

literature in the area, Kyvik (2000) establishes a set of five roles which academics are now expected to fulfil: in addition to the roles of research (defined as knowledge production in this framework), teaching, administration and management (included here in administration) mentioned in Henkel's (2000) definition, he includes two new roles, enlightenment of the public and extramural activities. All of these roles provide a context in which academic values are expressed and can in themselves form a significant part of an individual academic's identity: Henkel (2000) reports that 'when asked how they would define their professional identity and the main continuities and changes in it, the academics in our study replied in two main ways. Some centred their answers upon their discipline and their development within that [and] some gave primacy to their roles as researchers, scholars, teachers, administrators or managers' (p.181).

Thus it would seem that the 'patchwork' of academic professional identity is composed largely of a combination of values, shaped by various communities and played out in various roles and tasks in particular fields, and that the pattern of the patchwork depends on how the individual academic's personal story and the values of the various communities or fields in which she operates are woven together in the particular context of her professional practice. The current study aims to consider both the patterns that are produced and the interactions between structural and personal factors that shape their production. Of particular interest in terms of the study is how changes to the contexts of professional identity formation, especially those provoked by macro-level decisions external to the immediate communities and fields in which the academic operates, impact on the individual and it is to a consideration of this issue that attention will now turn.

2.3 Changing policies, changing people

Identity formation is significantly affected by the contexts in which it occurs and Du Gay et al (2000) highlight to us 'the necessity of not abstracting the properties of particular forms of personhood from the specific cultural milieux in which they are formed' (p.4). It follows then that changes to these contexts will impact to a greater or lesser extent both on the process of identity formation and on the identities that are formed, and various studies (for example Henkel 2000, Kogan et al 2000) have shown that this assumption holds in the case of academic professional identities. This section will explore how change and reform can impact on the different contexts in which academics operate and on the professional identities that they form in these contexts.

Like all human beings, academics have been affected by changes at the level of society. In recent times society has been significantly altered: the phenomenon of globalisation in particular has changed how nations and individuals see the world and operate within it. In the Western world, globalisation has tended to lead to the decline of the welfare state and to a growing belief that the world is a market and that what matters is ability to compete in the marketplace. As members of national and indeed international societies, academics too have been affected by the new emphasis on the market as well as by other shifts that have occurred as individual states strive to survive in an increasingly risky world.

An increasing emphasis on the development of economies rather than societies has led in many Western societies to a reconceptualisation of higher education, although the extent of this reconceptualisation does vary from one national context to another. In many cases, the university's traditional role of producing broadly educated critical citizens has been rewritten and it is now expected to produce large numbers of suitably qualified and specialised graduates who can make a significant economic contribution. Its status as the centre of knowledge creation has also come into question as research blossoms in new non-university locations and produces the kinds of 'useful' outputs which economic progress is deemed to require. The linking of higher education to the economy has limited its traditional rights and provided it with a new set of obligations: academic freedom and the right to self-regulation, long taken for granted, can now no longer be seen as guaranteed, and the control of academic activity at many levels now has to be shared with other 'stakeholders' whose needs have to be considered and to whom those 'at the chalk face' are now indirectly or often directly answerable. While reactions to these broad changes in how higher education is seen vary, with some institutions and individual academics embracing them and others very actively contesting and resisting them, there can be little doubt that academic traditions are under threat in these turbulent times.

These new broad perspectives on the nature and purpose of higher education have translated into changes at the level of higher education policy, and the policy makers have been busy in recent times. Ball (2003) points to a policy epidemic of educational reform sweeping the globe. New policies tend to impact first on the communities in which academics operate, changing institutions, disciplines and departments and the relationships between as well as within these key communities. Such changes come to affect the professional experience of academics: the roles they are expected to play

change, as do the tasks they are expected to accomplish, and in the process core values are also called into question. These issues are now considered in more detail.

In most higher education systems, the basic structural unit is the institution, and it is the institutions that tend to be the 'pivotal organisations in the implementation of policies' (Kogan et al 2000 p.165). Higher education institutions are intrinsically complex organisations, acting as a home to a variety of different disciplinary communities with sometimes vastly different ontological and epistemological positions, and charged with being one of what Kogan et al (2000) describe as the 'integrating forces that serve to unify' (p.140) the academics who work within them. Most recent higher education reforms seem to have had the effect of increasing the complexity of the contexts in which institutions operate as well as of the institutions themselves. The need to respond to different and sometimes conflicting external demands while still coping with the complexities of the internal context has led to what Ball (2003) describes as 'institutional schizophrenia' (p.223). Institutions are being forced to adapt as best they can to the new environment created by policy change, and this process involves making certain compromises: Henkel (2000) contends that the institutions she studied were driven by the need to 'ensure survival with an identity which, even if not seamless with that of the past, was acceptable to its members, as well as likely to command resources' (p.55).

Change at the level of the institution causes a ripple effect and sooner or later the other communities within the institution that shape academic professional identities come to be affected. Many recent policy reforms have encouraged institutions to strengthen their central administration functions and this is often at a cost in terms of power and autonomy to the various academic departments and disciplines. In some institutions, this has been accepted by those outside the centre and the balance of power (to influence academic identities among other things) has shifted in favour of the institution. In others however there is strong resistance: Kogan et al (2000) found that when disciplinary hierarchies are challenged, a wide range of myths emerge to defend the status quo and protect the position of the discipline, and Henkel (2000) found that 'departments could also become sites for collective opposition or the development of strategies to sustain departmental interests in the face of external bodies or internal developments' (p.254).

Thus, policy reform clearly impacts on the different communities in which academics operate, but it would appear that the effects on these communities are not consistent across contexts and must be considered in the context of specific institutions. While

reform may, in some cases, lead to a situation in which 'institutions have more power to shape the lives, relationships and self-perceptions of academics' (Henkel 2000 p.254), it may also work to transform them into 'targets for opposition' (Henkel 2000 p.254) and the effect of such opposition can be to weaken the institutions' potential as a source of identification and simultaneously to unify and strengthen other communities such as the discipline and the department, and thus to increase their power to shape academic professional identities.

Higher education policy not only impacts on the communities in which academics operate, but also on the roles they play as professionals. Research has shown that reforms not only affect traditional roles but also lead to the emergence of new roles. Research, teaching and administration roles are all open to redefinition under the prevalent policy regimes and new developments have led to the creation of new roles in areas such as curriculum development, staff development, quality control and so on. Since, as Enders (2001) points out, changes in what different tasks are seen as lead to fundamental changes in the professional identities that can be drawn from such tasks, it seems sensible to look at how academic tasks and roles can be affected by policy reform in more detail at this stage.

Both Kogan et al (2000) and Henkel (2000) found that policy reform affected research and researcher identities in the countries they studied. A new understanding of what research was and of who should control it emerged and was integrated into policy in the various contexts investigated: Henkel's (2000) study in the U.K. for example points to a movement away from the traditional assumption that research was a largely personal activity for which the overall agenda would be shaped by the interplay between individual choices and disciplinary communities, and towards a new understanding of research as a national resource which would be driven by demands from external stakeholders for outputs that would yield economic and social benefits. This fundamental shift in thinking could not but affect both the pursuit of research and the identities academics took from it. Research assessment and funding mechanisms were put in place that increasingly rewarded researchers, and more often research groups, with clear track records of producing 'useful' and 'applied' knowledge. Those who did not conform to the new expectations found their identities as researchers challenged. For younger academics, the process of forming research identities changed: Henkel (2000) found that young academics were obliged to tailor their research agendas according to what was required by these mechanisms rather than necessarily being allowed to pursue the avenues they found interesting in the ways that they deemed most

suitable. Kogan et al (2000) found that the changes were particularly traumatic for older researchers who, under the new definitions, suddenly found themselves designated not research active and thus lost their right to claim a researcher identity at all.

Research selectivity policies in the U.K. did, Henkel (2000) claims, have some positive impacts: they were successful in 'expressing and revitalising a myth of profound personal and political importance for academic professional identities, that research was a central and continuing part of them' (p.258). The opposite side of this particular coin was that the renewed emphasis on the importance of research resulted in the devaluation of the other major academic role, namely the teaching role. As funding focuses on researchers, university teachers tend to see their relative value decline in the eyes of their institutions. The teaching role and the associated professional identity may come under pressure as a result of the change of emphasis brought about by research policies but it can also be affected by other policy shifts. Policies encouraging the massification of higher education, the widening of participation and the alignment of higher education with the needs of industry and the economy in the U.K. for example also had an impact: with increasing student numbers, increasing diversity in the student population and the requirement for courses which developed key skills and were delivered in manageable modular chunks, teaching became a tough as well as an often thankless task and not one that could contribute positively to a sense of self-worth and to an academic reputation or identity to the same extent as it had in the past. Kogan et al (2000) did find that certain reforms had a more positive effect on the teaching role: developments such as 'the institutionalisation of student evaluations and the creation of internal markets in institutions raised the profile of teaching reputations' (p.181) but even these developments had their downside as they put pressure on academics to make changes that they did not necessarily want to make. Thus the overall impact of policy reform on teaching identities in various contexts that have been researched seems to have been a negative one rather than a positive one.

By contrast, the third traditional academic role, that of administrator, has taken on increased significance as a result of recent policy reform in many contexts. Henkel (2000) found that academic work in the U.K. had become increasingly bureaucratised and that academics' time was increasingly being diverted into administrative tasks rather than into what they considered to be the important functions of research and teaching. Kogan et al (2000) too found that academics were faced with more paperwork and more committee work as a result of what they describe as 'the need for the visualisation of work' (p.179). The need to cope with new demands led to the emergence of whole new

roles: Kogan et al (2000) show how the instigation of quality control policies led to the appointment of directors of research and directors of teaching, among others, which had previously been both unheard of and unnecessary, and Henkel's (2000) study highlights the emergence of a new breed of academic manager. While these new roles opened up new potential career trajectories for academics, the increased emphasis on administrative work was generally considered a negative development: most of Henkel's (2000) respondents saw managerial and bureaucratic values as being incompatible with academic values and were generally unhappy with the new arrangements.

These various changes to academics' communities and to their roles have called into question the fundamental belief in academic freedom and academic self-regulation on which academic professional identities have traditionally been built. Many of Henkel's (2000) respondents felt that their 'power to define higher education and to police its boundaries had declined' (Henkel 2000 p.216). There was a sense that even if, officially, 'academic autonomy was not being reduced, the extent to which it was conditional upon the decisions of external stakeholders was being made more obvious' (Henkel 2000 p.222). While some (e.g. Nixon 1996) have questioned whether academic freedom as it was traditionally understood is actually a good basis on which to build a sense of academic professionalism in the current context, there appears to be a strong sense, even among its internal critics, that without academic freedom, university teachers are being transformed into 'a new proletariat' (Nixon 1996 p.8) and their professional identities are being fundamentally undermined by the various changes to the contexts and definitions of academic work.

The literature shows that policy reform has had a clear impact on the communities in which academics operate and on the roles they expect and are expected to play as professionals, and these are highly influential factors in the formation of academic professional identities. But, as Ball (2003) points out, in considering the impact of policy, we must remember that 'it does not simply change what people, as educators, scholars and researchers do, it changes what they are' (p.215). It is to this question of how individual academics react to policy changes and how these influence their professional identities that attention will now be turned.

It appears that not all academics are equally susceptible to the effects of policy reform: Henkel's (2000) research found that levels of awareness of how the policy context was changing and of the impact this might have varied from one institution to another. Among those who did register the significance of the changing context, there was often a

mixed reaction to the changes. Kogan et al (2000) found for example that the introduction of new quality policies was welcomed by some academics who 'saw public accountability as the dominant and legitimate principle of quality policies' (p.176) and considered that higher education institutions should not be exempt from the requirements of accountability. Others however, interpreted the same policies as representing 'changes in political culture towards consumerism, managerialism and a loss of trust in professionalism' (p.176) and were strongly opposed to their introduction.

Academics' different reactions to policy changes led them to adopt different strategies to deal with the new conditions in which they were being asked to operate. Henkel (2000) found that some, who were lucky enough to be based in powerful high status institutions, managed to simply ignore the reforms and carry on with business as usual. Those who were not so well positioned were forced into action however, and Trowler (1998) asserts that they developed ways of coping that were tinged by sentiments ranging from despair to tokenism to enthusiasm. Those who reacted with despair tended to resort to what Kogan et al (2000) describe as 'conservation strategies' (p.174) that involved active defence of the status quo and active resistance to any efforts to impose change. The 'tokenists', on the other hand, applied a variety of 'subversive strategies' (Kogan 2000 p.174). These took various forms. Henkel (2000) found that some academics simply accommodated the changes and translated their own objectives and perspectives in to the new language set in place by the external power brokers and carried on largely as before, a strategy which Shain and Gleeson (1999) describe as 'strategic compliance' (p. 456). Others engaged in 'policy reconstruction' (Henkel 2000 p.262), becoming actively involved in the implementation of new policies in order to ensure that these were put into operation in a manner that would have the minimum possible impact on the existing state of affairs in their institutions, departments and disciplines. Still others resorted to 'compartmentalisation' (Henkel 2000 p.262), which allowed them to see new policies such as quality policies as the responsibility of others and not directly connected to or in any way disruptive of their everyday activities. While conservation and subversion strategies tended to be widespread in the face of change, not all academics saw the changes brought about by policy reforms as a threat: Kogan et al (2000) found that some English academics willingly complied with the new Teaching Quality Assessment and used these assessments to really review their teaching and to try to reach a better understanding and a stronger sense of identity, a reaction which Moore et al (2002) also found in schoolteachers' responses to reform and have labelled 'principled pragmatism' (p.551).

Thus policy reforms clearly cause people to react in different ways and to do different things, but how do they affect people's actual professional identities? For most people, the natural reaction is to strive to protect their existing identities: Henkel (2000) contends that 'adherence to continuities in one's self image and assumptive world is a normal reaction to changes that bring uncertainty and the possibilities of threat to one's self esteem' (p.239). In some cases though, change is inevitable and substantial: Scott (1998) points out that 'certain changes and factors can cause people to reconceptualise their idea of what it means to be a professional' (p.42). Such reconceptualisations can be a painful experience: Casey (1993) describes them as 'ruptures which cause disorientation, isolation and temporary destruction' (p.44) and Moore et al (2002) see the enforced 'reinvention of the professional self [as a] convoluted and stressful process' (p.560). Individuals react differently when obliged to deal with such painful change. Some construct defensive or 'oppositional' (Casey 1993) identities and distance themselves from the groups with which they formerly identified: Henkel (2000) found that, in cases of institutional change, 'some academics consolidated their sense of professional identity through differentiation from the management of the institution' (p.254) and that increased emphasis on individual research output caused collaborative scholarship, and thus the sense of professional identity drawn from such collaboration, to decline (p.206). Others tend to draw strength from colleagues and communities in the face of adversity: Kogan et al (2000) found that in certain circumstances challenges caused groups to unite and find a common identity even where there was no such identity before, and the development of such collective identities is undoubtedly a powerful way of coping with change. While individual professional identities are altered in different ways as a result of policy change, and while both Henkel (2000) and Kogan et al (2000) found that change was most likely to lead to an active defence of existing values, there is clearly some truth in Ball's (2003) assertion that policy changes who we are as well as what we do.

2.4 Research into academic identities: recent developments in a fertile field

The period since the initial literature review for this study was conducted has seen the emergence of 'a growing literature discussing the experiences and identities of academics working within the 'new times' of contemporary academia' (Archer 2008a p.265). This section provides a brief overview of the main themes addressed by the most recent research into academic professional identities. It considers the

methodologies applied and the conceptual resources drawn on in the work and attempts to summarise the key findings that have emerged.

While a number of researchers (Brehony and Deem 2005, Olssen and Peters 2005, Pick 2006, Stensaker 2006 and others) have investigated the effects of macro-level change at meso level of the higher education institution in an effort to understand how developments such as globalisation, the spread of neoliberalism and the quest for a knowledge economy have impacted on how institutions operate, the bulk of the work has focused on the influence of these developments at the micro level of the individual academic, examining 'the lived experiences of academic workers' (Archer 2008 p.265) in the belief that 'qualitative research that focuses on how change is being understood and experienced on the ground can contribute to broader theoretical insights' (Clegg 2005 p.149), a belief which also underlies the study presented here.

Much of this research (Fowler 2005, Churchman 2006, Lomas and Lygo Baker 2006, Paewai et al 2007, Sparkes 2007, Archer 2008, Clegg 2008, Kolsaker 2008) considers the overall effects on individual university academics of the broad macro-level context in which they operate. It examines the 'embodied struggles' (Sparkes 2007 p.521) of academics in the current audit age, dominated by the discourses of performativity and managerialism, and examines 'the impact of neo-liberal modes of governance on the ways in which we make sense of the world as individuals, academics and professionals' (Harris 2005 p.421). This work is complemented by studies investigating the impact of specific macro-level policies on individuals (Henkel 2004, 2005, Sikes 2006, Fanghanel 2007) and studies investigating the impact of the overall macro-level context on particular groups of academics (Baldwin et al 2005, Archer 2008a, 2008b, Durning and Jenkins 2005, Jawitz 2008, Winberg 2008) or on particular dimensions of the academic role and on the relationship between these dimensions (Robertson and Bond 2005, MacFarlane 2005, Young 2005, Greenbank 2006, Carnell 2007, Robertson 2007). The influence on individual academics of the various communities of which they are members continues to generate interest, and work examining the impact on academic roles and identities of the discipline (Durning and Jenkins 2005, Musseline and Becquet 2005, Lindblom Ylänne et al 2006), and the department (Mills et al 2005) has also been published in this period.

A wide range of methodologies and methods has been applied to the study of academic professional identities in recent times. Data for empirical studies have been collected by means of surveys (Fowler 2005, Lindblom Ylänne et al 2006), focus groups (Quinn

2004), and interviews (Deem and Lucas 2005, Patrick 2006, Clegg 2008 and others); researchers have also carried out case studies (Hockings 2005, Mills et al 2005) or reviews of existing literature in the field (Trowler et al 2005). Qualitative research approaches that allow for in-depth understanding of 'the quality of respondents' academic lives' (Patrick 2006 p.181), of which the life history approach taken in the current study is one, have tended to predominate. Data analysis has drawn on a variety of conceptual resources. Researchers have drawn on the work of Bourdieu (Deem and Lucas 2005), Bernstein (Beck and Young 2005, Middleton 2008), Foucault (Kolsaker 2008, Yokayama 2008), Lave and Wenger (Jawitz 2008) and others; they have conducted discourse analysis (Fanghanel 2007), rhetorical analysis (Edwards and Nicholl 2006), phenomenographic analysis (Åkerlind 2007) and 'conceptual archaeology' (Robertson and Bond 2005 p.509). While most researchers continue to present their work in the form of 'traditional' academic articles, some have experimented with alternative formats, presenting their ideas in the form of poems (Chowaniec 2005) and stories (Sparkes 2007) which seek 'to speak from the heart' (Sparkes 2007 p. 522) and indeed to the hearts of those who read them.

Broadly speaking, these recent studies have confirmed and deepened the findings of earlier research into academic identities. They show that academics do in fact negotiate a great diversity of professional identities in a range of personal, historic and situational contexts (James 2005) and that such identities 'even within a single discipline area are flexible, multi-layered and susceptible to different degrees of change' (Winberg 2008 p.353). They suggest that academics' epistemologies continue to be influenced by the communities of which they are members; that they are, for example shaped by their disciplines and how knowledge is conceived and structured within them, and that this in turn shapes their experiences of academic life (Robertson 2007). They point out that 'novice academics follow a range of different trajectories in constructing academic identities' (Jawitz 2008 p.185) and that different contexts cause people to prioritise different dimensions of the academic role (Greenbank 2006).

Many of the studies that have focused on the effects on academics of the neoliberal and managerialist philosophies that have come to dominate higher education in the UK and in a number of other countries in the past number of years make somewhat depressing reading. They suggest that recent policy changes have impacted on 'the dynamic between individuals, disciplines and universities within which academic identities are formed and sustained and on the values that are central to academic identity' (Henkel 2005 p.155) and that they have led to a deterioration in the experiences of students and

staff, to a decline in the level of job satisfaction experienced by academics and to an increase in stress levels (Fowler 2005). They point out that pluralism and professional autonomy are being replaced by indicators and standards and that the reductionist approach typical of managerialism is removing difference (Lomas and Lygo Baker 2006), and warn that neoliberal regimes in institutions are endangering the capacity for authentic intellectual work (Davies 2005).

The literature does leave us with some hope however. Harris (2005) stresses that 'it is important to recognise the possibilities and opportunities provided in the current climate in which we work, in order to successfully challenge the negative and destructive elements of the neoliberal modes of governance' (p.421), while Avis (2005) suggests that 'the contradictions of performativity provide the context in which new forms of professionalism can develop' (p.209). Some of the most recently published studies suggest that academics are indeed actively mounting a defence against the negative and destructive forces of globalisation, neoliberalism and new managerialism. Clegg's (2008) research into academic professional identities in a post-1992 UK university found that 'despite all the pressure of performativity, individuals created spaces for the exercise of principled personal autonomy and agency' (p.329) while Archer's (2008a) study of younger academics in the UK showed that while it may not be possible 'to *do* without *being* an academic neoliberal subject' (p.265), the stories told by these individuals did contain 'important moments and spaces of resistance' (p.282). Kolsaker (2008) asserts prevailing views on the negative impacts of neoliberal regimes may be 'overly pessimistic' (p.513) and presents the findings of an empirical study that suggest 'a willingness to tolerate managerialist modes of governance provided autonomous niches can be protected' (p.513). Her study indicates that there is currently 'constructive interaction and interdependence between managerialism and academic professionalism, in which academics exploit strategies of power to manage and reconstitute their self-concept within an evolutionary context' (p.513).

One important point to note in relation to the current work is that there continues to be a significant gap in the literature in relation to the experiences of academics in the Irish context in general and in relation to the experiences of Irish technological sector lecturers in particular. It is in this area that the current study hopes to make a significant contribution.

2.5 Conclusion

The literature on academic identities available at the beginning of the study suggested that academic professional identities are formed as individuals perform an increasingly varied array of roles in institutional settings that are influenced by changes in the broader environment in which they operate and directly affected by policy shifts that result from such changes. It showed that these identities are complex patchworks, in which individual values and traits are woven together with the values and traits of the various different communities to which academics belong. The desired understanding of the professional identities of the academics operating in the context under investigation would therefore clearly require the exploration of both the participants' professional identity 'patchworks' and the processes and contexts of their formation and transformation. Chapter 4 describes how this exploration was conducted.

CHAPTER 3

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

The current research aims to understand how higher education policy, created at the macro level and mediated at the meso level of the institution, impacts at the micro level of the individual lecturer. In theoretical terms, what is of interest is the interplay between structure and agency. The study also seeks to uncover what kinds of professional identities have been formed at the particular nexus of macro, meso and micro levels under investigation and to examine whether and to what extent these identities have evolved in response to changes in the context in which the academics studied operate. This chapter analyses the three concepts central to the study, namely identity, structure and agency, in order to establish a theoretical framework for the analysis and interpretation of the data collected.

3.2 Identity – what is it and who needs it anyway?

Hall (1996) details what he describes as 'a veritable discursive explosion in recent years around the concept of identity at the same moment as it is subjected to a searching critique' (p.15). The extent of the discussion and critique has prompted him to wonder whether there is any point in further considering the issue and to ask 'who needs identity' (Hall 1996 p.15). This section examines some of the key issues that have arisen in this 'discursive explosion' and the case that can be made for continuing to work with what has become a highly contested concept.

This debate centres on the question of what 'identity' actually means. The modernist interpretation of identity views the person 'as an individual subject ... a given entity, the author of its own acts and centred in a unitary, reflexive and directive consciousness' (Du Gay et al 2000 p.2). At the heart of this modernist subject is 'the unity of the real 'me' or essential self' (Usher 1998 p.18), a singular, static essence that is both unchanging and fundamentally unchangeable. Archer (2000) contends that 'Modernity's Man, as a projection of the Enlightenment tradition, worked strenuously at stripping down the human being until he or she had one property alone, that of rationality' (p.4).

These rational subjects came into the world fully formed and made their way through it with their fundamental rational core untouched and certainly unaltered. This view of identity offers a comforting sense of certainty, although it leaves little room for personal growth or nurture to have any impact on what has been given by nature.

This modernist notion has come under attack from a variety of sources. The challenges have focused on the viability of this essentialist perspective in the context of late modernity with its 'dislocations of structures and processes' (Henkel 2000 p.13). In this context, characterised by complexity and constant change, the notion of identity as a fixed, stable entity is seen as threatening rather than reassuring and the 'problem of identity is primarily how to avoid fixation and keep the options open' (Bauman 1996, p.18). The idea of a 'singular knowable essential self' is contested and replaced by 'more multiple, disrupted notions of subjectivity' (Goodson and Sikes 2001 p.15) which are 'multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic discourses, practices and positions' (Hall 1996 p.17). The certainty and stability of the modernist concept is replaced by a sense that identity is 'more contingent, fragile and incomplete and thus more amenable to reconstitution than was previously thought possible' (Du Gay et al 2000 p.2). All that we can rely on, it seems, is that there is no longer anything reliable about identity.

The deconstructionist approach adopted by critics of the modernist view of identity is somewhat problematic in that it does not try to replace what it considers flawed concepts with more appropriate ones but simply 'puts key concepts under erasure' (Hall 1996 p.15). Even if there are indeed weaknesses in the existing concepts of identity, the critique leaves us with a dilemma in relation to these concepts: 'since they have not been superseded dialectically and there are no other, entirely different concepts with which to replace them, there is nothing to do but to continue to think with them – albeit now in their detotalised or deconstructed forms and no longer operating within the paradigm in which they were originally generated' (Hall 1996 p.15).

What concept of identity, then, can we use to think with against the backdrop of the contemporary 'risk society' (Beck 1992) and the deconstruction of the modernist concept? To return to the idea of a unitary subject would be, Hall (1996) suggests, impossible. Yet to go as far as some postmodernist theorists who have reconceptualised identity as a textual or discursive construction rather than as a personal phenomenon and argue that it is 'constituted through the reiterative power of discourse to produce that which it also names and regulates' (Du Gay et al 2000 p.2) seems equally unviable. In

denying that 'identities and identifications have a materiality outside the sphere of the discursive' (Walker 1998 p.352), the postmodernist conceptualisation of identity effectively denies individual human beings their agency and indeed their fundamental humanity. Yet, as Archer (2000) points out, individuals continue to live in a manner that suggests that the 'death of humanity' has not in fact taken place: 'Outside of Academia, ordinary people act in an undemolished fashion ... in confronting their environment, they feel a continuous sense of the self who does so, because they cannot live out their dissolution; they have cares, concerns and commitments which they see as part of themselves, for they cannot accept the "identity" of demolished men and women; and they have social positions which most of them would like to rectify ... and are unconvinced that social improvements depend merely on discursive changes' (p.2)

How then can we conceptualise identity in a way that addresses the concerns of the deconstructionist critics but allows us to continue to consider the individual as having an existence outside the realm of the discursive? Any such conceptualisation would involve accepting that identity is 'non-unitary and fragmented' (Munro 1998 p.2), and that 'whilst we may work hard at presenting ourself as having a unified and coherent identity...at a very basic level we are multi-self beings' (Goodson and Sikes 2001 p.41), but would not require us to abandon the idea that there is something solid and non-ephemeral to these selves. It would need to acknowledge the importance of context in the creation of identity and to accept that identities are 'produced in particular historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices' (Hall 1996 p.17), all of which impact on how the individual evolves. It would also involve accepting that identity is not a product but a process, what Giddens (1991) describes as 'the reflexive project of the self, which consists in the sustaining of coherent yet continuously revised biographical narratives' (p.5).

Working within the framework of social realist theory, Margaret Archer (Archer 1995, 2000, 2003, 2007) proposes a model of personal and social identity that takes all of these factors into account. In her conceptualisation of identity, the individual is neither 'Modernity's Man', processed of an essential unchanging core of rationality that means that he shapes society but is not shaped by it, nor 'Postmodernity's Man', arising from and constituted purely by discourse. Archer's model is based on an analytical dualism which recognises that 'both humanity and society have their own *sui generis* properties and powers' (Archer 2000 p.17) but acknowledges the roles played by each of these sets of properties and powers in the constitution and evolution of the other. This model

provides a potentially useful lens through which to view the research data and thus will be examined in detail.

3.3 A social realist perspective on the emergence of identity: from self through person to agent and actor

Archer's model of personal and social identity is based on social realism's 'stratified view of "the subject" whose different properties and powers (PEPs) emerge at each level' (Archer 2000 p.255). The four strata that make up the individual human subject are 'the self, the person, the agent and the actor' (Archer 2000 p.255). Each stratum is characterised by its own distinct properties and powers but all four strata are located within the one individual subject and thus are interrelated. A full understanding of the process of identity formation requires an understanding both of the individual strata that make up the subject and of how these interact and affect each other.

The first stage in the process of forming personal and social identities involves the emergence of the 'self' and of 'self identity'. Self identity amounts to 'a continuous sense that we are one and the same being over time' (Archer 2000 p.7), whereby the adult student feels herself to be the same person as the child learning to read at primary school, the young teenager choosing to study at university and so on. The sense of self develops early in life and is characterised by what Archer calls 'our most crucial human properties and powers – self-consciousness, reflexivity and a good knowledge of the world which is indispensable to thriving in it' (Archer 2000 p.189). It is the sense of self that makes us distinctly human and provides 'the necessary anchorage for the person, agent and actor alike, necessary that it is [sic] in order to unite a variety of life experiences, reflective evaluations, structural conditionings and normative expectations in one human being' (Archer 2000 p.257)

The second stage in the process involves the formation of a personal identity. The individual human being, in possession of a sense of self, must operate in the world. Every human being 'has concerns in the natural order (about physical well-being), in the practical order (about performative competence) and in the social order (about self-worth)' (Archer 2000 p.313), and is obliged to address the concerns arising from all three orders of reality, but is not obliged to assign equal importance to them all.

Exercising the 'self's' capacity for reflexivity, the individual engages in an internal conversation in which the relative importance of the various concerns is considered. This internal conversation generates the individual's personal identity: 'the internal dialogue entails disengaging our ultimate concerns from our subordinate ones and then involves elaborating the constellation of commitments with which each one of us feels we can live. The inner conversation is about exploring the terms of a liveable degree of solidarity for the self in its commitments and the unique *modus vivendi* to emerge is what defines the uniqueness of personal identity' (Archer 2000 p. 11).

The 'person', characterised by her unique constellation of ultimate concerns and in search of a modus vivendi that will allow for the pursuit of these concerns, interacts with the social as well as with the natural and practical orders of reality. This interaction between the person and the social world generates the final two strata of social realism's stratified subject, the agent and the actor. These are social identities, 'our "social selves" which emerge respectively through involuntary embroilment in society's distribution of resources and our voluntary involvement in society's role array' (Archer 2000 p.254). As the professional identities that are the focus of the current study are clearly social identities, an understanding of these social selves and the process by which they emerge and develop is of particular importance to the project at hand.

Despite the fact that they are often referred to in the singular, in social realist terms agents are defined as 'collectivities sharing the same life chances' (Archer 2000 p.260). Every human being is an agent, as every human being is born into a particular collectivity. In being 'assigned to positions on society's distribution of resources' (Archer 2000 p.11) at birth, we become primary agents. Archer (2000) asserts that our initial positioning as primary agents is both involuntary and objective. The individual cannot choose to be born privileged or unprivileged, but the consequences of being one or the other are very real.

However, while our initial placement as primary agents is not of our choosing, we do have the power to decide whether we choose to accept it. Transforming our positions is possible but 'their transformation depends partly upon the subjective reflexivity of primary agents in seeking to play an active part in re-shaping society's resource distribution' (Archer 2000 p.11). Primary agents can and do react to their involuntary pre-grouping by re-grouping into new collectivities which are bound together by a shared desire to act for change or indeed for the maintenance of the status quo. As such, they become corporate agents.

Corporate agents are characterised by 'capacities for articulating shared interests, organising for collective action, generating social movements and exercising corporate influence in decision-making' (Archer 2000 p.266). They exercise these capacities strategically to bring about social transformation or social reproduction, which in turn 'affects the extant role array and thus the potential social identities available' (Archer 2000 p.260). The actions of corporate agents dedicated to transformation results in the 'elaboration of the institutional role structure' (Archer 2000 p.11) to include a greater range of roles in which primary agents can invest themselves.

Unlike primary agency, corporate agency is voluntary, and not every primary agent becomes a corporate agent. Neither does corporate agency constitute a strict social identity in itself, because 'the "we" of corporate agency is still only a group whose members share its goals and organisation' (Archer 2000 p.267). However, in expanding the extant role array, it opens up new opportunities for primary agents to acquire social identities and to become social actors.

In the process of social identity formation, Archer (2000) asserts that the agent can be seen as the 'parent of the actor' (Archer 2000 p.261). Individuals' initial pre-grouping and involuntary positioning on society's resource distribution affect the extent to which they have access to available roles in which to develop a social identity: their primary agency 'profoundly influences the kinds of actors they can choose to become [as] certain opportunities and information are open to the privileged and closed to the non-privileged' (Archer 2000 p. 285). Individuals' voluntary regrouping into collectivities which work to promote their particular interests has an impact on the range of roles that are available to any given individual wanting to become a social actor at any given time: corporate agency works actively to shape the options of primary agents and to ensure that the individual 'is not condemned to a static array of available positions' (Archer 2000 p.287). The fruits of any corporate agent's labours are not necessarily enjoyed by the members of the particular collectivity itself however: as the work of the parent is often for the benefit of the child, so too corporate agency often creates new openings for individuals of future generations and 'facilitates their obtaining a social identity which may have eluded agents themselves' (Archer 2000 p.261).

While primary and corporate agency impact on social identity, Archer (2000) claims that 'it is only social actors who properly exist in the singular and who alone meet the strict criteria for possessing unique identity' (p.261). This unique identity results from the individual's engagement with the array of roles available in society. In order to become

social actors, individuals must succeed in 'finding a role(s) [sic] in which they can invest themselves such that the accompanying social identity is expressive of who they are as persons in society' (Archer 2000 p.261).

Social actors are 'role incumbents' (Archer 2000 p.283) but incumbency of any given role does not in itself confer strict social identity. In order to achieve social identity as an actor, an individual has to 'be able to personify a role rather than simply animating it' (Archer 2000 p.288). Personifying a role involves 'investing oneself in it and exerting it in a singular manner' (Archer 2000 p.11). This is only possible if the individual brings her personal identity to bear on the role and occupies it in a manner consistent with her own unique constellation of ultimate concerns. By personifying a social role, the individual is transformed, becoming the bearer of a distinct social identity as well as of a personal identity. The role itself may also be transformed: living out the role in a distinctive manner serves to 'introduce a continuous stream of unscripted role performances ...[and] every unscripted role performance creatively elasticates role expectations and prevents them from becoming set in concrete' (Archer 2000 p.297).

This process of acquiring social identities is illustrated in Figure 3.1 below. As individuals develop from infanthood to maturity, they travel for the first time around the circuit, acquiring 'the full range of personal powers (PEPs) – those of self, agent, actor and particular person' (Archer 2000 p.295) along the way. The social actors of quadrant T4 are fully formed subjects who have 'achieved strict social identity by finding a role(s) [sic] in which they found it worthwhile to invest themselves' (Archer 2000 p.296) as well as possessing 'the personal identity which enable[s] them to personify it in a unique manner, reflective of who they themselves [are]' (Archer 2000 p.296).

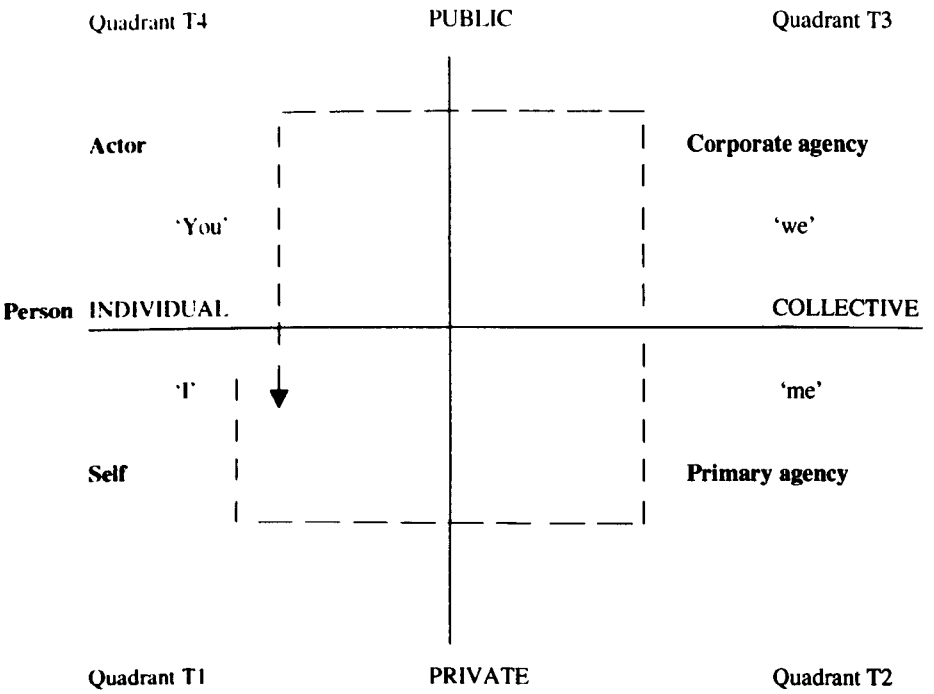

Figure 3.1 The acquisition of a social identity (Archer 2003 p.124)

Over a lifetime, individuals travel repeatedly around this circuit, seeking out roles and forming social identities which allow for the pursuit of their ultimate concerns and are compatible with their particular personal identities, and personifying these roles in a unique manner based on those personal identities. With each new circuit they reflect actively on what they have become, on their current position in society and on the extent to which their social and personal identities are suitably aligned. They recommit to those roles they have found to be expressive of who they are, playing them out in their own way and simultaneously transforming them and being transformed by them. Despite the challenges involved, they withdraw from roles that have ceased to provide them with a suitable vehicle for achieving what matters to them and being what they want to be and seek out new roles and new social identities that resonate with their ultimate concerns.

3.4 The 'vexatious fact of society' and the problem of structure and agency

While both our personal and social identities are ultimately 'ours', as the person, the agent and the actor are all strata of the subject, they are made in and dependent on a very real and influential world which, from the social realist perspective, exists outside of and independently of the subject. Our personal identities are generated out of our engagement with all three orders of reality, as we consider and prioritise our concerns based on our need to function in the natural, practical and social worlds. Our social identities arise from our placement in and interaction with the social world and are influenced by what has been described as 'the vexatious fact of society' (Archer 1995). In presenting her model of identity formation, Archer (2000) stresses that 'the emergence of our "social selves" is something which occurs at the interface of "structure and agency" [and] is therefore necessarily relational' (p.255). To fully understand social identities, of which the professional identities being investigated in this study are an example, it is therefore necessary to engage with the concepts of structure and agency and, most importantly, the relationship between them.

Archer (2003) points out that the 'problem of structure and agency' has always been one of the core problems in social theory. The meaning of even the key terms in the debate remains contested, despite a broad consensus that structure is in some way objective and related to the 'parts' of society, while agency is subjective and related to the 'people'. Beyond this fragile consensus however, different theorists hold diametrically opposed views on how structure and agency relate to and influence each other. On one side stand those whom Archer (2000) describes as engaging in 'downwards conflation', believing that structure determines or at least dominates agency, leaving individuals as mere weak 'träger' of structure and culture. On the other side are those who tend towards what Archer (2000) defines as 'upwards conflation', holding that agency is the determining or dominant force and that it is the individual who is responsible for making society and culture, such that both society and culture are mere constructs rather than entities with any causal powers of their own. Both of these perspectives seem problematic for similar reasons: in attributing dominance to either the 'parts' or the 'people', neither seems to do justice to the powers of the 'dominated' element. In the reality of lived experience however, neither structure nor agency seems powerless. Human agents can and do react to and resist society's efforts to mould them in particular ways, and social structures cannot be deconstructed and reconstructed at will, but have real power to affect the lives of individual human beings.

Realist social theory avoids both forms of conflation by according due power to both structure and agency, seeing both as 'distinct strata of reality, as the bearers of quite different properties and powers' (Archer 2003 p.2). Social forms are characterised by 'structural and cultural emergent properties, which are held to have temporal priority, relative autonomy and causal efficacy vis-à-vis members of society' (Archer 2003 p.2). Both their existence and their potential to influence are independent of their conceptualisation by any individual: they are real and have real power. Human beings as agents are characterised by personal emergent properties including 'all those predicates, such as thinking, deliberating, believing, intending, loving ...which are applicable to people but never to social structures or cultural systems' (Archer 2003 p.2). They can, and do, use these personal powers to respond to the influence of structure and culture upon them. The relationship between structure and agency is not one in which either component dominates: instead, realist social theory asserts that 'the causal power of social forms is mediated through social agency' (Bhaskar 1989 cited by Archer 2003 p.2).

How exactly does social agency mediate the causal power of social forms? To answer this question, we need to consider both 'how structural and cultural powers impinge upon agents and ...how agents use their own personal powers to act "so rather than otherwise" in such situations' (Archer 2003 p.3). Archer (2003) contends that realist social theorising has concentrated mainly on the first question and has adequately conceptualised this 'transmission' dimension. Less attention has been paid to the second dimension, to the 'reception of these objective influences, with their potential power to condition what people may do, by reflexive agents whose subjective powers ultimately determine what they do in fact do' (Archer 2003 p.8). Archer's work (2003, 2007) addresses this 'reception' dimension and arrives at a compelling conceptualisation of the process by which agency mediates structure that seems to resonate strongly with the data collected in the current study.

Focusing on how structural and cultural powers impinge on agents, Archer (2003) stresses that the process linking the two is not a process of social determinism. Instead, social realism asserts that these influences impact on agents through a process of social conditioning, which involves 'the interplay between two different kinds of causal powers' (Archer 2003 p.3), namely the causal powers vested in social forms and in those vested in individual human beings. Social forms are characterised by 'structural emergent properties (SEPs), such as distributions, roles, organisations or institutions, and cultural emergent properties (CEPs) such as propositions, theories and doctrines'

(Archer 2003 p.5). These properties pre-date the existence of any individual subject and mould the circumstances in which the individual is initially involuntarily placed and expected to operate. Archer (1995) claims that 'these results of past actions are deposited in the form of current situations. They account for what is there (structurally and culturally) to be distributed, and also for the nature of such distributions; for the nature of the extant role array, the proportion of positions available at any time and advantages / disadvantages associated with them [and] for the institutional configuration present' (p.201).

These structural and cultural factors have the potential to impinge on agents, specifically the potential to generate constraints and enablements. However, 'to constrain and to enable are transitive verbs: they have to impede or facilitate something' (Archer 2003 p.5). Until they are provided with something on which to act, the causal powers of constraint and enablement vested in social forms remain unexercised. It is human beings, through the exercise of their capacity for reflexivity, who provide what is required to activate these powers. As Archer (2007) puts it 'no one can have an ultimate concern and fail to do something about it. Instead each person seeks to develop a concrete course of action to realise that concern by elaborating a 'project' in the (fallible) belief that to accomplish this project is to realise one's concern. Action itself thus depends upon the existence of what are termed "projects" where a project stands for any course of action intentionally engaged upon by a human being' (p.7). It is these individual projects that activate the causal powers of structural and cultural factors and generate constraints and enablements. Not all projects activate constraints and enablements however: 'only if there is a relationship of congruence or incongruence between the social property and the property of the person(s) will the latter activate the former...where congruence prevails, it represents a structural enablement and where incongruence exists, it constitutes a structural constraint' (Archer 2007 p.12)

If activated by agential projects, structural and cultural factors can and do impinge on agents. They have 'the generative power to impede or facilitate projects of different kinds from groups of agents who are differentially placed ...[and] because they are relatively enduring, structural and cultural emergent properties retain their generative potential to exert constraints and enablements, were anyone or a group to adopt a project upon which they would impinge' (Archer 2003 p.7). Once these structural and cultural factors have been activated, the manner in which they will act is predictable in that 'the exercise of their causal powers is automatic' (Archer 2007 p.7).

3.5 The 'internal conversation'

The extent to which activated constraints and enablements actually impinge on particular agents is, however, not predictable but entirely dependent on how these agents, as distinct entities with causal powers of their own including the capacity for reflexivity, respond to them. In general, agents do not simply accept without question the constraints and enablements their individual projects have activated, but respond in different ways to the powers exercised by social forms. In the face of constraints, or even anticipated constraints, they may abandon their projects or they may find ways of resisting or circumventing the obstacles they encounter. In the face of enablements, they may expand their projects and make them more ambitious. It is at this stage that social forms are mediated (as opposed to simply activated) by social agency. Agents' decisions on how to respond are taken reflexively, in an 'internal conversation' in which the agent as subject reflects on her objective circumstances and works out how to align her concerns with the context in which she finds herself. The reflexive internal conversation is, therefore, the means by which agents actively mediate the causal powers of social forms.

Contrary to her own assumptions, Archer's investigations (Archer 2003, 2007) into the internal conversation found that the nature of this reflexive dialogue is not actually the same for everyone. In fact 'internal conversations were found to be so different as to warrant distinguishing three different modes of reflexivity – communicative reflexivity, autonomous reflexivity and meta-reflexivity' (Archer 2003 p.342). The kind of reflexivity predominantly practised by individuals was found to depend on both the context in which they were operating and the ultimate concerns that they were pursuing, and to affect the stances they took towards society in general and towards the constraints and enablements activated by their projects. The adoption of a particular stance was also found to have consequences both at the level of the individual and of society. These findings warrant closer inspection.

Archer (2003) claims that these three distinct modes of reflexivity initially emerge 'from three different types of interplay between structural properties ... and personal properties' (p.348). Context is clearly influential, but in itself it does not determine the mode of reflexivity practised by a given individual: if this were the case, one could expect that 'all who share the same type of initial and involuntary context would develop the same mode of reflexivity' (Archer 2003 p.348), and Archer's work shows that this is not the case. It appears that the relationship between context and concerns is a

dialectical one, in which 'one particular aspect of context, namely continuity or discontinuity "proposes", but the nature of personal concerns then "disposes"' (Archer 2003 p.348).

A continuous context, in which an individual is constantly surrounded by 'similars and familiars' (Archer 2007 p.85), is conducive to the development of communicative reflexivity, which is characterised by a pattern of 'thought and talk' (Archer 2003 p.167) whereby the individual initiates the reflective process in the privacy of her own mind but completes it only through 'external' communicative interaction with others. A discontinuous context, by contrast, tends to be conducive to the development of a more 'autonomous form of subjectivity' (Archer 2003 p.348). Discontinuity tends to lead to a lack of 'similars and familiars', and in the absence of constant dialogue partners, individuals fall back on their own internal resources and become autonomous reflexives or meta-reflexives.

Whether a person ultimately develops the particular mode of reflexivity proposed by her context depends on the nature of that person's particular constellation of ultimate concerns and the extent to which these concerns dovetail with the context. Where individuals' concerns are compatible with their context, they tend to pursue those concerns happily within that context and to develop communicative reflexivity. Generally, communicative reflexives' main concerns are with the social order of reality and firmly focused on family and friends. Where individuals' concerns do not dovetail with their contexts, they tend to seek out new contexts in which they can develop a fitting *modus vivendi,* and to develop autonomous or meta-reflexivity. Those whose ultimate concerns focus on achievements of a practical nature usually find a suitable context in which to pursue these concerns and become autonomous reflexives. Those whose main concern is with the pursuit of ideals, by contrast, tend to find that 'no existing social arrangements approximate to their ideal' (Archer 2003 p.258) and to practise a socially and personally critical form of internal conversation that is described as meta-reflexivity.

The type of reflexivity an individual practises influences how that individual interacts with the social world. Archer (2003) asserts that 'practitioners of each of the three different modes of reflexivity adopt generically different "stances" towards society and its constraints and enablements' (p342). Communicative reflexives appear to adopt an evasive stance towards the social constraints and enablements activated (or potentially activated) by their projects, while autonomous reflexives tend to take a strategic stance

and the position adopted by the meta-reflexive is usually a subversive one. Archer (2003) explains the significance of these stances: each stance, she explains 'goes above and beyond the manner in which a given subject responds to any given constraint or enablement and represents an overall pattern of response to the totality of structural powers...the stance is ventured as a generative mechanism, at the personal level, with the tendential capacity to regulate relations between the person and her society. In short, they constitute the micro-macro link' (Archer 2003 p.342-3).

The adoption of a particular stance has consequences for the individual subject, both in terms of how that subject acts and in terms of her social mobility. In adopting an evasive stance, communicative reflexives effectively commit to self-sacrifice or self-renunciation. The evasion of constraints tends to involve 'thinking small' and restricting the scope of personal projects so that these do not evoke barriers. Communicative reflexives also evade enablements, in many cases consciously choosing to ignore opportunities which present themselves because taking these opportunities could involve turning their backs on family, friends and their comfortable continuous contexts. As a result, communicative reflexivity is linked to social immobility: the communicative reflexive tends to be, on the whole, content with her social context, and actively chooses not to move beyond that context, even if opportunities for mobility arise.

The strategic stance of the autonomous reflexive, by contrast, is linked with upward mobility and with self-discipline. In striving for performative achievement, autonomous reflexives confront constraints with ingenuity, seeking to circumvent them by 'carving out niches for their practical activities that are least vulnerable to socio-cultural penetration' (Archer 2003 p.354). Any and all enablements that present themselves are quickly grasped, a process which involves 'accepting every "elastication" afforded by educational opportunities, the self-discipline to extend qualifications and skills...and then capitalising on these self-improvements to advance the *modus vivendi* desired' (Archer 2003 p.354-5). The autonomous reflexive is characterised by determination to get on and a willingness to make sacrifices if necessary to make this happen.

The commitment of meta-reflexives to the pursuit of an ideal means that their activities are characterised by 'a constant striving for self-transformation' (Archer 2003 p.355) and their attempts to find a context in which they can be the ideal selves they aspire to be often result in downwards or at best lateral mobility. The meta-reflexive neither evades nor strategically engages with constraints and enablements: instead, she attempts to subvert both and to provide a critique of social forms which is intended, ultimately, to

contribute to their transformation in line with the ideal the particular individual has committed to pursue.

Archer (2003) points out that 'although agents themselves focus upon bringing about and trying to sustain a micro-macro alignment that gives them some measure of control over their own short lives, this does not mean that their activities are relatively self-contained micro-level phenomena, deprived of macroscopic social import' (p. 356). Reflexivity is held to be a personal emergent property that has causal efficacy with relation to structural and cultural forms, and the stances that are generated by the different modes of reflexivity impact at the level of society as well as at the level of the individual subject.

Archer (2003) posits that 'because the ultimate concerns of communicative reflexives are vested in inter-personal relations (family and friends), their main effect is to strengthen social integration' (p.356). The evasive stance of the communicative reflexive is a stance that supports the status quo by avoiding anything that might disrupt it, and thus it tends to encourage social and structural reproduction, which Archer (2003 p.3) describes as 'morphostasis'. The ultimate concerns of autonomous reflexives are 'vested in the institutional order that provides the contextual outlet for their performative skills [which means that] their main effect is to augment goal achievement in different parts of the social system' (Archer 2003 p.357). Rooted in a desire for personal achievement and advancement, the strategic stance of the autonomous reflexive acts to increase social productivity and to promote social change and structural elaboration or 'morphogenesis' to use Archer's terminology (Archer 2003 p.3). Meta-reflexives, whose ultimate concerns are linked to the realisation of ideals, are also focussed on change but at a different level. Through a subversive stance which 'represents a critique of both tendencies' (Archer 2003 p. 357), namely the tendencies to morphostasis and to morphogenesis, they aim to fundamentally change society itself and to ultimately bring about social reorientation.

3.6 Conclusion

Archer's work provides a compelling account of how identities are formed and transformed as individual human beings interact with social and cultural forces. Reflexive human beings, in possession of a continuous sense of self and a capacity for reflexivity, engage in internal conversations in which they consider and prioritise their

concerns in the natural, practical and social orders of reality. The unique constellation of ultimate concerns that emerges from these conversations constitutes the individual's personal identity. The pursuit of these ultimate concerns requires the individual to interact with the social world, an interaction which generates social identities as agents and actors. All human beings are characterised by primary agency: they are assigned positions on society's distribution of resources, initially by birth, and on subsequent cycles of identity formation by default as a result of taking up particular social roles. They may also develop corporate agency through aligning themselves with like-minded individuals. In order to fulfil their ultimate concerns, however, they must also become actors. This involves investing themselves in social roles that they feel will allow them to be the kinds of people they want to be, and playing these roles in a manner that is consistent with their personal identities.

Social identities are formed at the interface of structure and agency and Archer also provides a persuasive account of how individuals are influenced by the structural and cultural forces at play in contexts in which they operate and how such forces in turn are shaped by the actions of individuals. From her social realist perspective, social forms have the power to constrain and enable the various projects which individuals devise as mechanisms for pursuing their ultimate concerns. The extent to which the power of social forms impinges on any given individual is, however, dependent on how that individual, through the exercise of her capacity for reflexivity, decides to respond when her projects activate constraints and enablements. Archer's research has shown that some people adopt an evasive stance, while others take a subversive stance and still others are strategic in their approach. Adopting a particular stance has repercussions, both at the level of the individual and at the level of society as a whole.

Archer's work provides a lens through which the data collected for the current study can be analysed and a framework within which the stories can be interpreted and the research questions addressed. The outcome of this analytical and interpretive work is presented in Chapter 8.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

A variety of different approaches have been taken to the study of academic work and life by different researchers, from large-scale national and international surveys (e.g. Altbach 1996) to in-depth qualitative investigations (e.g. Henkel 2000). This chapter will consider the approach adopted in this study. It will discuss the factors influencing the choice of an appropriate methodology and will outline the key features of the life history methodology adopted. It will detail the various stages in the implementation of this approach in this particular study, from acquiring access and recruiting research participants to collecting the individual participants' stories through interviews and analysing and presenting the data. Particular emphasis will be placed on the challenges that arose during the research journey and the efforts that were made to deal with these challenges.

4.2 From questions to answers: the search for an appropriate approach for the inquiry

Texts on social research stress that the choice of a methodology and methods for a particular piece of research should be guided by the purposes of the study being conducted and the research questions it seeks to answer. 'We need a process capable of fulfilling those purposes and answering that question' suggests Crotty (1998 p.2). Not only do we need to design or choose a suitable process, but we also have to be able to justify our choice. Crotty (1998) highlights the need for us to link methodology to our underlying theoretical perspectives and epistemological stances, claiming that 'justification of our choice and particular use of methodology and methods is something that reaches into the assumptions about reality that we bring to our work...[and] into the understanding you and I have of what human knowledge is, what it entails and what status can be ascribed to it' (p.2). This section briefly considers the assumptions about the nature of knowledge and of research that underlie the current study as well as the methodological approaches suggested by the research questions being addressed.

Although, as Crotty (1998) indicates, 'not too many of us embark on a piece of research with epistemology as our starting point' (p.13), the views of the researcher on what constitutes research and what constitutes knowledge consciously or unconsciously shape the research process from the outset, influencing the kinds of questions posed and the kinds of approaches likely to be taken to answering those questions. In addition, efforts to evaluate the claims to knowledge made in any research study require an understanding of the epistemological position of the researcher.

This research is grounded in what Usher (1996) labels an interpretive or hermeneutic epistemology. Among the underlying beliefs of the interpretivist researcher are the assumption that 'knowledge is concerned not with generalisation, prediction and control but with interpretation, meaning and illumination' (Usher 1996 p.18) and the assumption that 'all human action is meaningful and hence has to be interpreted and understood within the context of social practices' (Usher 1996 p.18). Interpretivists also believe that 'human action is given meaning by interpretive schemes or frameworks' (Usher 1996 p.18). The process of research is a process in which interpretive frameworks are used to make sense of data relating to human actions, and the knowledge generated in this process is acknowledged to be 'perspective-bound and partial' (Usher 1996 p.19).

While a particular epistemological position may dispose the researcher towards particular kinds of research questions and particular methodologies, the choice of an appropriate approach should ultimately be based on the nature of the issues to be addressed by a given piece of research. Plummer (1983), among others, asserts that a particular problem will usually bring an appropriate methodology in its wake. The current study set out to explore the dynamic formation of professional identities in a particular context and the impact on those identities of the policies and structures that shape that context. Thus it required a research approach that foregrounds the individual and her particular experiences and interpretations but also acknowledges the role of factors outside the individual in shaping those experiences. Consideration of the various options available suggested that the life history approach advocated by Goodson and Sikes (2001) would be appropriate for a study investigating this particular set of issues.

4.3 Learning from lives: life history methodology

Life history research, Goodson and Sikes (2001) suggest, is an approach which tends to be used to address 'big questions ... which deal with the essence of identity, of our place in the world, with the purpose and meaning of it all' (p.2), and those who undertake it must be acutely aware and prepared to accept that 'these are questions to which there are unlikely to be easy or straightforward answers' (p.2). A life history approach values and explores 'the subjective reality of the individual' (Plummer 1983 p.67) and 'provides evidence to show how individuals negotiate their identities and consequently experience, create and make sense of the rules and roles of the social world in which they live' (Goodson and Sikes 2001 p.2).

Life history work emphasises the importance of listening to individual stories. It sees these stories as valuable in their own right but also as valuable in terms of what they reveal about the social and historical contexts in which the individual storytellers have lived and formed their personal meanings. It considers that individual stories 'are not really individual stories but the stories of our context' (Usher 1998 p.27), tales which are grounded in wider social structures and processes and serve to reveal the operations of these structures (Armstrong 2003 p.116). Thus they can help us to understand not only the individual but also the social and historical contexts in which the individual operates and has operated: they provide us with a point of entry into 'the tension between the social or structural and the individual' (Goodson and Sikes 2001 p.9), and allow us not only to understand 'how individuals experience the objectively structuring empirically observable features that place them historically where they are' (Erben 1998 p. 14) but also, to a greater or lesser extent, to understand those features in their own right.

If life history work is to provide insights into the 'relations between structure and agency with reference to a given individual' (Scott 1998 p.33), then the individual stories must be set against the context in which the lives they recount were / are lived. Goodson and Sikes (2001) stress the importance of the move from the individual tale, which they call the life story, to the contextualised account, which is the life history. This move involves linking the stories told by individual respondents to the 'social histories, and indeed the social geographies in which they are embedded' (Goodson and Sikes 2001 p.17) and aims to 'locate the life story as it operates in particular historical circumstances' (Goodson and Sikes 2001 p.62). Using a life history methodology requires the researcher to work with both the life stories as told and other sources and forms of data, such as documentary data, to try to understand 'the pattern of social

relations, interactions and constructions in which the lives of men and women are embedded' (Goodson and Sikes 2001 p.87). If life history research is to help us to understand 'the subjective implications of socio-political processes' (Goodson and Sikes 2001 p.106), then this move from life story to life history is crucial: 'without contextual commentary on issues of time and space, life stories remain uncoupled from the conditions of their social construction' (Goodson and Sikes 2001 p.17) and the potential learning from individual lives may be unnecessarily limited.

For the researcher who is interested in how individual stories 'articulate... with social and historical forces' (Walker 1998 p.352), a life history approach can lead to rich data. However, as with any methodology, life history methodology has limitations. A belief in the value of individual accounts must be balanced by an awareness of the limits of what can be learned from one individual's tale: life history researchers must acknowledge that 'no account is a full and authoritative account' (Mann 1998 p.51). They must also acknowledge that a life story is not a tale of absolute truth, but a construction, a 'bricolage' or 'reconstruction of a fragmented life' (Scott 1998 p.34), which is being created even as it is being recounted. Goodson and Sikes (2001) point out that 'as social beings we constantly story our lives, but in different ways and using different words in order to fit specific contexts, purposes and audiences' (p.42).

The move from life story to life history also clearly involves a certain amount of what Erben (1998) calls 'imaginative reconstruction' (p.10). The life history is influenced by 'the context of the telling' (Goodson and Sikes 2001 p45) and by 'the biographer listening to the stories [who] is also positioned by her own biography and her own epistemological frameworks' (Scott 1998 p.33). While life history research aspires to being a democratic approach in which traditional hierarchies between the researcher and the researched are broken down, the power to select topics and participants as well as to interpret data and present findings still rests largely with the researcher, and thus the impact of the researcher needs to be acknowledged and not underestimated.

The appropriateness of a life history approach for the current study seemed clear on a number of levels. Its fundamental assumptions about the nature of knowledge and the processes by which knowledge can be generated resonated with the epistemological position outlined in the previous section. Its belief in the ability of individual stories to contribute to the understanding of broad general phenomena reflected the belief underlying the research that understanding how academic professional identities are formed and transformed in a specific context could contribute to a more general

understanding of these issues. Its insistence on the need to connect the personal and the contextual in order to provide an insight into both how social and political structures shape individual lives and how individuals interpret these structures and exercise agency within their boundaries, seemed to render it inherently suitable for a study which aimed to investigate the interplay of structure and agency in the process of academic identity formation.

4.4 Applying a life history approach

Having selected life history methodology as an appropriate approach for the study, the next step in the process was to decide how to apply this approach in order to find answers to the research questions being addressed. This involved a number of key decisions and actions, from establishing clear boundaries for the project, negotiating access and obtaining the required ethical clearance, to selecting and recruiting participants and choosing and implementing suitable methods for the collection and analysis of data, which are discussed in the following sections.

4.4.1 Setting the boundaries of the study

Before the study could begin, decisions relating to its boundaries were required. First of all, the question of whether to involve lecturers from all or several IoTs or indeed from just one institution in the study needed to be resolved. Personal experience of working in different IoTs suggested that these institutions are far from homogeneous and that the impact of macro-level policy at the micro level of the individual tends to be influenced by the actions taken at the meso level of the particular institution. Consequently, it seemed sensible to limit the focus of the study to one institution. This ensured that the research participants were all dealing with the same meso-level structures, interpretations of policy and approaches to policy implementation, as well as with the same macro-level influences.

The selection of an institution for the study was strongly influenced by personal factors. As mentioned previously, this research project was motivated by a desire to understand how my own professional identity as a lecturer has been and is shaped by the fact that I work in the IoT sector. The desire to increase my personal understanding of my own professional context as well as to contribute to a more general understanding of the

impact of the policies governing that context on all those operating within it, coupled with the perception that a detailed grasp of both the institutional and the national contexts would be necessary to fully understand the individual stories, encouraged me to carry out the study in my own institution.

4.4.2 Ethics and Access

Any research involving people raises ethical issues and researchers need to ensure that no one is harmed as a result of participating in the research. In the case of the current study, both the topic under investigation and the research approach were quite personal, and while, as Goodson and Sikes (2001) assert, it may not always be possible to predict exactly how such highly personal research may impact on participants, precautions needed to be taken to protect the participants. All participants were formally made aware of the scope and nature of the research before they consented to become involved and they were assured that they could withdraw from the process at any time. Interviews were conducted in a context of the interviewee's choosing and in a non-threatening, sympathetic manner. Interview transcripts were approved by the participants. Data analysis was informed by what Casey (1993) describes as 'the need not to play double jeopardy with life stories' (p.24) and by a commitment to being analytical but non-judgemental at all times. The use of such strategies would, it was hoped, ensure that participants were suitably protected at all stages in the research process.

One of the key ethical challenges that arose was the challenge of maintaining the anonymity of the individual participants and of the institution where the research took place. Given that these lecturers operate within what remains a relatively small institution and that particular individuals had distinctive stories that might be recognised within or outside the institution, it was anticipated that guaranteeing anonymity would be difficult. A variety of strategies, from the use of pseudonyms or codes in place of participants' names to the creation of composite or fictionalised life histories (Goodson and Sikes 2001 p.37) or the use of group biographies (Casey 1993), were considered. In view of the centrality of individual professional identity to the study, neither composite life histories nor group biographies seemed appropriate. Ultimately, pseudonyms were used to conceal the identities of the individual participants and details that might allow these individuals to be identified were omitted in as far as this was possible.

The question of how to deal with the identity of the institution provided a greater challenge. On the one hand, the national and local contexts were of central importance to the study and thus would ideally need to be presented in some detail. On the other hand, there was a need to minimise the risk of harming the institution or damaging its reputation in any way, and this seemed to demand that the identity of the institution be disguised. Ireland is a small country with a limited number of higher education institutions and the institution in which the study was conducted has a unique history, so guaranteeing institutional anonymity would be difficult. Using a pseudonym was unlikely to suffice, but going beyond this to more dramatic strategies might require the omission of details that were needed to adequately address the research questions. The analysis of the data suggested that the research findings were unlikely to cause harm to the institution or its reputation and thus I decided to reveal the identity of the institution in my work, while concealing the identity of the individual participants.

Before the research could proceed initially, it was necessary both to obtain ethical clearance and to formally negotiate access to the research site. Permission to carry out the research was granted by the Director of WIT in the Summer of 2005. Formal ethical clearance was obtained from both the University of Sheffield and WIT's Research Ethics Committee by the end of November 2005 and the study was then able to proceed.

4.4.3 Whose lives? The process of participant selection

As both the topic under consideration and the chosen methodology were intensely personal, the selection of appropriate research participants was crucial to the success of the study. Life history work requires a particular type of participant: Plummer (1983 p.89 – 90) suggests that a good research informant needs to be accessible in terms of time and place, to have sufficient time available to them to participate, to be thoroughly enculturated in their cultural world and currently involved in that world, and to be willing and able to tell a good story. It also requires the selection of participants who have something to contribute to the research being undertaken and thus random sampling methods are not generally appropriate. Sampling for the current study was purposive (Goodson and Sikes 2001 p.24) and targeted lecturers who were likely to be both willing and able to contribute to the research at hand.

I initially planned to recruit twelve participants. This group was to include lecturers with differing lengths of service from four of the six academic schools at WIT: three

academics of different 'generations' (ideally one who had joined the college in the 1970s, one who had joined in the 1980s and one who had joined in the 1990s) from each of the four longest established academic schools (Business, Engineering, Humanities and Science) were to be invited to be involved in the study.

Each of the four schools from which participants were to be drawn provided lists of their academic staff, and the institution's Human Resources manager provided data on when a selected subset of lecturers from each school had joined the staff. Based on this information, a number of individuals were invited to participate in the study. Some of those approached, particularly from the 'oldest' generation did not respond, while others declined to become involved. However, most of those contacted expressed a willingness to participate, though some requested further information on the study before committing to becoming involved. As soon as the required twelve participants were recruited, the process of data collection began.

Once the interviews were under way, a number of problems with the participant selection process became clear. The most significant of these was that the start dates provided by Human Resources were not always accurate. As a result, some participants did not actually belong to the 'generation' to which they had been thought to belong. Since the individuals in question all had rich, interesting stories to tell, and since the 'generational' lines as originally drawn were proving to be less useful than had been anticipated, I decided to continue to work with the participants and review the generational classifications. Initial data analysis suggested that there were significant common threads in the stories of those who were part of my original first and second generations, while the experiences and professional identities of those who had joined the staff in the 1990s and 2000s differed somewhat from their earlier colleagues. The key differences emerging seemed to be traceable back to the loosening up of certain constraints on the activities and autonomy of institutions in the RTC legislation enacted in 1992. The participants were, therefore, re-grouped into a 'pre-1992' generation and a 'post-1992' generation, which allowed for meaningful cross-generational comparisons. Since only four of the initial participants had arrived in the post-1992 period, one further post-1992 participant was recruited from each academic school at this point.

4.4.4 In search of stories: the data collection process

Both the research questions being addressed and the methodology being applied meant that interaction with individual lecturers was at the heart of the data collection process. Other activities, including documentary analysis and contextualisation interviews with institutional managers, also contributed to the study, but it was from interviews with the individual academic participants that the rich core data on which the analysis presented in the upcoming chapters is based emerged.

I had envisaged that data collection would involve a number of interviews with each participant. In the initial interviews, participants would be given freedom to tell the stories of their own professional lives in the manner they deemed appropriate, while subsequent interviews would involve the construction of life histories appropriate to the research focus from these individual life stories through collaborative contextualisation work involving both researcher and participant.

Lecturers who had agreed to participate were contacted to schedule initial interviews. Prior to these interviews, participants were re-issued with the participant information sheet (see Appendix 1), which they had received when they were initially approached to participate in the research, as well as with consent forms (see Appendix 2) and background information forms (see Appendix 3) which they were asked to complete and bring with them to the interview. The background information sheet was designed to elicit mainly factual data in relation to qualifications, job titles and so on that would be used to build up a profile of each individual.

Individual interviews varied in duration, with the shortest lasting little over half an hour and the longest running to almost two hours. All but one of the interviews were recorded, and participants were told that they could ask to have the recording stopped at any time if they wished. A schedule of interview questions (see Appendix 4) centred around six main thematic areas, which had been developed on the basis of previous research into academic professional identities as well as on the basis of the issues to be addressed by the study, was used to guide the conversations where necessary, but prompts were kept to a minimum in order to allow participants the freedom to tell their stories in their own way.

This phase of the research presented some interesting challenges. The very first interview brought to light many issues that need to be dealt with when using this

approach to data collection. The interviewee was clearly very uncomfortable. He sought reassurance about the measures in place to protect participants' anonymity and refused to allow the interview to be recorded. As the interview drew to a close, he returned to a number of points he had addressed early in the conversation and asked that I remove certain details he had provided from my notes as these might allow him to be identified. He also asked that I provide him with a report on the interview and that I allow him to review and edit any sections of my thesis based on his story before submission. I subsequently decided not to include this individual's story in the thesis to ensure that I would not inadvertently do harm.

The remaining interviews ran more smoothly, although a number of issues arose that should be mentioned here as they may have affected the data. Firstly, despite agreeing to their interviews being recorded, several participants seem to have been somewhat intimidated by the fact that their stories were being taped. These individuals seemed to feel that they were under scrutiny and were clearly anxious to make a good impression. They told their stories in rather a formal manner and were frequently apologetic about their statements, expressing concern that they might not be providing the kind of information I needed. What was particularly interesting was the change in these participants once the recorder was switched off. One individual who had been sitting on the edge of his seat for the duration of the interview visibly sank back into the chair and sighed, before proceeding to chat in a much more informal manner about some very relevant issues for a further twenty minutes. This behaviour signalled that, at least in some cases, the image that was being presented to me in the interview was being very carefully and deliberately constructed. The 'post-recording' stories also presented something of an ethical dilemma. They often contained interesting insights that could not be included in the research because they were officially off the record but that could and did colour my interpretation of what the individual in question had said on the record. In analysing the data, I deliberately avoided focussing on or citing these comments. The same strategy was applied to any comments that participants asked me to remove on reading the interview transcripts.

Secondly, the stories told by the research participants were influenced by the timing of the interviews. In some cases, events taking place around the time of the interview clearly coloured individuals' tales. A number of respondents commented explicitly on this. One pointed out that low staff morale in his department due to falling student numbers may well have lent a negative tone to his story, while another admitted that his sometimes negative attitude towards the institution's efforts to support research was

most likely exacerbated by the fact that his application for sabbatical leave had recently been turned down. The context in which a story is told clearly has the potential to impact on the story and this had to be kept in mind when analysing the data.

Finally, my status as an insider researcher clearly impacted at the interview stage. This was beneficial in many ways. The fact that they knew me, in some cases reasonably well, set at least some of the participants at ease. The trust that is necessary between the researcher and the researched in life history work was already established before the interviews and these individuals were willing to talk openly to me as a result. The fact that I was familiar with their context also meant that participants could tell their stories without having to explain details that might have puzzled an outsider. The assumption of shared knowledge and understanding proved to be something of a double-edged sword however. Individuals occasionally made pertinent references in passing to specific incidents or developments in the institution that I was not in fact aware of, despite being an insider, forcing me to interrupt to seek clarification. More significantly, many also presumed that their own individual actions and experiences since joining the staff were part of the shared heritage of the institutional community that I, as a member of that community, would automatically understand. Many participants spoke at length and in detail about their lives before lecturing, as it was clear that I would not know about this period of their lives, but needed to be prompted to provide such detail about their experiences after joining WIT, since they assumed that what they had done since coming to Waterford was common knowledge and did not need elaboration.

The original research design envisaged more than one interview with each participant, with subsequent interviews to be used for clarification of ambiguities and for the collaborative creation of life histories. In practice, this plan was not implemented for a number of reasons. Firstly, although all participants agreed to being contacted again if necessary, most had highlighted work intensification as one of the most significant changes that they had experienced in recent times, and I did not wish to impose more than was necessary on their goodwill. Secondly, any issues that required clarification had in fact been clarified in the course of the initial interviews. Thirdly, most participants had made explicit links between their particular experiences and the backdrop against which these experiences took place when telling their stories and thus much of work of contextualisation had also already been done. All participants were, however, provided with full transcripts of their interviews and given the opportunity to edit these and to make additional comments if they wished.

The data collection phase of the study also involved gathering information about the historical backdrop against which the professional lives of the participants had been lived. Legislation relating to higher education in general and to the technological sector in particular was relatively easy to locate, as were some policy documents. Certain key reports that had acted as catalysts for change in the IoT sector proved more difficult to access, as a number had been prepared especially for the Minister for Education and had not been published. In his work on higher education in Ireland, White (2001) had also suggested that understanding the process by which the various acts, reports and policies actually came into being would considerably enrich the understanding of their implementation and ultimate consequences. In order to understand which of the various policies and reports had in fact been of significance for Waterford, what factors were at play locally and nationally as these were being generated, how the institution and its various sub-units reacted to and implemented the various policies and recommendations, and how these ultimately affected the institution, contextualisation interviews were held with several members of the executive management team.

The core legislation and policy documentation and the data from the six management interviews were used to construct a picture of the context in which the research participants operated and developed professional identities. The findings of the research are however based on the data generated in the biographical interviews conducted with sixteen individual lecturers from four broad disciplinary backgrounds, eight of whom joined the academic staff at Waterford before 1992 and eight of who came to lecturing in the period after legislation for the technological sector was enacted in 1992.

4.4.5 In search of meaning: the data analysis process

The process of analysing the data began as soon as the first of the participant interviews was completed and involved several cycles or iterations. This section outlines the key phases in the data analysis process and discusses some of the issues that arose in what proved the most challenging part of the research process.

The individual interviews generated a large volume of data and the stories were characterised by a high level of diversity of both form and content. The interviews were deliberately loosely structured conversations that were largely shaped by the individual respondent's train of thought and sense of story. As anticipated, these conversations generated rich and interesting stories, but each story differed from the others both in

terms of the issues addressed and the overall structure, making the discovery of common threads linking the stories to each other and to the research questions a challenging task.

The first phase of the data analysis process could be described as the discovery phase, in that it focused on discovering or uncovering the key themes present in the life stories narrated by the participants. In this phase, I made use of reflective notes that I had compiled in relation to each individual interview. These notes consisted of initial personal reactions to the different life stories, recorded as soon as possible after the completion of each interview, and reflections on the contents of individual interviews, recorded during the transcription process. From these reflective notes, a list of key themes and sub-themes that seemed to be emerging from the stories was generated.

At this point in the process, it became clear that common themes seemed to be emerging from the stories of the participants who had begun their lecturing careers in the 1970s and 1980s but that the experiences and accounts of these individuals differed from those of their colleagues who had started lecturing in the 1990s and 2000s. There were differences in how individuals defined themselves: the earlier recruits tended to define themselves in very general terms, describing themselves simply as lecturers, while the later recruits were more likely to define themselves as lecturers in specific discipline and sub-discipline areas. While the stories of the earlier participants focused on their experiences of teaching and of interaction with students and colleagues in their schools and departments, the later participants tended to emphasise their involvement in research and their interaction with other researchers within and outside the institution.

The opportunity for technological sector lecturers to engage in research as part of their role had only been opened up in 1992, with the enactment of legislation which allowed the Regional Technical Colleges 'subject to such conditions as the Minister may determine, to engage in research, consultancy and development work' (Government of Ireland 1992, Section 5). Closer examination of the data suggested that many of the differences between the stories of those recruited in the 1970s and 1980s, on the one hand, and the stories of those recruited in the 1990s and 2000s on the other hand, could in fact be traced back to the easing of various constraints on the activities and autonomy of the RTCs in the 1992 Regional Technical Colleges Act. In the subsequent phases of the analysis, the lecturers who had joined WRTC prior to the enactment of the Regional Technical Colleges Act and those who had come to Waterford after the legislation was in place were viewed as two distinct groups, and attention was focused on how the experiences of these two groups (referred to as the pre-1992 and post-1992 generations

and each bound together by certain commonalities in their experiences and stories) differed from each other, as well as on the similarities and differences discernible in the individual participants' accounts of their professional lives.

In the next phase, the interview transcripts were coded using the list of themes and sub-themes generated in the discovery phase. This coding process highlighted an important issue that would need to be addressed in the subsequent phases of the analysis. It appeared that the impact of policies and structures on the individual lecturers would be more difficult to discern in the stories I had collected than was the case in similar studies that had been carried out in this field. The respondents in Henkel's study (Henkel 2000) and Lucas' study (Lucas 2001), for example, were quite explicit in their comments about the effects of particular policies on their lives and professional identities. My participants, by contrast, made few explicit references to higher education or general policies and their impact. While they did link their experiences to the contexts in which they occurred, most tended not to comment on the factors that were responsible for shaping those particular contexts unless directly asked to do so. To understand how policy impacted at the level of the individual, it would be necessary to understand both how individuals were influenced by their contexts and how these contexts were influenced by the various policies and structuring forces that were at play. The influence of context could be read off the participants' stories but the links between those contexts and policies would have to be teased out in order to address the overall research questions. This is attempted in Chapter 5.

As I worked through the interviews, new themes emerged from the stories and were added to coding list. By the time half of the original twelve interviews had been coded, this list had expanded considerably, and it was clear that it had the potential to grow even longer as each new interview transcript was analysed. At this point therefore, the list of codes was reviewed with the aim of reducing it to more manageable proportions for subsequent rounds of coding. It became clear that the data could be classified under five main headings. To varying extents, the respondents all spoke about their lives before moving into lecturing, their initial experiences of academic life, the different roles they were and / or are expected to play as IoT lecturers, and their interactions with the various communities to which they belong or with which they work. Given the focus of the study, it was also necessary to examine and write about any comments made about the impact on them of the various policies and structures in place and about their reactions to these policies and processes. The initial interviews were re-coded and the remaining interviews coded using these five headings and a short list of sub-headings

related to each (see Appendix 5), and two pieces were written, one of which synthesised the main trends emerging from the stories of the pre-1992 respondents, and the second of which summarised the key issues arising from the stories of the post-1992 recruits.

These pieces, which form the basis of Chapters 6 and 7, were descriptive rather than analytical. They allowed broad cross-generational comparisons to be made and the evolution in academic professional identities over time to be traced but they lacked explanatory force. In order to understand why these particular academic identities were emerging in this particular context and just how they were being shaped by the context, the data would need to be viewed through an appropriate conceptual lens.

In my search for a conceptual framework for the study, I had initially been drawn to the work of Bourdieu. His views on the influence of structure on agency seemed to resonate with my personal experience of the context that I planned to investigate and his concepts of habitus and field in particular promised to be useful analytical tools. As I considered the data however, I began to question the suitability of Bourdieu's theory as a conceptual framework for the study. The first difficulty related to the assertion that the relationship between the agent and the social world 'is not that between a subject (or a consciousness) and an object, but a relation of "ontological complicity"... between habitus as the socially constituted principle of perception and appreciation and the world which determines it' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992 p.20 cited in Archer 2007 p.42). To what extent could a theory which saw structure and agency as being mutually constitutive and inextricably linked and which seemed to 'preclude one from disengaging the properties and powers of the practitioner from the properties and powers of the environment in which practices are conducted' (Archer 2000 p.6) be used in a study that explicitly aimed to understand the interplay of structure and agency in a particular context?

The second difficulty related to the fact that, despite these efforts to put structure and agency on the same level, Bourdieu's theoretical framework often appeared to ascribe more power to structures than to agents. The agent in Bourdieu's theory is an individual whose 'actions and works are the product of a modus operandi of which he is not the producer and has no conscious mastery' (Bourdieu 1977 p.79 cited in Archer 2007 p.43), and who seems to be, at least broadly speaking, condemned to 'passively bearing the weight of the world' (Archer 2007 p.42) because he is denied the capacity for reflexivity that would allow him to engage more actively with the world and to transform it rather than reproduce it. The individuals in my study, by contrast, seemed

to be actively 'making [their] way through the world' (Archer 2007). As I considered the stories I had collected, I was both surprised and struck by the extent to which both individual participants and the institution resisted having their ambitions reined in or their pathways determined by forces outside themselves. While they were, undeniably, influenced by the structural context in which they were operating, they also demonstrated an ability to reflect on that context and to take action designed to transform it, and even their decisions to endure what they could not change seemed to be taken consciously rather than emerging 'semi-consciously' (Bourdieu 1977 citied in Archer 2007 p.14) or 'quasi-automatically' (Bourdieu 1990 citied in Archer 2007 p.14) as a result of their social positioning. A theory that saw them as 'personifications of exigencies actually or potentially inscribed in the structure of the field or, more precisely, in the position occupied within this field' (Bourdieu 1989 p.449 cited in Archer 2007 p.44) seemed unlikely, therefore, to provide a suitable theoretical lens through which to view these individuals' stories, and so a new conceptual framework needed to be found and applied.

The search for a theoretical framework ultimately led to the work of Margaret Archer (1995, 2000, 2003, 2007). Her theory on the role of the reflexive 'internal conversation' in the mediation of structure and agency seemed to resonate with what was emerging from the data in the initial analysis. While the current study, unlike Archer's own work, did not directly address the issue of reflexivity with the participants, individuals' stances towards constraints and enablements, which are a product of the practice of a particular type of reflexivity, were clearly represented in the data. Archer's work seemed to provide the conceptual lens that had been missing. In the next and final phase of the analysis process, the interviews were revisited and interpreted in the light of her theories on the interaction of structure and agency and on the reflexive formation of personal and social identities, as outlined in detail in Chapter 3. The resulting analysis is presented in Chapter 8.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an account of the methodological approach chosen for the research and of its implementation as well as of some of the challenges that arose during the research process. In the chapters that follow, the focus will shift to the participants' stories and the contextual backdrop against which their professional lives are lived.

CHAPTER 5

FRAMING THE CONTEXT

5.1 Introduction

A fundamental feature of the life history approach is the move from the individual tale, or life story, to the contextualised account, or life history, which involves the linking of the personal accounts presented by participants to the 'social histories and indeed to the social geographies in which they are embedded' (Goodson and Sikes 2001 p.17). In order to understand 'the subjective implications of socio-political processes' (Goodson and Sikes 2001 p.106), the researcher must 'locate the life story as it operates in particular historical circumstances' (Goodson and Sikes 2001 p.62). The purpose of this chapter is to enable this 'location' of the professional life stories recounted by the research participants by examining the particular historical circumstances in which their academic identities formed and evolved.

All of the participants have spent their professional academic careers, however long or short, in the Irish IoT sector, and are currently working in one particular institution within that sector. The chapter explores this common contextual backdrop to the participants' stories. It reviews the development of the technological sector from the 1960s to the present day, and briefly examines the legislation and policies that have shaped the sector in that period. (A more detailed discussion of these issues is presented in Appendix 6). It also outlines the key characteristics of the macro and meso-level contexts in which the participants were operating when the research was conducted and traces the evolution of the lecturing contracts that constitute the official definition of what an IoT lecturer is expected to do and ultimately to be.

5.2 The technological sector takes shape: thirty-five years a growing

The technological sector has a relatively short yet turbulent history. It has its origins in the 1960s when, as White (2001) puts it, 'Ireland accidentally entered a social engineering project that built up technological and vocational education outside the universities' (p.vii). The decades since the first technological colleges opened their doors in 1970 have seen tremendous change both in the colleges and in the environment

in which they operate and thus the sector provides an interesting context in which to study the impact of structure and policy on academic identity formation and transformation.

The first indications of the development that would change Irish higher education date back to the 1950s. This decade saw significant change in Irish political thinking, particularly in relation to economic policy. White (2001) notes a shift in the thinking of the Department of Education in this period, and an increased concern with the economic dimensions of education. The Department was also affected by the shift towards a more interventionist approach that was affecting all government departments at this time, and successive Ministers started to seek out opportunities for active change.

General concern with the economic contribution of education and with active intervention to bring about change translated into a specific focus on technician education in the early 1960s. There was a sense, fuelled by interaction between the Irish government and the fledgling OECD, that 'the prosperity of a modern society and economy depended on the availability of an educated workforce' (Coolahan 2004 p.77) and that Ireland therefore needed to produce greater numbers of skilled technicians. Reviews carried out by the Commission on Higher Education and the Steering Committee on Technical Education led to the conclusion that the country needed a new separate system of higher education to provide the required technological education, which was not, and it was felt could not be, provided by the universities. Thus the seeds of the technological sector were sown.

The majority of the current Institutes of Technology (IoTs) started life as Regional Technical Colleges (RTCs) and as such were never really intended to function as higher education providers. White (2001) provides a good overview of their development. They were first mooted in 1963, when plans for the introduction of a new technical leaving certificate were announced. It was suggested that courses leading to this award would be provided by new technological colleges with regional status. These colleges were also to train apprentices and some higher-level technicians. Implementation of these plans proceeded slowly at first, and when the idea of a technical leaving certificate was axed as a result of opposition lobbying, the immediate need for the proposed RTCs seemed to have evaporated.

By this stage however, White (2001) explains, the proposal to establish these colleges had taken on a life of its own. In 1966, the Minister for Education set up the Steering

Committee on Technical Education to advise him on issues related to technical education, to advise the consortium that had already been set up to build the proposed new colleges and to provide a brief for the colleges with projected courses, outline curricula and so on. This Committee's Report proved highly influential. It provided the government with grounds for pursuing what now seemed an unnecessary development, arguing that Ireland needed people with technical skills and that the RTCs could be used to artificially stimulate people's interest in acquiring such skills, since such interest did not appear to be occurring naturally. It defined the long-term role of the institutions as being to educate 'for trade and industry over a broad spectrum of occupations from craft to professional level, mainly in engineering and science but also in commercial, linguistic and other specialisms' (Coolahan 2004 p.77). It proposed that the new colleges be administered by regional education councils rather than the local Vocational Education Committees, and it recommended that a national awards council should be set up to oversee programme development and delivery and to make awards in all of the new RTCs.

The Steering Committee Report gave the government the impetus needed to make the RTCs a reality. In the Autumn of 1970, the first five colleges opened, offering courses leading to qualifications validated by professional bodies and full time certificate courses in engineering, science and business. Although the battle to keep them from being controlled by the VECs had been lost, the Department of Education controlled the funding for the colleges directly. The first students took courses that had been designed at national level under the supervision of the Department of Education, since academic staff were not appointed to the colleges until shortly before they opened and most of those recruited were from industrial and technical rather than teaching backgrounds. These students graduated in 1972 with certificates from the newly established National Council for Educational Awards (NCEA), which was set up to oversee and make awards in the non-university sector.

The 1970s saw this new sector expand and change. By 1974 there were eight RTCs in operation. Developments in the senior cycle of second level education and in the training of apprentices under a new national training agency meant that the focus of these colleges shifted to third-level education even at this early stage, despite the fact that they had not originally been envisaged as higher education institutions. With the guidance and support of the NCEA, the new institutions began to develop new programmes and became well established on the landscape of Irish higher education.

Over time, both the context in which the RTCs operated and the colleges themselves were to change significantly. In the late 1970s, the disconnect that had existed between the educational and industrial sectors finally came to an end. The Industrial Development Authority (IDA) began to work with higher education institutions in an effort to ensure that technological skills shortages, which were affecting the country's potential to attract foreign investment, were tackled. This was a significant development, not least because the IDA turned not only to the technological colleges but also to the university sector, bringing the universities, which up to now had resisted providing technological education 'in from the cold' as White (2001) describes it, and thus undermining the position of the RTCs as the specialists in this area.

The 1980s saw the desire for increased autonomy develop in the maturing RTCs. Spurred on by the National Institute for Higher Education (NIHE) Limerick's campaign for university status, the RTCs decided that they too wanted more. The quest for freedom initially focused on the need for the colleges to move beyond their teaching remit and to engage in other activities. White (2001) traces the impact of this campaign on the political field of the time: ministerial statements and government commissioned reports suggested that there was growing acceptance that the remit and the autonomy of the RTCs should be expanded.

The translation of this acceptance into actual fact occurred when the Regional Technical Colleges Act became law in 1992. While the Act did not provide quite the level of autonomy that the colleges aspired to, as it kept them firmly under the control of the VECs, the NCEA and the Department of Education, it did at least establish them on a statutory basis. The RTC Act clearly defined the remit of the colleges as the provision of 'vocational and technical training for the economic, technological, scientific, commercial, industrial, social and cultural development of the State with particular reference to the region served by the college' (Government of Ireland 1992 section 5). In fulfilling this overall mission, they were chiefly expected to 'provide such courses of study as the Governing Body of the college considers appropriate' (Government of Ireland 1992 Section 5) although the legislation also empowered them, 'subject to such conditions as the Minister may determine, to engage in research, consultancy and development work and to provide such services in relation to these matters as the Governing Body of the college considers appropriate' (Government of Ireland 1992 Section 5). The conditions determined by the Minister have, it should be noted, traditionally been quite restrictive, governed by a determined effort to prevent 'mission drift' and to ensure that the colleges remain focused on their applied remit.

Each RTC was to have a Governing Body whose role was 'to manage and control the affairs of the college and all property of the college' and to 'perform the functions conferred on the college' (Government of Ireland 1992 Section 7.1). The Governing Body was to appoint an Academic Council 'to assist it in the planning, coordination, development and overseeing of the academic work of the college and to protect, maintain and develop the academic standards of the courses and the activities of the college' (Government of Ireland 1992 Section 10.1). The constitution of Governing Bodies was strictly regulated and all its decisions were subject to the approval of the Minister for Education.

The second half of the1990s saw considerable turbulence in the higher education generally and in the technological sector in particular. The 1995 Report of the Steering Committee on the Future of Higher Education unleashed serious turmoil, which hit the technological sector in 1997. The Report recommended that the RTCs be redesignated Regional Institutes of Technology to reflect their evolving roles and that Waterford RTC become a higher-level technological institute with authority to make its own awards, in recognition of its unique position as the main higher education provider in its region.

In January 1997 the Minister for Education announced that the Waterford RTC was to be re-designated as Waterford Institute of Technology. Chaos ensued as the other RTCs claimed that they were entitled to be similarly upgraded. By 1998 all of the RTCs had become IoTs. IoT designation was not, however, accompanied by the delegation of authority to make awards that had originally been promised. Instead, an Interim Review Group was set up to establish a procedure for delegating awarding powers. This group reviewed submissions from Waterford and Cork, and recommended in 1998 that these colleges be delegated authority to award certificates and diplomas, but by then, work was under way on new legislation to regulate higher education awards and the recommendation was put to one side, only to be implemented in 2001, by which time other significant changes had occurred.

The 1999 Qualifications (Education and Training) Act heralded further change for the technological sector. Under the Act, the NCEA was to be replaced by a new Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC), which would still have a role in validating programmes and making awards, but would now be expected to carry out this role within the confines of a new National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and to answer to the body established to create that framework, the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI). The role outlined for HETAC was one that would

effectively oblige the Council to contribute to the demise of its own power, as the legislation required it to create a process for delegating awarding authority to the institutions under its control. This development, coupled with the inclusion of a clause in the 1997 Universities Act under which institutions could formally apply to become universities, gave the stronger RTCs cause for optimism, as it seemed that the autonomy they wanted might soon be within reach.

As the new millennium dawned, Ireland was enjoying an economic boom, but it was widely held that the country would need to nurture a knowledge economy if growth was to be maintained. A significant role in this process was envisaged for higher education and, in order to ensure its fitness for purpose, the government invited the OECD to review the system. The 2004 OECD Report found that there was room, and indeed a requirement, for improvement in several areas. It recommended that more attention be paid to widening participation and to the internationalisation of Irish higher education, as well as to research infrastructure, which was considered to be inadequate.

More significant for the technological sector were the recommendations in relation to the structure of the higher education system. The panel was unambiguous in its support for the maintenance of the distinct sectors within the system but proposed a new structure that would bring both universities and IoTs under a single funding authority. While the Report appeared to be recommending parity of esteem for diverse institutions under the new Tertiary Education Authority (TEA), it advocated that this single body should have 'two committees, one for the university and one for the institute sector' (OECD 2004 p.52) and it also clearly stipulated that a new funding model to be designed by the TEA 'should be differentiated between the university and the institute of technology sectors so as to preserve the distinctive roles of the two sectors' (OECD 2004 p.53). These recommendations also came 'with the caveat that the new Authority must contain machinery to prevent mission drift in either direction' (OECD 2004 p.21). The OECD report explicitly stated that no IoT should be allowed to become a university and that only applied research, to be funded by Enterprise Ireland (EI) rather than the TEA, should be sanctioned in the technological sector. The final nail in the coffin came in the form of a recommendation that the power to award doctoral qualifications be withdrawn from the IoT sector. Fourth level was to be the territory of the university sector alone.

While many of the recommendations of the 2004 report have not yet been implemented, activity in relation to higher education indicates, crucially for the purposes of this study,

that they have had an influence on the thinking of policy makers. The most recent legislation to have been enacted shows this clearly. The Institutes of Technology Act of 2006 has brought the IoTs under the remit of the HEA, which was previously responsible only for the university sector. Under the Act, the colleges are no longer be funded by the Department of Education and Science (DES) but are to be allocated a budget by the HEA based on a 'statement of the proposed expenditure and expected income' (Government of Ireland 2006 Section 15) to be presented annually by the institutions to that body. IoTs must also prepare a strategic development plan as well as writing and implementing access and equality policies. The Act does include a section guaranteeing academic freedom for both institutions and individual staff members and it does give more power to an institution's Governing Body than previous legislation but in many other respects, it serves to maintain the status quo in the technological sector.

5.3 The technological sector today: current contextual conditions of possibility

The Irish higher education system today remains characterised by what Killeavy and Coleman (2001) describe as a rigid binary structure, with the university sector on one side and the technological sector on the other. The technological sector currently consists of thirteen Institutes of Technology and a small number of other specialised institutions. Statutorily established by the 1992 RTC Act, the IoTs are now governed by the 2006 IoT Act.

At the start of the twenty-first century, the colleges and their staff find themselves operating in a context that differs significantly from the context in which they were established. The 'elite' (Trow 1974) higher education system of the 1960s has been transformed into a 'mass' (Trow 1974) system, with 55% of the Leaving Certificate age cohort currently going on to study at third-level (HEA 2008). Further growth is anticipated, with the government targeting a national participation rate of 72% of the relevant age cohort by 2020 (HEA 2008). Thanks to initiatives designed to widen participation, the increases in the percentages of students entering higher education have been accompanied by changes in the composition of the student body. Mature students accounted for 18% of those entering the system in 2006 and should account for 27% by 2013 (HEA 2008).

Despite the apparent growth, population trends have seen the actual numbers of students taking the Leaving Certificate decline in recent years. Figures from the State

Examinations Commission show that the number of students sitting the exams fell from over 66 000 in 1995 to just over 52 000 in 2006. While this decline will be temporary, it has led to a situation in which the supply of higher education places exceeds demand and institutions have had to devise strategies to deal with this unusual situation. IoTs and their staff have had to become involved in aggressive marketing of their programmes, both at home and overseas, and have had to learn to deal with the increasingly heterogeneous student communities that result from casting the recruitment net so widely.

While the IoTs have had some success in their quest for increased autonomy over the years, they remain subject to significant external control. From 1970 to 2006, they were funded directly by the Department of Education and Science and their programmes, their budgets, and even their academic staff appointments were subject to DES approval. The IoT Act has, in essence, simply transferred to the HEA the responsibilities and powers previously held by the DES, and has conferred no meaningful increase in operational freedom on the IoTs.

The structure and broad objectives of the institutions' academic programmes are also still strongly influenced by external forces: programmes must now be modular and comply with the National Framework of Qualifications. HETAC may have delegated awarding authority to many institutions, but the Council retains the power to review the IoTs and to withdraw this authority at any time. Efforts to escape this restrictive environment by invoking section 9 of the Universities Act have proved entirely unsuccessful for any institutions that have tried this to date and it seems highly unlikely that any IoT will be re-designated as a university in the foreseeable future.

The size and composition of the academic staff at RTCs / IoTs have traditionally been, and indeed continue to be, subject to external control. In the 1970s and 1980s, staff were recruited and hired by the local VECs, which had to seek sanction for each new post created and approval for each individual appointed from the Department of Education. Even after the VECs were removed from the equation in the mid-1990s, the need for DES sanction for appointments continued. Promotional opportunities for existing staff are also dependent on the external decisions: the Department of Education and Science remains responsible for the allocation of posts at all levels within the institutions and this allocation is governed by the desire to maintain appropriate ratios between the different grades in the institutions at all times.

5.4 The research site within the sector: a close-up on Waterford Institute of Technology

Waterford was the site of one of the original Regional Technical Colleges. Waterford RTC opened its doors in 1970 with a remit to provide technical and vocational education for up to 200 students: it initially offered two-year certificate programmes in three academic schools (Business, Engineering and Science) as well as courses leading to the examinations of professional bodies in areas like accountancy and apprentice training. By the time the study commenced in 2005, Waterford Institute of Technology was firmly established as the main higher education provider for the South East region of Ireland, a region which is home to 11% of the country's population but which has, as yet, no university. It offered ninety-two full-time programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate levels in six academic schools (Business, Education, Engineering, Health Sciences, Humanities and Science) as well as part-time courses in adult and continuing education and supervision for a growing population of research postgraduates (accounting for approximately 4% of the student population). In the academic year 2004-2005, it had approximately 9,500 students on its registers.

Waterford provides a very interesting context in which to study academic professional identity formation and transformation: not only has it grown tremendously since 1970 but it has also been, since the early days, an institution in tension and transition. When it was originally established as an RTC, it was intended to focus its attention on the training of technicians. The lack of a university in the South East meant that there was a serious gap to be filled in terms of higher education provision for the region however, and when calls from regional stakeholders for the establishment of a university (dating back to 1977) went unanswered, WRTC stepped up to the challenge of filling this gap. While many of the other RTCs continued to focus on developing new certificates and diplomas, WRTC began concentrating on degree level programmes, on expanding its disciplinary base to include areas of study that were not purely vocational and technical and on developing a research role alongside its prescribed teaching role.

These developments were applauded at regional level but they were not necessarily welcomed at national level. Waterford soon came to be seen as the 'problem child' of the technological sector. At best it provided those in control with a challenge, as the institution's constant efforts to stretch the boundaries of its remit meant that new procedures and structures to allow this had to be considered and put in place. At worst it

strengthened them in their resolve to keep the binary divide firmly in place and the technological sector institutions firmly in their allotted space within the system.

The Waterford college is, in many respects, a pioneer in the sector. As we have seen in the previous section, it was the first college to be designated an Institute of Technology in 1997, unleashing a wave of serious tension within the sector. It was also the first college to be granted authority to make its own awards at certificate and diploma level under the process for delegation of authority brought in by the 1999 Qualifications Act. It was subsequently the first college to undergo review and to receive delegated authority to award its own primary and taught masters degrees, and was the first to go through the HETAC process of accreditation to hold a research register, which led to a decision in 2005 to allow the college to register and supervise postgraduate researchers to doctoral level in the sciences and to masters level in other key areas without further awards council validation.

As all pioneers, it has had to face significant challenges. It has had to deal with the teething pains of various new processes and has on occasion been subject to repetitions of reviews when the first attempts showed up procedural difficulties with particular processes. It has also had to deal with defensive reactions from various sources which feel threatened by its ambitious development. At various stages it has been actively pushed back into its box by institutions ranging from the universities and other IoTs to national bodies such as the Department of Education, the NQAI and HETAC, and even international bodies such as the OECD panel who carried out the 2004 review of higher education have felt the need to put a brake on its enthusiasm.

Over its short lifetime, WIT has not only faced up to the changes to structure and policy which have impacted on the whole technological sector of higher education, but has actually caused many of these changes by its actions. It has been the target of both support and opposition. Its leaders have consistently striven to push boundaries and both leaders and individual lecturers have had to deal with the resulting internal and external tensions. All of this has impacted on what the institution and the academic staff within it have become, and it is to an understanding of what kind of academic professional identities have developed and how they have developed in this context that the current study aspires.

5.5 The technological sector lecturer: terms and conditions in transition

Not only are the IoTs as institutions subject to strong external influences, but the terms and conditions of employment of their staff are also largely externally dictated. Academic staff in IoTs are bound by contracts agreed at national level between the Teachers' Union of Ireland (TUI), institutional management and the Department of Education and Science. They are also public servants and have therefore been affected in a similar manner to other public sector workers by the various partnership agreements put in place to regulate the development of the Irish economy since 1987. This section considers how the contracts that constitute the official definition of the lecturing role have developed over the lifetime of the sector, as well as the impact on academic staff of demands for increased productivity and efficiency in the public services overall.

The RTCs were originally administered by the local Vocational Education Committees and the majority of staff were Class III Teachers with terms and conditions of employment identical to those of Class III teachers in second-level vocational schools. Given that the RTCs were to provide some third-level courses as well as second-level courses, the additional grades of Assistant Lecturer and Lecturer were introduced. Assistant Lecturers were required to devote more than 55% of their time to teaching on third-level courses, while Lecturers' teaching duties were to be 'confined as far as possible' (Department of Education 1974) to third-level work.

The late 1970s saw the abolition of the Class III Teacher and Assistant Lecturer grades. Class III Teachers were replaced by College Teachers, who were required to teach up to 40% of their hours on third-level courses, while Assistant Lecturers were assimilated onto the Lecturer scale, which became known as the Lecturer 1 (L1) scale. A new teaching scale, the Lecturer 2 (L2) scale, was also introduced, but the number of L2 posts allocated to each institution was limited and obtaining an L2 post involved a competitive process. These academic grades remained unchanged until 1998, when significant alterations were introduced as a result of the Programme for Competitiveness and Work (PCW). This partnership agreement saw the introduction of a new entry level grade, the Assistant Lecturer (AL) grade, as well as the merging of the L1 and L2 grades to form one grade, denoted simply as Lecturer (L). A further teaching grade, Senior Lecturer 1 (SL1) (Teaching), was introduced above the Lecturer grade. Each institution was allocated a limited number of SL1 posts, for which only existing L2 staff were initially allowed to compete.

Despite the clear qualification inflation in practice, in theory the minimum qualifications required by candidates for lecturing positions in RTCs / IoTs have not changed significantly over the years. The requirements for each of the subjects originally taught in the RTCs were set out in detail in the Department of Education's Memo V7 (Department of Education 1974). Teaching certification was required for some subjects, but in most areas what was expected was a primary degree or equivalent. This document did however state explicitly that these were the minimum qualifications and that industrial experience was also desirable. These minimum requirements remained unaltered until 1998. In the post-PCW era, candidates for Assistant Lecturer posts are expected to hold an honours degree or equivalent, while those aspiring to higher-level posts are expected to hold postgraduate qualifications. The inclusion, in conditions for progression from the AL scale to the L scale, of a provision for ALs with PhDs to be considered for advancement after three rather than five years service, suggests that even candidates for entry level posts may well need to be qualified beyond the minimum level.

Lecturing contracts in the technological sector have always been strongly teaching-focused. Not only has teaching always been placed first on the lists of duties contained in the contracts, but traditionally significant detail has been provided in relation to what is required in this area, including in most cases a specific statement in relation to the number of hours per year that a contract holder is expected to spend on teaching. The hours requirements have admittedly changed somewhat over time. Assistant Lecturers in the 1970s were expected to teach 900 hours per year while Lecturers had to do no less than 700 hours per year, as against an expected teaching load of 630 hours per year for Assistant Lecturers and 560 hours per year for Lecturers under the post-PCW contracts.

What is more significant however is that, among all the duties lecturers are expected to fulfil, teaching is the only one for which such specific requirements are set out. This has a significant impact at both meso and micro level. Both managers and individual lecturers tend to define what a lecturer is and does in terms of teaching hours, rather than in terms of overall duties and responsibilities. Efforts to support activities other than classroom teaching, from course management and pastoral work to research, tend to involve allocating 'hours' to these activities, thus reducing the class contact time of those involved in such activities but never leaving anyone on less than 'full hours'. While this 'hours' discourse is alien to those outside of the technological sector, within the sector it remains one of the prevalent discourses, shaping and potentially limiting what institutions and individual lecturers can do.

The contracts also outline the duties, other than teaching, that lecturers are expected to fulfil, although they provide considerably less detail in relation to these other responsibilities. The original Memo V7 contracts set out a list of four duties for lecturers: as well as teaching, they are required to look after the property of their employer, to comply with the instructions of the various bodies to which they are answerable, as well as to assist in 'general education and administrative work in connection with enrolment duties, interviews, syllabus revision, educational records, stock-taking and general supervision' (Department of Education 1974). Assessment was only added to the official duties of Assistant Lecturers and Lecturers in 1979. By 1993, the list of duties had grown to six. These included 'providing professional support to students in their learning activities' and 'engaging in research, consultancy and development work as appropriate' (Department of Education 1993).

The post-PCW contracts (Healy 1998), which were in place when this research was conducted, contain significantly longer lists of duties. The AL contract lists ten duties in total. As well as teaching, which can include postgraduate supervision, maintaining appropriate records, assessment and student support, Assistant Lecturers are expected to be involved in course development, course promotion, committee work and activities 'necessary to the development of their department or school', and to engage in research or consultancy 'as appropriate'. The duties of a Lecturer are similar, except that Lecturers are expected to teach fewer hours and to provide input into course coordination as well as course development. Lecturers also have an additional duty, namely to 'promote scholarship'. The SL1 contract specifies that the holder is also expected to provide academic leadership and scholarship on courses, to play a pivotal role in research and development and to act in an advisory capacity and as a professional support in academic matters to colleagues.

In addition to describing what lecturers are expected to do, various versions of the contract also point to limits in relation to what they are allowed to do. The most significant limitation would appear to be the restriction on external work. Memo V7 specifies that 'external work shall not be undertaken without the consent of the Committee [VEC] normally obtained beforehand' and clearly states that such consent 'shall not be given unless it is clear that such work shall not conflict with or affect the efficient discharge of the appointee's duties under the Committee' (Department of Education 1974). This condition remains in place today, although since the mid 1990s the necessary consent can be granted by the institution in which the lecturer is based.

Lecturing staff in IoTs work within a hierarchical structure in which promotional opportunities are relatively limited. While Assistant Lecturers are allowed to progress to the L scale once they have met certain conditions, moving beyond the Lecturer grade is more difficult. The number of posts that are available in each institution at Senior Lecturer level is regulated by the Department of Education and Science. A limited number of SL1 (Teaching) posts were allocated to each IoT in the PCW agreement, but few posts have been created at this level in the interim, which means that opportunities to advance to this level only open up when incumbents vacate their posts. The higher grades (Senior Lecturer 2 and Senior Lecturer 3) are management grades, and posts at these levels are allocated to institutions on the basis of staff and student numbers. Growth at WIT has led to the creation of additional posts at these levels over time, but this has not necessarily increased the chances of promotion for all lecturing staff. These posts tend to be permanent posts, which means that once a position is filled, it may be years before another opens up. They also tend to be allocated to particular departments and schools, effectively excluding those outside the relevant disciplinary areas from competition for the posts.

Lecturers' terms and conditions of employment are also influenced by the fact that IoTs are publicly funded institutions and their employees are public servants. Both institutions and individuals are, therefore, affected by policies and developments relating to the public sector. Various national agreements have made pay increases conditional on increased productivity and accountability in the public sector generally, and these have left their mark on the technological sector. The PCW agreement of 1998 fundamentally altered the structure of academic posts in IoTs and secured a commitment from the TUI to reviewing the structure of the academic year and to developing and operating appropriate quality assurance mechanisms. Subsequent agreements have led to further changes: institutions have been obliged to modularise and semesterise their programmes and to introduce a performance management scheme for academic and other staff, for example.

Thus, lecturers in Institutes of Technology are bound by contracts agreed at national level between the Department of Education and Science, the management of the institutions and the Teachers Union of Ireland. These contracts lay out the various duties that they are expected to fulfil. The main duty, and the one which is most clearly specified, has been and remains teaching. Under the version of the contracts which was in place when the research was conducted, Assistant Lecturers were expected to teach for 18 hours per week (or 630 hours in total over the course of an academic year), while

Lecturers and Senior Lecturers had a teaching load of 16 hours per week (or 560 hours per year). Other duties included assessment, course development, maintaining records and engaging in research and consultancy 'as appropriate'. Those at Lecturer level were also expected to play a role in course management and to promote scholarship, while Senior Lecturers were expected to provide academic leadership on courses and to act as a professional support in academic matters to colleagues.

The contracts also specify the level to which those appointed to particular levels should be qualified. Under the 1998 contracts, those applying for Assistant Lecturer posts are required to hold at least an honours primary degree while applicants for posts at Lecturer and Senior Lecturer level are required to be qualified to masters level. In practice, most new recruits at Assistant Lecturer level are expected to hold or at least be working towards doctoral qualifications. Progression from Assistant Lecturer to Lecturer status is automatic on completion of five years of service but progression beyond Lecturer level is only possible if a higher-level post is vacant. Higher-level posts are limited, being allocated sparingly to institutions on the basis of student numbers by the Department of Education and Science, and opportunities for promotion generally only open up when incumbents vacate their posts on retirement, making it difficult for most to climb the career ladder within the institution.

5.6 Conclusion

Overall, the IoT sector has traditionally provided, and continues to provide, a very tightly structured and often seemingly inflexible context in which to function. Institutions and individuals are obliged to operate in a space in which there appears to be little room for manoeuvre, yet the data suggest that, both at the meso and micro levels, bold and imaginative actions have created spaces for the exercise of agency. The issue of how this particular context influences individual academics and the professional identities they form and of how it is in turn influenced by these individuals lies at the heart of the analysis presented in the coming chapters.

CHAPTER 6

THE LIVES OF LECTURERS: THE PRE-1992 PARTICIPANTS' STORIES

6.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the life stories of eight individuals who joined the academic staff at Waterford Regional Technical College between its establishment in 1970 and the eventual enactment of legislation for the technological sector in 1992. It presents a brief introduction to these individuals and considers the pathways that led them to academia. It traces the development of their academic careers from when they initially joined the institution to when they were interviewed for this study in 2006, paying particular attention to their engagement with the different and shifting roles an academic is expected to play and with the various communities in which these roles are played out. It examines how these roles and communities, and thus these particular academics' careers, were and continue to be influenced but not entirely captured by the institutional and national policy context in which they are embedded. The overall aim of the chapter is to establish what kinds of academic professional identities have been formed and developed by these particular individuals as agents interacting with the particular set of structuring forces at play at Waterford.

6.2 Participant profiles: introducing the pre-1992 participants

Kieran Roberts, the longest serving member of staff involved in the study, joined WRTC in 1978. He was appointed as a Class III Teacher in the School of Engineering, where he was initially involved mainly in apprentice education. 1979 saw the arrival of Mark Stevens and Owen Gough. Mark was appointed to an Assistant Lecturer post in the natural sciences area within the School of Science, while Owen joined the then School of Accountancy and Business Studies as a Lecturer in Business Studies. Dr. Simon Jones came to Waterford in 1981 to take up a Lecturer 1 post in the Department of Humanities which was, at that time, still part of the School of Accountancy and Business Studies.

Expansion in various disciplines in the early 1980s meant that lecturing opportunities opened up in a number of different fields. Betty Casey was one of several new staff

appointed in the School of Accountancy and Business Studies in this period, joining WRTC as a Lecturer 1 in 1982. In 1983, a shortage of lecturers in his specialist area within the School of Engineering saw Joseph Lysat being asked to take on some part-time hours, and he was subsequently appointed to a full-time position as a Lecturer 1. The final members of this pre-1992 group, Laura McDonald and Emma Meehan, both came to the institution in 1985. Laura started out as a part-time teacher in the Department of Humanities, while Emma was appointed to a full-time Lecturer 1 post in the computing area with the School of Science.

Participant name	**Affiliation**	**Recruited in**	**Qualifications**
Kieran Roberts	School of Engineering	1978	Originally held trade qualifications and a teaching qualification – now qualified to masters level
Mark Stevens	School of Science (Life Sciences)	1979	Originally held a primary degree and a teaching qualification – now qualified to masters level
Owen Gough	School of Accountancy & Business Studies	1979	Originally qualified to masters level
Simon Jones	School of Accountancy & Business Studies (Department of Humanities)	1981	Originally held a primary degree and a teaching qualification – now qualified to PhD level
Betty Casey	School of Accountancy & Business Studies	1982	Originally held a primary degree and a professional qualification – now qualified to masters level
Joseph Lysat	School of Engineering	1983	Originally held a professional qualification – now qualified to masters level
Emma Meehan	School of Science (Computing)	1985	Originally held a primary degree – now qualified to masters level
Laura McDonald	School of Accountancy & Business Studies (Department of Humanities)	1985	Originally held a primary degree and teaching qualification – now qualified to masters level

Table 6.1 Overview of participant information for the pre-1992 participants

6.3 Pathways to the profession: how the pre-1992 participants arrived in higher education

For these individuals, academia was to an extent an accidental destination. All but one of them worked in areas unrelated to education before embarking on academic careers, and while some did actively decide to divert from their initial professional pathways and to officially transform themselves into teachers, others seem to have become lecturers by chance rather than necessarily by conscious choice.

Most of the pre-1992 participants came to lecturing long after completing their own higher education or training, and they seem not have considered teaching or lecturing when initially planning their careers. Mark admitted that he had not set out to become a teacher when he graduated from university. 'I had no fixed ideas about what I wanted to do' he recalled. 'As a matter of fact, I never considered teaching as an option'. While he had not actually discounted the education option, other respondents had. Betty remembered having a clear picture of what she did not want to do when she completed her degree: 'the two things I decided at the time were that I wasn't going to teach...and I wasn't going to be an accountant' she explained. Kieran too seems to have initially decided against a career in education, and in fact to have actively chosen to avoid the academic path altogether at a very early age. Despite his parents' willingness to make the necessary financial sacrifices to allow him to attend secondary school at the local seminary, he was concerned that he would not be sufficiently capable for the very academically focused education on offer. 'I said that really it was great to get the opportunity but I didn't think that it would suit me and that I would prefer to go to the vocational school' he recounted.

Only Laura and Emma, who both came to lecturing relatively soon after graduating from traditional university courses, seem to have actively considered teaching as a possible career path during their own initial higher education, and in both cases it was second-level teaching rather than third-level lecturing that they contemplated. 'When I was going to college, I would always have thought that I would have liked teaching' Emma admitted. But when she had to choose a specialism within her science degree programme, she found herself confronted with a dilemma: 'I knew I wouldn't have had the aptitude to do an honours degree in maths or physics' she recollected. 'When I chose computer science I was saying to myself "I'm getting rid of the teaching option now" ... but I said so be it'. In Laura's case, teaching appears to have been in the family: 'on my father's side of the family I am apparently the fifth generation of teacher'

she explained. The effects of this heritage seem to have been subconscious rather than conscious, however. While she did train as a second-level teacher on completion of her primary degree, the reasons Laura gave for her choice of courses at university indicated a lack of any clear sense of what kind of career she wanted to pursue. 'I did Arts because I was too lazy to apply myself to anything specifically...and then I ended up doing the H.Dip. because most of my friends were doing it' she recalled.

Laura was not the only member of this generation to come to Waterford armed with a teaching qualification however. Simon, Mark and Kieran also arrived as trained teachers, having consciously chosen to change career paths and move from industry to education. For Simon, teaching provided an opportunity to pursue a passion. Having originally left university without a degree and worked in a wide variety of jobs, he developed an interest in his current discipline in his mid-thirties and returned to higher education as a mature student to take an arts degree. Pragmatism dictated that this leap had to lead to some form of work and teaching seemed 'the most likely option'. He took a PGCE course designed specifically to train teachers in his area for the further and higher education sectors and worked in UK polytechnics for a number of years before applying for a post in Waterford.

For both Mark and Kieran, the motivation for the move into teaching was both intrinsic and extrinsic. Both were looking for more structure than was offered by the jobs they held in industry. Mark found the fact that he could not clearly quantify his achievements frustrating: 'I felt a lack of completion in the job' he explained. Kieran, by contrast, loved his job but knew that the combination of his own poor health and the very strong work ethic instilled in him by his parents was likely to lead him to push himself too hard if he remained in industry. Experience of part-time work in vocational schools had given him a sense that 'teaching could suit me and could enable me to do everything that I enjoyed doing and have a bit of time in which to do it and have a more definite structure'. External factors conspired to enable both Mark and Kieran to make the move into teaching in the mid 1970s. In the wake of the OECD's recommendations on the training of technicians in Ireland, concerted efforts were made to improve educational provision in science and technology. Mark's move to a post as a second-level maths and science teacher was facilitated by 'a big drive at the time to recruit teachers, especially in the sciences area'. A shortage of teachers in other technical areas led the Department of Education to offer competitive scholarships for full-time teacher training courses to entice expert trades people into teaching, and it was this scholarship scheme that enabled Kieran to train and then work as a specialist second-level teacher.

For Kieran, Mark and Simon, the decision to apply for posts at WRTC was rooted in a desire to advance along their newly chosen career path as teachers. Simon had decided to move to Ireland for personal reasons and was actively pursuing a teaching post when the Waterford post was advertised. Mark was enjoying teaching but was anxious to develop his career further. 'There were very few career promotional prospects in the job that I had' he explained '[so] after seven years at second-level I began to realise that maybe if an opportunity came to change, to move on, I would do so'. After a few years of second-level teaching, Kieran was impatient for a new challenge, but was 'duty bound' to remain in teaching for at least five years to repay the Department of Education's investment in his training. An opening for a lecturer in the trades area at WRTC seemed to provide the perfect solution to his dilemma, as it would provide the challenge he needed while allowing him to meet his obligations, and he was determined to get the job. 'I still remember giving that interview absolute welly' he recounted. 'I went for that interview like I've never ever gone for another interview'.

It was to some extent chance rather than design that led the other members of the pre-1992 generation to WRTC. Having moved from overseas to raise his family in Ireland, Owen found himself in need of employment. Lecturing was just one of the avenues he pursued in his hunt for work, and it turned out to be the avenue that led to a job. Both Betty and Emma were prompted to move into academia by changes to their work situations in industry. In Betty's case, a change of manager in the company where she was working caused significant changes that led her to start looking for alternative employment. A newspaper advertisement for a lecturer in accounting at WRTC caught her attention and she decided to see if, despite her earlier aversion to teaching, lecturing might be for her. After a short and very painful stint in the software industry, Emma parted company with her employer and found herself without a job and also no longer sure that she was cut out for the career path she was on. 'What followed happened purely by chance' she recounted. A friend from university suggested that she approach the RTCs to see if there might be jobs available in her area, and a visit to WRTC proved fruitful. 'Totally coincidentally there was a job going' she explained.

Joseph, by contrast, was not looking for a change of employer. He was working in professional practice when the director of the college asked him if he would be interested in doing some part-time lecturing. Joseph recalled that at the time he was not particularly enthusiastic: 'I said I'd think about it. It didn't really suit, but the company [his employer] didn't seem too bothered'. Initially he lectured two mornings a week and while he enjoyed it, he didn't consider moving out of professional practice. The

changing economic climate in the early 80s in Ireland gave him cause for concern however, as he was working in an area which was likely to suffer badly in a period of recession, so when a lecturing position opened up, he decided to make the move into academia on a full-time basis.

As an Arts graduate and qualified second-level teacher, Laura describes herself as an 'accidental lecturer': 'I would have to say that I honestly never took a decision to go into academia ' she claimed. She spent two years in temporary posts in secondary schools but did not consider moving out of second-level teaching until a friend encouraged her to apply for work to the RTCs when she found herself in need of a job. She sent CVs to several RTCs and was contacted by Waterford with an offer of part-time teaching hours. She decided to take the hours on offer, never intending to stay in Waterford for very long: 'I came down then, for a few weeks as I thought, until something else fell into my lap' she recounted. 'There was no more of a plan than that'.

Overall then, lecturing was not necessarily part of an original conscious career plan for the pre-1992 participants. Only two of these individuals, Emma and Laura, had considered education as a career option during their own student days, and both had considered second-level teaching rather than lecturing at that point. Laura did go on to obtain a teaching qualification, as did three of her pre-1992 colleagues, who decided to re-skill in order to move into teaching from their existing professional roles. The remaining four pre-1992 recruits had neither teaching qualifications nor teaching experience, but were in search of work when positions opened up in Waterford and decided to take a chance on lecturing as a new career.

6.4 Life as lecturers for the pre-1992 participants: adopting and adapting academic roles

When these participants joined WRTC, they had only a limited idea of what they were getting into. RTCs were still a relatively new phenomenon in the Irish higher education system, and most people knew little about them. 'I had literally never heard of Waterford RTC until the day before we went down' Emma remembered. Only Joseph had any experience of the sector, having studied at two different RTCs when they first opened in the early 1970s. His recollection of the colleges from his student days was that they were 'rather like secondary school to a large degree' and that 'there was a lot of teaching, more or less nine to five with maybe one half day in the week...one lecturer

would leave and another would come in'. This view of the RTCs as being like second-level rather than third-level institutions was commonly held. 'I don't even know that we considered them third-level' Laura recalled. The colleges were certainly not considered to be on a par with the universities: 'we would actually have thought that the IoTs were for people who couldn't make it at university' Laura explained. The fact that RTCs were generally seen as teaching institutions led to a perception of RTC lecturers as teachers. Mark, Simon and Kieran certainly held this view, applying to WRTC with the clear intention of furthering their fledgling teaching careers, while Betty immediately labelled the job she saw advertised as a teaching job. Thus, in as far as they had any real idea of what to expect when they joined WRTC, the members of this pre-1992 generation saw themselves as moving into teaching rather than into academia as such and they happily accepted this and moved forward to embrace what was to become their new profession.

The role of the RTC lecturer in the late 1970s and early 1980s consisted of teaching and little else. Research was neither required nor encouraged at this point. It was not considered to be part of the remit of the individual or indeed of the institution, and any attempts to engage with research were met with disapproval: 'in some ways it was frowned upon because you were taking up resources, you were taking up time, you weren't focussing on your job, so it was not encouraged' Owen explained. External consultancy work was also discouraged, despite the fact that the RTCs had been created to meet the needs of industry for trained staff. Individuals were recruited largely on the basis of their professional and industrial experience, but were expected to give up all professional activities and the associated professional and vocational identities once they were appointed as lecturers.

Lecturers had a very limited administrative role, according to Laura. 'Not only did we not do all the administration we do now, we didn't even type up our exam papers' she pointed out. There was a tacit understanding that the lecturing role involved looking after the students on a personal as well as on an academic level: 'obviously you did a bit of pastoral work as well as the need arose' Owen explained. A certain amount of course development and review work was also expected. The professional and other bodies which awarded qualifications to RTC graduates had quite stringent requirements and 'every lecturer was doing a syllabus and turning up for panel visits in their Sunday best' Betty recollected. But in the main, the role of the lecturer was to teach: 'There was very much the sense that we were teachers, albeit at a higher level' Emma explained.

This view of lecturers as teachers had a significant impact on the experiences of academic staff as well as on the professional identities they formed. The focus on teaching led to a focus on hours. 'The hour' Emma explained 'has always been seen as the basic unit of work in the college'. The logic behind this was straightforward: it was, as Emma pointed out 'a typical VEC thing. It was very easy to administer, and it reflected what we were doing. We were teachers at that time. And with teaching it's very easy to ensure that everyone has the same workload'.

Full-time lecturers were contracted to teach a certain number of hours per year and the role of academic managers was to ensure that all the hours that featured on the various course schedules were taught and that all academic staff were on full timetables. Betty's story of a discussion with her Head of School early in her career is an excellent illustration of the near obsession with filling hours that characterised the RTCs at that time. Because of delays on the part of the Department of Education in approving a new course on which she was to teach, Betty was only allocated four hours per week of teaching in her first month at WRTC. Concerned at having fewer hours than her colleagues, she decided to go and discuss the matter with her Head of School. 'In I went' she recalled 'and I said that I was just wondering about why I only had a timetable of four hours. Well he nearly had apoplexy. "Sit down there, sit down there," he said. He reached for the phone, he picked up the phone, he called X who was one of his Heads of Department at the time, then called Y who was another and within twenty minutes I had a full timetable'.

This focus on filling timetables caused many difficulties for individual academics. Some found the blank spots on their schedules filled with hours teaching subjects in which they had no expertise: when it was finally 'filled', Betty's timetable included five hours a week of teaching marketing even though she had been hired as an accounting lecturer and had only studied marketing briefly on her own degree course ten years previously. Others found themselves being allocated teaching duties on the basis of gaps to be filled rather than on the basis of their expertise. Emma found herself grappling with high-level courses from day one. 'The year I came, a woman ...had left and I slotted in for her' she recalled. This meant that she was teaching on the final year of the institution's then only degree programme when she herself had only recently completed her degree, using her own student notes: 'I didn't have anything else in terms of experience to do anything else' she remembered. Part-time staff were asked to cover huge numbers of hours and expected to take on whatever teaching assignments the full-

time staff wouldn't or couldn't fulfil: 'whatever wasn't wanted was passed to us ...we were really just the "mopper uppers" if you like' Laura recollected.

All hours were, at this point, considered to be equal. Those responsible for allocating hours saw no difference between an hour at first year level and an hour at final year level, and seemed not to understand that an hour on an evening course leading to professional exams might require more of a lecturer than an hour on a full-time certificate programme for school leavers. Some courses clearly demanded more than others of those asked to teach on them however. Betty recalled being asked to teach trainees preparing for professional exams by night: 'this was like being asked to climb Mount Everest for somebody who couldn't even walk' she recounts ' it was serious, serious pressure for me at the time'.

As new lecturers, Betty and her colleagues found themselves thrown in at the deep end and being left to sink or swim. The general understanding of the lecturer's role as being a teaching role meant that all the new appointees were really expected to do was to slot in to the gaps on the timetables that they had been hired to fill and to get down to the business of teaching classes, but this was more of a challenge than it might have initially appeared. Those with teaching experience were at least able to draw on that experience to help them. 'For the first three months or so that I was here I had to go from week to week and draw on my reserves from my Leaving Certificate teaching experience' Mark recalled. Those who came to lecturing without the benefit of such reserves found themselves pushed to the limits just trying to survive. 'I was up to my tonsils trying to keep up' Betty remembered.

It was not long before even those with no teaching background learned to 'swim'. Resourceful individuals, they drew on their own experiences in the professional fields for which they were preparing their students. This 'real world' dimension to the teaching was something that the students seemed to respond to very positively: 'I think students like to look at someone and say "OK, this is [an engineer] and I can have some idea of what this is about because he is someone who has done it"' Joseph remarked. Relating what was going on in the classroom to the world in which the students would eventually operate required that the lecturers keep up to date with what was happening in industry. 'For lecturing survival, you have to be at the top of your game' Kieran commented. 'The students go out to work on sites and if you've been giving them old wheelbarrow technology, they'll know in a week'.

Keeping up to date was not without its difficulties, however, not least because the contractual ban on external work to an extent obliged individuals to swap their professional identities for a lecturing identity on entering academia. But the pre-1992 academics were committed to ensuring that their teaching remained rooted in professional practice, and they found ways to circumvent the ban, from getting involved with the local branches of professional bodies to arranging site visits on which they could learn alongside their students and even, in one case, to taking a career break to work in industry. 'I really did feel that I couldn't go on just telling students things from books' said Emma, explaining this particular decision.

These lecturers were industry-focussed but they were also very strongly student-focused. They strove to meet the academic needs of the individuals in their classrooms but also saw their role as involving a pastoral dimension. This commitment to the students expressed itself in different ways in different lecturers' lives. In most cases, it translated into activities directly related to student support. Owen and Mark both reminisced about providing individual students with support in the early days of their careers and seemed saddened by the fact that students now approach them for help less frequently, and Betty reported having built up what she describes as 'a fair portfolio of committees' in areas related to student (and indeed staff) support. In some cases, this commitment to students provided the motivation to undertake further study. 'I actually did my Masters ... almost out of respect for my job' Emma explained. 'Out of respect for my students, I needed to have a masters if they were doing a degree'. The pastoral dimension may not have been allocated hours on the timetable in the way that teaching was, but for the pre-1992 academics, care of the student was, and remains, at the heart of the lecturer's role.

Another dimension of the role to which no 'hours' were officially dedicated was course development and course management. Although contracts did specify that lecturers were expected to participate in 'syllabus revision', this was not initially a concern for many of the pre-1992 academics. 'I came in when all the course development had been done, when all the syllabi had been set down, so there was no real course development' Mark recalled. As the college grew, this dimension of the role became more significant for some individuals, though not for all: Joseph contrasted his own area, where the staff have focused their attention largely on the growing 'four solid courses' that comprise the departmental portfolio with other areas where there seems to be a 'proliferation' of new courses. The extent of course development work in any given discipline seemed to be linked to the overall vision and ambitions of the managers responsible for the area in question, but it was to the lecturers, and particularly to those appointed as course leaders,

that the actual work of driving the development and ultimately running the new courses usually fell. The role of course leader was often an onerous one, particularly on courses validated by the professional bodies who enforced strict regulations on those running their programmes and insisted on regular detailed review processes, and it was very much 'a nominal thing' (Simon) for which there was no actual reward. Nonetheless, it was a role that was coveted, particularly by those with ambition for their disciplines and indeed for themselves. 'A course leadership was a treasured possession' Betty remembered.

One reason why course leaderships were coveted was because they represented, in the eyes of the general community if not in actual fact, a promotion of sorts, at a time when opportunities for promotion for lecturers were still rather limited. Lecturers did progress up nationally agreed pay scales on the basis of annual non-performance related increments, and negotiations between the Department of Education and the Teachers' Union of Ireland led to changes in the pay scales and academic grades over the years which, for many people, constituted promotion or at least improvement enough in their status to satisfy them. 'I got lots of old promotions by default' Kieran pointed out. 'Class IIIs became College Teachers, College Teachers became Lecturers ... So the system has been good to me in that sense'.

For others, this incremental progression was not enough. They were anxious to move beyond their assigned ladders and to get real, as opposed to default, promotions. Such real promotions were rare in the sector in the 1980s however. Lecturers could be promoted from the Lecturer 1 scale to the Lecturer 2 scale but the Department of Education only allowed each institution a limited number of L2 posts and only sanctioned new openings for promotion to this level at irregular intervals. When new L2 positions were sanctioned, competition for them was intense. Betty recalled vividly the first time she went for promotion to L2 level. 'There were twelve L2s being given to the college as a result of a union negotiated thing and we had four schools' she explained. It was widely assumed that this would mean three posts for each school and in her particular school, she was one of three people perceived as likely to be promoted. 'What I didn't know at the time was that they [the heads] had only managed to negotiate two for our school' she explained. Betty was not appointed to an L2 post at that time and this disappointment was to prove a turning point in her career. 'I was very very bitter, and really I'm still very bitter over that, because it has had all sorts of knock-on implications for me' she said.

An alternative route did exist for those seeking promotion. This route involved moving into management, as Heads of School and Heads of Department tended to be selected from among the academic staff. The management route demanded a radical change of career direction but promised certain benefits. 'That was the only route really to actually get further up in the operational side of things, to actually have some control over developing things' Simon explained. As with L2 posts, however, the number of posts at these levels were strictly regulated by the Department of Education, and the fact that they were permanent posts tended to mean that, once they were filled in a particular discipline area in any given 'generation', it was quite unlikely that further similar promotional opportunities would open up for lecturers in that area and that generation.

Thus the early years of the pre-1992 participants' lecturing careers were focussed on a limited number of activities. Most of their attention was focussed on the teaching dimension of the lecturing role, and although they initially found it difficult to deal with the challenges of teaching sixteen to twenty hours per week, sometimes in areas that were only loosely related to their particular fields of expertise, they soon developed strategies and prided themselves on delivering their course in a manner that was industry-relevant and student-focussed. Under guidance from their managers, some also became involved in the development of new courses and accepted course management roles, since these seemed to represent some degree of professional advancement in an environment where real promotional opportunities were limited and difficult to access.

6.5 Changing and challenging times: the 1992 RTC Act and its aftermath

By the time WRTC came of age in 1991, change was on the horizon, and the world as the pre-1992 academics knew it was to be reshaped over the following decades. As we have seen in Chapter 5, the 1990s and the early years of the new millennium saw the enactment of several significant pieces of higher education legislation as well as the publication of policy papers and reports in which a shift in emphasis in higher education policy was discernable. While government remained committed to maintaining a binary system of higher education, the emphasis on training technicians for industry which had marked the discourse of the 1970s and 1980s was replaced, initially by a focus on widening participation and improving access for those who had previously been excluded from third-level and later by a commitment to developing world class research and so-called fourth level education in Irish higher education institutions. These shifts

in the focus of higher education policy were accompanied by a general trend towards increased transparency and accountability in the public sector that were also to have implications for lecturers.

The pre-1992 participants evaluated several of these macro-level changes as having had positive consequences for both the institutions and the individuals working within them. The formal acknowledgement, in the RTC Act, of the right of the colleges to present courses at degree level as well as subdegree programmes for validation to external awarding bodies allowed WRTC to expand its course portfolio to include more degree programmes. This appears to have impacted positively on academic staff. Not only did it allow them to develop new programmes in their own particular areas of interest, it also opened up the space for them to develop specialist, as opposed to generalist, teacher identities. 'Things gradually developed and eventually I wasn't servicing anyone, I was just working in our own department' Betty recalled. The expansion into new, higher-level programmes also led to the recruitment of new staff in previously underrepresented areas of specialism, and lecturers such as Betty and Simon, who had long operated as 'a one man band' in his discipline area, found themselves having to rely less on the external professional and disciplinary networks which had previously formed their communities of practice, as such communities started to develop within the institution. By acknowledging the importance of the link between the colleges and industry and granting institutions the right to engage in consultancy and development work (albeit with the approval of the Minister), the 1992 Act also effectively lifted the ban on external work. For individuals like Joseph and Kieran, this change opened up opportunities to develop and maintain the connections with industry that they see as essential for lecturers in their area through engaging in external consultancy work. 'A number of years ago there was a huge hoohah about all of that' Joseph recollected. 'Now nobody would object to it'.

The RTC legislation also gave the RTCs greater control over their own destiny than had previously been the case, stipulating that they were to have their own Governing Bodies and Academic Councils. The pre-1992 academics saw involvement in Academic Council as an ideal way to make a contribution and to 'drive the ship forward' as Owen put it. Despite the high level of voluntary commitment that was involved – 'there was a huge number of meetings and there was no such thing as no classes for Academic Council members on a Tuesday...so you ended up changing classes and running around trying to find rooms, the usual if you are trying to reschedule something at short notice'

Betty remembered – six of the eight members of the pre-1992 generation served on Academic Council at different points, and some served more than one term.

The technological sector was allocated a central role in the government's plans for widening participation, and though the impact of policy in this particular area on the experiences of individual academics was not always entirely positive (see below), it did have one unexpected benefit. The allocation of management posts in technological colleges has traditionally been based on student numbers, so the growth in the student body that resulted from efforts to increase higher education access led, eventually, to institutions being granted extra management posts which they used to subdivide existing departments. For Simon, the creation of a new department dedicated to his discipline and a small number of cognate areas marked a significant positive development. Previously located in a large department where 'there was a certain amount of overlap perhaps, but a very small amount' between the disciplines, he and his colleagues have finally found a comfortable conceptual home in the institutional structure. 'It's given us a much more empathetic situation...we can actually see that there's great potential for us now in this kind of context' Simon explained.

The pre-1992 participants also interpreted some of the conditions imposed in the various social partnership agreements as positive. The new lecturing scales introduced by the PCW were welcomed by several members of this generation, as they opened up possibilities for progression that had not existed previously. For those on the College Teacher scale, lecturer status was brought within reach. 'If you were doing a certain proportion of lecturing hours, you became a Lecturer' Laura explained. For those already on the lecturer scale, the amalgamation of the L1 and L2 scales meant that advancement no longer involved waiting for a higher-level post to come up and 'jumping through every hoop under the sun' (Betty) to get it. Lecturers who wanted to advance still further now also had the opportunity to apply for the newly created Senior Lecturer 1 positions. 'I thought that was a step forward' Simon said. 'At least it was a move towards recognition of more senior academics. It does provide a certain step on the career ladder to aspire to'.

The introduction of performance management is also something that academics of this generation seem quite happy to accept. 'I've never been threatened by any policy or procedure that's come in, including the most recent one where we are going to be appraised' Laura asserted. Joseph saw the requirement that individuals discuss their progress and plans with their managers as potentially beneficial to the individual.

'They're all very nice and very complimentary here, perhaps too complimentary' he said. 'A little bit more criticism might be no harm, [particularly] criticism with a view to improvement'. Mark too thought that a system that would formally encourage individuals to keep up to date and embrace new developments rather than simply ignoring them was likely to be a positive step. 'I think that people should be asked to take courses and have the whole thing formalised a bit more' he said. 'Maybe with the new PMDS (Performance Management and Development System) when it comes in, people will be encouraged to do these things'.

Not all of the changes introduced as a result of the social partnership agreements have been met with such enthusiasm by the pre-1992 academics however. One change that has provoked rather more mixed reactions has been the introduction of modularisation and semesterisation in reaction to the requirement that institutions move to more flexible modes of delivery. Both Kieran and Simon initially resisted modular programme structures as being unsuitable for learning in their discipline areas. 'The current wisdom in my own field would be against it' Simon explained. 'The pedagogues in my area argue for a kind of gradual development model which the modular system doesn't really suit too well'. Kieran echoed this sentiment in relation to his discipline: 'We still try to provide a lot of skills, and skill takes time, practice and time'. While both of these individuals did admit to seeing modularisation as having some benefits, including making higher education more accessible for non-traditional students and allowing individuals to take ownership of subjects in a way that was previously impossible, for others the impact has been largely negative. 'I find it has lowered standards, I find it has increased workloads and I find that students are under much more stress because of it' Owen asserted.

Modularisation is not the only macro-level change that has been met with mixed feelings by the members of the pre-1992 generation. Since 1992 and particularly since the 1999 Qualifications Act, these individuals have found themselves on constantly shifting sands, and this has led, at best, to confusion, and at worst, to serious stress. Despite promises of increased autonomy for institutions, there are now more rather than fewer external bodies to be dealt with and even the most enthusiastic supporters of structured systems find it hard to understand how these bodies relate to each other and to the institution. 'I am involved in the thing, and yet if you asked me now about the relationship between HETAC, NQAI and all these other acronyms, I'd actually say "I need to go for a cup of tea"' Emma said. Institutions and individual academics are obliged to comply with the requirements of these bodies. They have had to rewrite and

rename programmes and reconceptualise qualification levels to fit the NQAI's (National Qualifications Authority of Ireland) National Framework of Qualifications. They have had to face various HETAC (Higher Education and Training Awards Council) panels in order to be delegated awarding authority, only to find that delegation was not to be accompanied by quite the level of autonomy that it seemed to promise. 'There still seems to be a ghost of HETAC around' Simon commented. 'There was talk at one stage of them going away but they're still there somewhere'. As the external bodies jostle with each and with the institutions for control, individual academics have found themselves caught in the crossfire and this has been far from positive as an experience. 'I don't like this space, where nobody knows [how things are supposed to work] and it's all about the politics and not about the facts and it's not about trying to get it right, it's about trying to play power games' Emma asserted. Delegation has impacted on academic lives in subtle but significant ways. It may not have brought the promised levels of autonomy, but the need to comply with the conditions imposed has substantially increased the administrative burden. While extra administrative staff have been hired to deal with the increased workload at institutional level, this has not served to relieve academic staff. 'We have lots of what I call indirects now, people who are not teaching' Betty said, 'and everyone has a job for you to do for them'.

The meso-level decision to apply for designation as a university under the 1997 Universities Act has added to the tension created by these macro-level changes. All eight members of this generation are openly supportive of the university campaign. Owen's view that university designation is essential 'both from the institute's point of view, because I don't think we can go further ... and from a regional point of view, in attracting industry to the region' is echoed by his colleagues, despite their own personal fears that they 'probably won't fit in to the university profile when it comes' as Kieran puts it. The slow progress of the campaign is taking its toll on individuals however. 'I think it's dragging on far too long and we don't know where we are. We're confused. We don't really know where we are' Joseph says. The hope and optimism in relation to the future is tempered by a sense of frustration and foreboding. 'It's as if an earthquake is about to happen and we don't know what way it is going to pan out' Laura explains. 'I think it probably is eventually going to happen but until it happens we are in a terrible place as an Institute of Technology, particularly as WIT...we're nobody's friend'.

Other macro-level changes that have occurred since the early 1990s appear to have had negative effects at the micro level for the pre-1992 academics. The government's policy on widening participation, for example, has led to significant changes in the

student body. Class sizes have increased, making it difficult for academics to approach their teaching in the manner they feel is appropriate. 'With larger classes you have to be that much more formal' Owen explained. Joseph pointed out that larger classes make it more difficult to enhance the learning experience by taking students on site visits, and Mark linked the decision to remove industrial placement from programmes in his department to the expansion of the student body. 'We had it for a long time' he explained 'but it became very difficult because the numbers increased'. The widening participation agenda has also created an expectation in society that most people should be able to access higher education, and while this in itself is welcomed, it does mean that academics now find themselves faced with students whose attitudes towards higher education differ significantly from those of the students they taught when they started out. 'The students now are not as career focused when they come into college' Mark commented. 'College is a place for them to be and they'll worry about a career down the line'. Owen concurred with this assessment. 'The students aren't so keen, generally speaking' he asserted. 'More and more students have what I call attitude. They don't actually create a disturbance but they don't really want to be here'. Changes in the nature of the student coincide with changes in relation to what is expected of lecturers. 'I think a lot of the students that we're getting in the last few years don't have basic social skills' Betty said, 'and at a time when we're trying to develop the holistic student, that's making our lives harder'.

The most significant policy shift in terms of the academic lives and professional identities of the pre-1992 participants came about with the acknowledgement, in the 1992 Act, of a research role for RTCs. When they joined WRTC in the 1970s and 1980s, it was clear to these individuals that they were joining a teaching institution and it never occurred to them that they would be asked to embrace a research role. Only Owen had been involved in research previously, having worked with a research organisation, and even he did not envisage that he would be asked to engage in research as an RTC lecturer. 'I wanted a sort of a break from research' he recalled. Over time, some colleagues did become involved in research but their efforts received little real support in a strongly teaching-focussed system, and their struggles served to dissuade others from becoming research-active. 'Research for people of my generation was really scary' Emma pointed out. 'You only did research if you were prepared to give up your holidays for it, give up your weekends ...you had no other life apart from your research'

WRTC was quick to embrace the opportunity to engage in research that was opened up by the RTC Act. The extent to which individual lecturers engaged with the new

research role varied however. While seven of the pre-1992 academics did respond to the pressure, or rather perhaps to the opportunity, to upskill and undertook postgraduate studies (Owen had already completed a masters qualification before joining WRTC), only two, both from the School of Humanities, can be said to have fully embraced the 'researcher' identity. Both Laura and Simon have become research-active in recent times, moving beyond extending their qualifications to involvement in funded research projects and, in Simon's case, in postgraduate supervision. Interestingly, neither pointed to career advancement as an explanation for this willingness to embrace the research role. Simon saw his involvement in research as a way of advancing the cause of his discipline area within the institution. 'I've taken a very active interest in developing that side of things to try and create a higher profile for us and lead the subject forward if possible' he explained. For Laura, research provided the opportunity to repay the institution for having supported her when she was forced to take leave as a result of personal problems, as well as a route out of what had become a demotivating professional situation. 'I was communications light relief for so long' she said. 'In the last few years I feel like I've reinvented myself'.

While the Humanities lecturers have risen to the research challenge, their colleagues in other areas have reacted with less enthusiasm. The two Business lecturers acknowledge that research has become part of the academic role for new recruits but do not see it as something that they themselves are likely to engage. 'People like yourself come in and are expected to do research, whereas I am nice and set in my rut, so there is only indirect pressure' Owen commented, while Betty claimed to be glad that she is 'accepted as someone who's not going to do that'. The two Engineering lecturers see keeping up with the rapid developments in industry as far more important than in engaging in academic research. Both Kieran and Joseph are passionately committed to advancing their own learning and spend as much time as possible consulting with professionals and visiting sites. Joseph suggested that such activities could perhaps be seen as a form of action research, although he ultimately agreed with Kieran who admitted that 'to an academic it's not really research'. As a natural scientist, Mark operates in a disciplinary and departmental environment in which research has traditionally been highly valued, yet he himself continues to focus his attention on his teaching and course leadership roles. 'There's been no pressure on me to do research' he reported. Only Emma feels threatened by the increasing emphasis on research, not least because involvement in research seems to have become a prerequisite for promotion. 'I feel bullied, harassed, demeaned more or less. I've been told that I haven't got jobs because I haven't got a PhD' she said, questioning the need for managers to hold doctoral qualifications.

Although they may not feel pressurised to engage with the research dimension of the role themselves, several pre-1992 academics express certain reservations about the increasing emphasis on research at the meso and macro levels. Some worry that undergraduate students are being undervalued and their needs neglected in the rush to develop and run postgraduate programmes. 'You have to have some recognition of the fact that the bread and butter of this college is not higher-level programmes' Joseph pointed out. Others are concerned that involvement in research is being accepted as a substitute for involvement in other activities that they see as being an essential part of the academic role. 'Some of the people I have seen doing PhDs have contributed absolutely nothing to the department other than teaching' Emma commented. In some cases, even teaching seems to be losing out to research. 'Now you have a whole contingent of people coming in who are bent on research and people who want to get out of teaching' Mark asserted. Not only does the emphasis on research distract from what the pre-1992 academics see as the key activity of the institution, but it is also associated with an increasingly individualistic approach to the job which is detrimental to the sense of community that many members of this generation value highly. 'In our department, there also was a great sense of team, especially initially' Mark recalled. 'People now come in and if they have a new technique, or a new technology or something specific, they don't want to share that with anyone. They're completely on their own. They implement things themselves'.

Overall then, much has changed since 1992. The pre-1992 participants were and are positively disposed towards some of the changes. They welcomed the opportunity to focus their teaching in their particular specialist areas that resulted from the colleges being allowed to develop higher-level programmes, and they were happy to see the ban on external work removed. They enthusiastically embraced the possibility of participation in institutional governance offered by the establishment of Academic Council, and the introduction of new pay scales which promised greater levels of advancement for all lecturers than had previously been the case was also seen as positive.

Other changes were not welcomed quite as warmly however. Many of the pre-1992 recruits expressed reservations about the introduction of modularisation, and admitted to finding it difficult to adapt to the changes that resulted from the 1999 Qualifications Act. Faced on the one hand with a whole new set of external bodies which they were required to satisfy, and on the other with an increasing administrative burden as a result of the

institution being granted delegated awarding authority, they found themselves confused and this new environment not entirely comfortable. The changes to the size and composition of the student body that resulted from the government's widening participation agenda were also seen as posing substantial challenges.

The most significant change experienced by the pre-1992 participants was the emergence of a research agenda at institutional level as a result of the creation of a space for research in the remit of the technological colleges in the 1992 legislation. Only the two Humanities lecturers in the group have actively engaged with this agenda. Not only have the remaining pre-1992 recruits consciously chosen not to become involved in research, beyond what was necessary to upgrade their academic qualifications, but they express concern that the focus on research is distracting attention from what they consider to be key activities of the institution, such as teaching, and they are worried about the long term implications of this shift in priorities for the undergraduate students and for collegiality and teamwork among academic staff.

6.6 Towards an understanding of professional identity in the pre-1992 generation: emerging impressions of academic selves

The stories of the pre-1992 participants suggest that these 'accidental academics' have, over time and despite their initial uncertainty about what to expect and about what was expected of them when they arrived at WRTC, developed a clear and particular understanding of what a technological sector lecturer is and should be. An initial precursory analysis of the data reveals a professional identity that is built on a strong commitment to particular elements of the academic role and to particular communities. The majority of the pre-1992 participants are firmly committed to teaching, to developing and running good quality programmes, to keeping up to date with developments in industry in order to ensure the continued relevance of their courses, and to making a contribution in whatever manner they can. They also demonstrate a strong dedication to their students and a clear loyalty to the institution that has provided the backdrop against which they have emerged as academic professionals. They have seen significant changes at the macro and meso levels over the course of their academic careers and have worked out their own (usually quite proactive) strategies for engaging with these changes, coming through them with their sense of the kind of professionals they want to be intact. A more detailed analysis of the academic professional identities that have emerged from the stories of the pre-1992 participants is presented in Chapter 8.

6.7 Conclusion

This chapter has considered the life stories of the pre-1992 research participants. In Chapter 7, the stories of their post-1992 colleagues will be the focus of attention.

CHAPTER 7

THE LIVES OF LECTURERS; THE POST-1992 PARTICIPANTS' STORIES

7.1 Introduction

Chapter 6 focused on the life stories of eight individuals who came to work as lecturers at Waterford Regional Technical College in the 1970s and 1980s. This chapter examines the stories of a further eight members of academic staff at the institution, all of whom joined the Waterford college after the Regional Technical Colleges Act passed into law in 1992. It considers the motivation and the trajectories that led these individuals to lecturing and to Waterford as well as the development of their academic careers within this particular higher education institution. It focuses in particular on how and to what extent these eight participants have engaged with the various roles that technological sector lecturers are now expected to play, and with the different communities that form the backdrop against which these roles are performed. The professional life stories of these eight lecturers are analysed with the aim of discovering just what kinds of academic professional identities have been formed and developed in the technological sector of Irish higher education in the post-1992 period.

7.2 Participant profiles: introducing the post-1992 participants

Dr. Francesca Davidson was the first of member of the post-1992 generation to join the staff at WRTC, returning to Ireland from overseas to take up a Lecturer 1 post in the School of Humanities in late 1992. Dr. Ben McLaren moved from another RTC to lecture in the School of Science in 1993, while Tom Donnelly came to academia from industry, joining the School of Engineering at WRTC in 1994. 1996 saw Seán Daly take up a lecturing role in the School of Science.

By the time the remaining members of this generation arrived, WRTC had been designated an Institute of Technology. Dr. James Lyons came from another IoT to take up a lecturing position in the School of Engineering in 1999. Dr. Alexandra Kavanagh moved into lecturing from industry, joining the staff in the School of Business as an Assistant Lecturer in 2000. Ronan Burke began his academic career as a part-time lecturer in the School of Business in 1998 and was appointed to a full-time Assistant

Lecturer post in 2000. 2000 also saw the arrival of Timothy Corrigan, who lectured part-time initially and was subsequently appointed as a full-time Assistant Lecturer in the School of Humanities in 2002.

Participant name	**Affiliation**	**Recruited in**	**Qualifications**
Francesca Davidson	School of Humanities	1992	Originally held a primary degree and teaching qualification – now qualified to PhD level
Ben McLaren	School of Science (Life Sciences)	1993	Originally qualified to PhD level
Tom Donnelly	School of Engineering	1994	Originally qualified to masters level
Seán Daly	School of Science	1996	Originally held a primary degree – now qualified to masters level
James Lyons	School of Engineering	1999	Originally qualified to PhD level
Alexandra Kavanagh	School of Business	2000	Originally qualified to masters level – now qualified to PhD level
Ronan Burke	School of Business	1998 part-time 2000 full-time	Originally held a professional qualification – now qualified to masters level and pursuing a PhD
Timothy Corrigan	School of Humanities	1999 part-time 2002 full-time	Originally held a primary degree – now qualified to masters level and pursuing a PhD

Table 7.1 Overview of participant information for the post-1992 participants

7.3 Pathways to the profession: how the post-1992 participants became lecturers

While academia was to some extent an accidental destination for their pre-1992 colleagues, the post-1992 participants took a deliberate decision to work in higher education. Most did pursue alternative careers before moving into third-level teaching, but in all cases the move was the result of a conscious choice. These individuals set their sights on lecturing positions in technological sector institutions and went about procuring these in rather a determined fashion, largely undeterred by the hurdles that presented themselves along the way.

For some members of the post-1992 generation, the decision to embark on an academic career was taken at an early stage and the road to academia was quite a direct and rather a traditional one. Timothy, the most recent recruit, followed a route very similar to that of aspiring university academics. He decided as an undergraduate that he wanted to lecture and started even then to take steps to prepare for an academic career. His choice of degree subjects was partly influenced by an awareness of the need to ensure that he would be attractive to a wide range of higher education institutions and to set himself apart from the competition. 'One of the things I tried to do from the beginning was to make myself a bit different to whatever else was there and to have something a bit different to offer' he explained. On completion of his primary degree, he immediately registered for a research masters, and on finishing his masters, he began to look at the possibility of pursuing doctoral studies in the US. At this point, a full-time lecturing position in his area opened up in Waterford. Timothy's decision to apply for this post was not taken lightly. He carefully considered the pros and cons of building an academic career in an IoT and concluded that it would be a good move. 'There's always an argument for being a big fish in a small pond' he said. 'An Institute of Technology gave me the space to blossom basically and to maximise the talents and skills that I have in a way that just wouldn't be possible anywhere else'.

James too effectively chose the academic path while still a student himself, although he admitted that his choice of direction at that stage may have had more to do with knowing what he didn't want to do than with any firm conviction about what he did want to do. 'In hindsight I would say that a lot of decisions that I made were by process of elimination' he said. On completion of his undergraduate studies, he applied for and was offered positions in industry but decided against entering the workforce at that point. 'Personally [as opposed to academically] I wasn't ready for any of it' he reflected

'so the easiest option and the one that made most sense was to stay and do a masters in [name of university] which was interesting but also a cosseted environment.' As a masters student he did some part-time work in various higher education institutions and this encouraged him to consider a lecturing career. He worked abroad in a research post for a number of years, before completing his PhD and spending some time as a post-doctoral researcher at a research institute. He returned to Ireland to take a post as a researcher in an IoT and subsequently worked as a lecturer in the same institution, before coming to Waterford to take up a full-time lecturing position.

Other respondents took a rather more circuitous route into academic life, but one that did, nonetheless, resemble the route usually followed by university academics. For Ben, actually getting onto the academic path posed the greatest challenge. He graduated with a National Diploma from an RTC and was obliged to move to a university to complete his degree. This involved transferring into the second year of an undergraduate programme and thus being ineligible for a state grant. After working in industry for a period to save enough to fund his studies, he took up a place at university and completed his degree. Once he made it onto the academic path, Ben stayed there, continuing his studies to PhD level. He took a lecturing post in another RTC initially, and was ultimately appointed to a permanent position in Waterford.

Francesca also experienced some initial diversions on what was to ultimately become quite a traditional academic trajectory. Like many Arts graduates, she saw teaching as a possible career path and, on completion of her degree, she immediately went on to qualify as a secondary teacher. She then set her sights on a university career and started work on a masters degree. When she lost interest in her initial research area, she decided not to complete her masters and resigned herself to the fact that lecturing was probably no longer an option for her. She spent some time working overseas, during which she continued to be drawn to a career in higher education. After a number of years working in business, she successfully applied for teaching posts in third-level institutions in her new 'home' country. By the time she decided to return to Ireland, she had developed what she described as 'a good solid pedagogical profile' and had built up the confidence to try and break into Irish higher education.

For the remaining members of the post 1992 group, the journey to academia was via a rather more winding road. All were graduates of the RTC sector and originally entered the workforce with subdegree qualifications and no intention of forging an academic career. Tom graduated with a National Certificate from the local RTC and then worked

for several years in a technical trade before returning to university to complete a degree. Armed with his degree, he worked for several years in industry before looking around for a new challenge. 'I considered just working for other companies ...and did get job offers, but I decided not to take them up at that time and started to think about a career in lecturing' he explained. He admitted to being attracted by 'the very generous holidays in Institutes of Technology' and to being influenced by the example of friends and colleagues who had taken up careers as lecturers. The teaching dimension also held a certain attraction for him, as he felt he was 'good at explaining things to people'. 'I thought it was a career I could be good at and that I could enjoy' he said. He approached the potential move into academia with caution however. Describing himself as 'not one to leave too many uncertainties lying around', not only did he sign up for a masters degree, but he also took on some part-time lecturing 'to test lecturing to find out if this was something [he] could actually do'. By the time he applied for his first full-time lecturing post at WRTC, he was confident that an academic career was what he wanted and he was happy to join the staff at the School of Engineering.

Alexandra too was initially a reluctant student, who says she only went on to third-level study because her mother left her little option. 'It was absolutely insisted on at home that you couldn't enter the family business if you didn't have a third-level qualification' she remembered. Although she saw herself as 'not academically inclined at all', Alexandra dutifully signed up for a National Certificate in Business Studies at the local RTC. Following graduation, she worked abroad for a time before returning to Ireland to complete a Business degree, again at a RTC. By the time she applied for her first lecturing post, she had an MBA under her belt, alongside significant business experience. By this point, she had realised that she wanted to change career direction. 'I sat back and thought about it and thought lecturing might be a road that I would be interested in' she explained. Used to 'talking for a living', she was confident that she would be able to adapt to teaching, and she was attracted by the challenges presented by other aspects of the academic role, particularly by the research dimension. She applied for several positions and eventually took a post at WIT, but even then maintained a safety net in case the move to academia turned out to be a mistake. 'I was on work sabbatical ... so I could have gone back' she explained.

Seán, by contrast, showed an enthusiasm for learning from an early age, soaking up information from any source that he came across. 'Anything that was around to read, I'd be reading it' he remembers. On leaving secondary school, he completed a National Diploma at a RTC. He wanted to continue his studies but the cost involved with

transferring to a university was prohibitive. 'I wanted to go on and do my degree but we just couldn't afford it. I couldn't afford to go to college without a grant' he explained. Necessity took him into the workforce and he took a position as a technician in a higher education institution. He continued in this role for over ten years, during which time he completed his degree by distance education. Over time, the technician role became constraining and he became frustrated by the lack of challenge. He had by this point become involved in training staff in the use of computer systems and in delivering night classes and knew that he would enjoy teaching. His continued interest in learning meant that the research, or at least the scholarship, dimension of the academic role was also attractive to him, and he began to apply for lecturing positions that were opening up in the then booming field of computing.

Ronan originally 'took the professional qualification route' as a student at an RTC. Unsure of what he wanted to do, he decided to follow in his father's footsteps and trained to be an accountant. 'It was the only profession I would have been exposed to in any particular way' he explained. While he enjoyed working as an accountant and was successful, he felt his work was lacking in certain areas that were important to him. 'One of the things I've found with the accounting profession is that there's quite a lot of intensive isolated work involved in it, and I quite like interaction' he explained. Positive experiences as a trainer as well as personal enthusiasm for learning turned his thoughts towards a move into education. 'I had always had an interest in education' he recalled. 'I felt deep down it was something that I would like and that I would enjoy.' He assumed that moving into education would be difficult for someone with only a professional qualification, but he decided to go and discuss his options with people at his local college in Waterford anyway. He was offered some part-time teaching, which he willingly took on. He soon discovered that his instincts had been correct and that he enjoyed lecturing. Determined to stay in education, he signed up for a masters programme and by the time he finished the programme in 2000, he had been appointed to a permanent lecturing position.

Regardless of whether they headed directly for academia or pursued alternative careers before moving into higher education, all members of the post 1992 generation made a conscious choice to pursue a career in third-level teaching and were willing to do whatever was required to secure full-time lecturing positions. For some, this meant engaging in further study. Francesca recalled being told that she would need to upgrade her qualifications. 'They offered me the job and said to me, as was usual at that time "you've got a year's probation and you have to start up your masters in that year before

we make you permanently permanent"' she recounted. Seán too remembered being pushed on the subject of further study at interview, and both Tom and Ronan undertook postgraduate studies on the basis that having higher-level qualifications seemed likely to improve their chances of being appointed to lecturing posts. For others, securing a position involved a certain amount of patience and the strength of character to bounce back from rejection. 'I applied a couple of times and I think I got turned down once at least if not twice' Seán said. Alexandra's first application to WIT was also unsuccessful. 'I got knocked back a small bit by that' she admitted. 'I wasn't used to being told no'.

Interestingly, all of the post-1992 academics appear to have targeted the technological sector rather than the university sector when applying for posts. Various explanations are offered for this trend. For some individuals, working conditions in the sector seemed particularly attractive. Tom was drawn to the generous holidays enjoyed by IoT lecturers while James considered lecturing to be well-paid work. Pay was less of an attraction for Alexandra, as she had been earning more in industry than she was initially paid as a lecturer, but the security of a permanent position was important to her and this was something that she felt she would only find in the IoT sector. 'Because my background was not academic, there was no opportunity for me to enter a permanent position at university level' she explained. The feeling of not being good enough for a university post underlying this comment is one that also emerges from the stories of other post-1992 participants. Even those with masters degrees felt that they were not university material. 'I never actually considered the universities because, without looking too deeply into it, I felt I wasn't qualified' Tom explained. 'I know some people with masters qualifications do teach in the universities but I think they would be in a minority'. Those with only primary degrees or professional qualifications knew that university posts were out of the question and chose instead to target institutions where their previous experience would also be valued. 'I was given a permanent pensionable job with less academic qualifications than some of my peers who were here because I was seen as having something big to contribute' Francesca claimed.

Not only did these respondents target the technological sector, several of them also specifically targeted the college in Waterford when planning their move into academic life. Some individuals wanted to work in the region for personal reasons and focused their attention on the opportunities in Waterford. Others targeted WRTC / WIT because it seemed to be an institution where individuals could build the kind of academic careers that they desired. James was attracted by WIT's long standing solid reputation in his

discipline area, while Timothy was drawn in by the apparent willingness of the institution to let him develop an emergent research area in his own unique way. Alexandra also thought that Waterford would provide her with space to grow and develop as an academic. 'I was aware of what was going on in some of the other Institutes of Technology and I knew that Waterford was more progressive' she explained. 'I also knew that there was a drive on for a research-lecturing mix here that I didn't see obviously in any of the other Institutes'.

Overall, the stories of the post-1992 participants show some diversity in relation to the pathways which led these individuals to lecturing. Some individuals followed a route similar to that of taken by traditional university academics while others, particularly those who were themselves graduates of the RTC sector, built up their academic qualifications gradually and worked in industry for longer or shorter periods before pursuing positions as lecturers. Although their pathways to the profession varied, all eight members of this generation took a conscious decision to become lecturers and were clearly willing to do whatever it took, from pursuing postgraduate qualifications to bouncing back from initial rejections, to make the transition to academic life. Not only did they know that they wanted to become lecturers, but they also knew where they wanted to work, targeting the technological sector as the sector in which opportunities were likely to be available for people with their particular backgrounds and in many cases specifically targeting Waterford because of its reputation as a progressive institution.

7.4 Life as lecturers for the post-1992 participants: adopting and adapting academic roles

Unlike the pre-1992 participants, most of the post-1992 respondents had studied and / or worked in the technological sector before they started lecturing in Waterford, and so they knew roughly what to expect when they took up their posts. They were conscious that they were entering what Alexandra claimed was seen as 'the two and a half level', where the focus was still on the provision of applied vocational education. They knew, and accepted, that the role of the lecturer in the sector was defined mainly in terms of hours in the classroom and even the later recruits, who consciously targeted Waterford because it seemed to be actively engaging the expanded remit granted to the RTCs in the 1990s, were not surprised to find that their duties, at least initially, revolved around teaching. The extent of the administrative and pastoral responsibilities that went along

with the teaching did come as a shock to some, however, as did the limitations on their potential for career progression as public servants operating within a tightly structured environment. Over time, and largely due to the efforts of ambitious individuals within the sector as well as to changes at both macro and meso levels, the role of the technological sector lecturer evolved and expanded to include activities other than teaching, chief among them research. The post-1992 lecturers were both willing and quick to adapt to the new challenges and to take on the new roles that opened up, and with this generation, new forms of academic professional identity started to emerge.

While some of the later recruits anticipated that lecturing would involve more than simply teaching, all of the post-1992 participants expected teaching to form a major part of their role at Waterford. 'At that stage it was a pedagogical business' Francesca said. The emphasis on teaching was not unwelcome: in fact, for some, the prospect of teaching was one of the main attractions of the job. 'I was interested in lecturing because I felt I was good at explaining things to people in a one-to-one situation' Tom remembered. Ronan too was actively in search of a teaching role, having enjoyed the opportunities he had had to interact with learners in his previous role in industry. 'When I was involved in training and the different programmes that I was doing, I liked the interaction and the whole dynamic that seemed to be there in the training room' he explained. Even those who came into lecturing with ambitions that reached beyond the boundaries of the classroom both expected and embraced the teaching dimension of the role. Timothy claimed that he saw, and still sees, teaching as 'only a very small part' of the role of the academic, but it is, nonetheless, a part that he has come to enjoy. 'I still like it. And I like it all the more now that I am teaching the stuff that I'm researching' he admitted. Alexandra too, while describing herself as a 'researcher by nature', was and remains very committed to teaching. She clearly values the connection she has with the students she teaches and sees this connection as a defining element of the lecturing role. 'If there was a time when I felt I wasn't connecting, there are other ways to do the other aspects of this, in a different role' she explained.

The post-1992 participants came to lecturing with strong views about the nature and purpose of teaching in higher education. While they accepted that the role of a technological sector lecturer was largely a teaching role, they also clearly saw teaching at third-level as being different from teaching at lower levels in the education system. 'I don't regard my job as anything like second-level education...It bears no resemblance to it', Tom insisted. 'I would never have done that'. Third-level teaching was understood to be about more than simply passing on information to students which they would

reproduce in exams. 'I don't feel that a one-way street of me giving students notes is in any way a learning process' Alexandra said. 'As a result I was trying to come up with alternatives to handing them a text book or a set of notes'. For Seán too, teaching was about more than the transfer of material from teacher to student. 'The students can read just as well as I can' he explained. 'I saw my role as trying to add value to what they could get by simply reading the textbook'.

There was a perception that teachers could add value only if they had personal experience of operating in the field for which they were preparing the students. 'If you're teaching people how to programme and you've never done it on a commercial basis, you know the theory behind it but you don't know the practice really' Seán commented. For the earlier recruits of this generation, like Tom and Seán, adding value meant drawing on their extensive non-academic experience and using their network of contacts in industry to help make connections for students between theory and practice by organising guest lectures and seminars. Francesca drew on her previous life experiences, claiming that she 'specialised very much in giving them [her] experience' of living and working in the country whose language the students were studying. In more recent times, adding value has come to involve lecturers drawing on their own research. 'There's not a lot of point at fourth year level of having someone coming in lecturing on any area if they don't know what the trends in research in this area are, how the college here is going to do it, who are the partners we have for it' Ben asserted. 'I lecture in a lot of areas at fourth year, subject areas where I can actually give examples of what has appeared in journals recently and how our research is adding to that area'.

Although they expected to have to teach, the post-1992 academics still found the teaching quite challenging and their initial incursions into the classroom somewhat frightening. For some, teaching was an entirely new and rather 'terrifying' (Ronan) experience. 'It was a bit daunting for someone who had never done anything like that whatsoever' Timothy recalled. Where possible, they drew on their experiences in industry but this often proved to be less useful in the classroom context than individuals had anticipated, as students did not always react quite as expected. 'I talked for a living, so I was used to speaking. I was used to be accosted, and accosted is the fair word, if I in any way stepped out of my comfort zone' Alexandra said. 'So coming in here and not being addressed by the students [i.e. not experiencing much interaction in the classroom], I was going "come on"'. The new recruits found that teaching required more than expertise in their discipline area, and that they had to develop a new set of skills. 'When you're lecturing for the first time... you're learning how to become a

lecturer as well' Ronan asserted. 'As a teacher, you don't have an identity at all. You have to develop one and I find that's quite difficult'. Even those who had done some teaching in other contexts found the teaching role tough in the beginning. 'There were two things that I probably wasn't expecting' Tom recollected. 'One was how daunting it was going to be to stand in front of a group of thirty or forty youngsters who were hanging on your every word. And the second was just how hard I would have to work in the first year and probably the second year.'

The post-1992 academics found themselves having to work quite hard to keep up with the teaching in the early years. This was partly due to the fact that most of their courses were new to them and had to be prepared from scratch. 'When I arrived and went into an office, there was nothing there' Francesca remembered. 'There were no books. Nobody was there to tell me what to do. It was sink or swim time.' Tom's experience was similar. 'More often than not you would have to go in and set the experiments up, particularly in the first year or two, if you'd never done them before. You'd have to go in and set the thing up and make sure it worked' he recalled. The volume of work was also affected by the fact that technological sector lecturers were expected to teach large numbers of hours, which took a lot of preparation time in addition to delivery time. 'I think that, on an ongoing basis, if you're going to be good at lecturing, eighteen hours [per week] is a ridiculous number' Alexandra commented. 'My prep time continues to be about an hour for every hour taught. That means I am actually putting in about thirty to thirty five hours a week on teaching'. The emphasis, at institutional and sectoral level, on ensuring that all academic staff were on full timetables meant that individuals initially found themselves being asked to teach courses that were only just within their field of expertise. This added significantly to their workload. 'If you teach in a university, you teach in your area of speciality. You're rarely asked to teach something that is slightly out of your area of expertise' Tom explained. 'But here you have to be a generalist, to be able to teach a little bit of everything. And that taxes you and demands a lot of you, in that you've got the capability but you've got to spend a lot of time reading textbooks and recapturing knowledge or gaining new knowledge that you never had in order to be able to go in there and do the job'.

Over time, the post-1992 lecturers settled into the teaching role, and developed strategies to deal with the challenges it presented as well as to ensure that it presented them with a suitable level of professional challenge. Where possible, they took ownership of their subject areas and negotiated with their managers for the opportunity to teach in their particular areas of expertise, making the teaching a less daunting experience. 'I think

I've bedded myself into particular subject areas now, which I'm happier with' Ronan said. 'There was a time when you just didn't know what was coming at you. And you feel a bit more comfortable talking about certain subjects now than you did, so I think that certainly helps'. They also took advantage of opportunities to teach on higher-level programmes as these were developed and in some cases set about creating these opportunities for themselves by creating new programmes in their own specialist areas. Although teaching on these programmes initially brought its own pressures ('When I taught for the first time on the final year of the [degree programme], I couldn't believe how difficult and pressurised it had been to get the set of notes to the class on the day' James remembered), it also had its advantages. Lecturers clearly enjoy the challenge of teaching more advanced students. 'There are times when you'd have to actually think about a question for a minute and that has never happened to me before with an undergraduate group' said Timothy of his teaching on a new honours degree. 'It just never has and I love that'.

While teaching was something that all of the post-1992 lecturers expected to be part of the job, there were other dimensions to the academic role that came as a surprise, at least to some. One such dimension was the pastoral dimension. Many of these participants anticipated that they would have to help individual students to deal with their academic difficulties but they did not foresee that they would be expected to provide support at the personal level. 'I didn't really appreciate that I'd have to deal with tears and real horror stories. Nobody warned me about that' Alexandra said. Her experiences with students soon demonstrated that this is actually a significant and inescapable dimension of the lecturer's role. 'It really struck me about three years ago when I had a student who had a complete meltdown' she recounted. 'I realised then, all joking aside, that we are a point of contact for these individuals that are hanging on by their fingernails'. Over time, she and her colleagues have found themselves called on to fulfil pastoral responsibilities to an increasing extent. 'I've noticed that I'm getting a lot more visits from students' James observed. 'It could be that they're not happy with their education or the pressures that are on them, or it could be that young people don't have particularly strong coping skills and are not used to coping with such situations but definitely the pastoral side has increased...I do find myself playing Mother Goose or maybe the shepherd much more frequently'.

Although they have accepted that there is a pastoral dimension to the lecturing role, the degree to which the post-1992 academics choose to engage with it varies. Some, like Francesca and James, seem to have been destined by personal characteristics or personal

experiences to take on pastoral responsibilities. 'I have always been the person to look after that...almost because I'm a woman' Francesca said, while James feels compelled to help young international students to adjust to their new environment. 'I know what it is like to be a guy on his own in another country' he explained. Others are less enthusiastic. In some cases, this is because dealing with students' problems can be quite time-consuming and draining. Timothy found himself with quite a lot of pastoral responsibility as a year tutor on a programme with large student numbers and expressed relief at having been able to pass this role on to a colleague so that he could focus on research. In other cases, individuals feel that pastoral work is simply not something they are suited to. 'I don't do tears. I don't know how to deal with them. I'd far rather sort out the problem for you' Alexandra said. Although they do not dispute the importance of pastoral work, there is a sense among the post-1992 respondents that it is a dimension of the role that needs to be more clearly defined and delimited. 'I think we should be made more aware of what our role is in this context, of whether or not we should be doing this kind of offline counselling thing and of where we stand from a litigative perspective if we are' Alexandra asserted.

The pastoral dimension was not the only dimension of the role that came as a surprise to the post-1992 lecturers. 'I also misunderstood how much of the role would be administrative' Alexandra admitted. While most of these individuals were allowed to focus on teaching in the beginning and administrative duties were limited, in all cases the amount of time that had to be devoted to administration seemed to grow exponentially as they settled in to their academic careers. 'The job has become more complicated, not more complicated as in difficult to do, but there's more complexity in terms of procedures and meetings and forms and the organisation is more complex' Tom explained. The growth of the college, its expansion into new areas, particularly postgraduate work, and the increasing levels of autonomy it has acquired as a result of the delegation of awarding authority have all contributed to an increase in administrative duties at the level of the individual lecturer, and this is not necessarily something that lecturers welcome. 'There are times when I think particularly the internal ones [processes] can feel like a bit of a chore' Timothy commented. 'They're almost bureaucracy for the sake of it at times'.

Ironically, administration seems to go hand in hand with ambition. By taking steps to further their careers, many post-1992 lecturers walked themselves into additional administrative work. Like their pre-1992 predecessors, several members of this generation jumped at the opportunity to take on what seemed to be posts of

responsibility when these opened up. Seán and James took on course leadership roles on existing courses, while Timothy acquiesced when asked to be a year tutor and Ronan volunteered to take on a coordination role on a large undergraduate programme despite the fact that 'nobody else at the time was remotely interested in it and people were wondering who was going to get landed with that poisoned chalice'. Others, including Tom and Alexandra, went about creating new openings by developing new courses that they would subsequently lead or run. All of these titles and positions came with significant administrative responsibilities that had to be fulfilled on top of the individuals' existing duties. 'It [course leadership] took a huge amount of time in the development of the programme and also in the ongoing minding' Alexandra said. 'And there weren't any allowances for that'.

While the increase in administrative duties that came along with these titles was, at least to some extent, self-inflicted, many post-1992 lecturers have also had extra administrative responsibility thrust upon them as a result of their success in other dimensions of the academic role, particularly the emerging research role. 'If you're involved in research and you're progressive in that role, it is assumed that you will be a forerunner in the administrative stuff' Alexandra pointed out. 'You're hauled in to every course board because they want the right CVs on the course board when they're developing courses'. Not only are the research-active targeted for course development work, they are also expected to play a role in developing the necessary structures for supporting research and research students and in guiding colleagues through the administrative maze that must be navigated by research supervisors. 'I have had to design forms because none existed for the college in the past' Ben said. 'And I am asked weekly to explain to people how I do transfer processes between masters and PhDs, how I run vivas, how we choose externs and so on. It's not my job to do that, and I don't get paid to do that, but I'm asked weekly to do that'.

The post-1992 academics have willingly engaged with teaching and have come to terms with the pastoral side of the job but they are, generally, less enthusiastic about the administrative dimension of the lecturing role. 'That kind of thing has a tendency to boil my blood' Timothy confessed. 'That admin-type mentality is just not there'. He and his colleagues do not deny the need for administration and they do welcome the fact that certain types of administrative work are now being recognised in the hours allocation process, but they do not necessarily want to be involved in this work themselves. 'I am a lecturer and I'm interested in being good at that. I am researcher and I am interested in

being good at that. And in terms of administration I more than contribute my fair share so I don't need to be a leader in that as well' Alexandra said.

Interestingly, it is the administrative work involved that has deterred many of these individuals from applying for promotion to management posts, despite the fact that the only way to officially advance beyond the basic lecturing grades has traditionally been to take on a management role. 'I felt that the Head of Department position in the institute was too administrative' Tom admitted. 'I never felt for instance that timetabling should be a function of a Head of Department. And had I ever tried and been successful in going for a Head of Department position, I would have hated that job'. Francesca agreed with this sentiment. 'I saw myself as a Head of Department, maybe even as a future contender for a Head of School' she recalled. 'But I really don't want to be timetabling'. 'I would say in general Head of Department is a hard job' James said. 'Even the job spec is ridiculous and I know there's an awful lot more to the job than the spec actually describes'.

Even if they were willing to grapple with the heavy administrative load that comes with promotional posts, the post-1992 lecturers have found that their opportunities for progression within the technological colleges are actually quite limited. While it is true that, since the PCW agreement, 'virtually everybody now can get onto the Lecturer scale' (Tom), progressing beyond the top of this scale is still difficult. 'There are a tiny amount of Senior Lecturer positions' Tom explained. Head of Department and Head of School posts open up even less frequently. 'Usually you're waiting for someone to die, someone to retire or someone to be promoted' James said jokingly. 'And they're rare events really'. On the rare occasions when promotional posts arise, they are not open to everyone. 'You couldn't really be going for anything outside your own discipline' James pointed out. 'So even though broadly speaking we are all lecturers, I could not be Head of Department in Languages, Tourism and Hospitality'. Competition among those who are eligible for posts can be intense and there is a sense that individuals are promoted on the basis of seniority rather than necessarily on the basis of their suitability for the position on offer. Francesca recalled being told to rein in her ambitions at an early stage in her career. 'I was very very ambitious, very very career orientated' she said. 'But soon people told me "well you'd have to be here twenty years before you'd get anything" and "join the queue, there are people before you" and so on. Actually I lost my confidence for a few years after that'.

What helped Francesca regain her confidence was the discovery that progression as an academic did not necessarily depend on promotion within the institution. The research remit granted to the RTCs by the 1992 legislation opened up an alternative way forward for technological sector lecturers, albeit one that had always been open to their colleagues in universities: it opened up the possibility of a 'real' academic career which the post-1992 respondents have all embraced.

The degree to which these individuals expected research to be part of their role as lecturers when they moved into academic life varied. For the earlier recruits, research was not really on the agenda. 'I had no preconception of whether that would be a possibility and I didn't set out with the intention of forging that. It was really almost chance' Tom said. He and other colleagues who joined in the early to mid-1990s perceived themselves to be getting into 'a pedagogical business' (Francesca), and they did not expect research to be part of their role. Both Francesca and Seán, however, remembered being quizzed at interview about their plans for further study, indicating that academic managers were already considering the potential for expansion into research in their recruitment decisions at this point in time. The later recruits of this generation, by contrast, both expected and actively pursued the opportunity to combine research with teaching when they moved into lecturing. Before coming to Waterford, James had worked as a researcher in another IoT, subsequently moving to a lecturing post within the same institution. He had continued working with the original research group while lecturing, so he knew that it was possible to combine teaching and research in the sector and this was something that appealed to him. Alexandra deliberately targeted Waterford when applying for posts because of a perception that there was 'a drive on for a research-lecturing mix' at the institution, while Timothy was initially drawn to the college as a result of the opportunities for research in his particular field of interest: as a family friend and eventual colleague expressed it to him, 'here you can be a teacher and do other things as well'.

All of the post-1992 lecturers were actively involved in research when interviewed for this study and most classify themselves as researchers as well as lecturers, but the 'researcher identity' that has emerged in this generation is in no way a homogeneous one. There are clear differences within even this small group in terms of individuals' reasons for embracing the research role and the process by which they have become researchers as well as in terms of what being a researcher means in practical terms.

Both Francesca and Ronan initially engaged in research for pragmatic reasons, chiefly that it seemed to be essential if they were to be appointed to the full-time permanent posts they clearly wanted. Francesca was told in no uncertain terms when she was initially offered her post that some research, namely that required for a postgraduate qualification, would be required of her if she was to be appointed on a permanent basis at the end of her probationary period. Despite previous negative experiences of postgraduate research, she signed up for a masters in order to secure her job, a move which was to have profound consequences for her future career. 'The great thing about it was being almost forced at gun point to go down the road to Cork to do a masters and waking up to this realisation, a bit late in the day (I was in my thirties then) that I was an academic and that this was what I wanted to do. I wanted to go and do a PhD and excel' she said. The permanent post secured, she did exactly that and by the time she was interviewed for this study, she had completed her PhD and was actively involved in post-doctoral work in her area.

Ronan's first foray into research also involved registering for a postgraduate course in the hope that it would help him to get a permanent post. Conscious of the increasing importance of research in the IoTs and of the significance that was attached to research output and qualifications in the recruitment of academic staff, as well as of the fact that he was entering lecturing with only a professional qualification to his name, he signed up for a masters as soon as he began to work as a part-time lecturer. Not only did this help him to secure a permanent lecturing post, the masters also set him firmly on the road to developing a researcher identity. He immediately started work on a PhD and also became involved in other activities related to research. 'I feel it's important to develop the academic professional publication end of things because that's where we're going as an institution' he said, jokingly adding that 'research can be interesting as well as being painful'.

It was the idea that research could be interesting that drew other members of this generation to it as an activity. Tom first got involved with research because a call for proposals under the newly launched Technological Sector Research (TSR) scheme provided an opening for the investigation of issues that intrigued him. 'I had a couple of ideas and I felt compelled to write them up' he said. Seán's initial involvement in research was also motivated largely by personal curiosity. 'It again goes back to always wanting to find out about things' he explained. He too applied for TSR funding for postgraduate students because he wanted to pursue answers to questions that had arisen in his own masters work. 'The projects themselves actually came out of my thesis for

my MBA' he recalled. Both Ben and James engaged in research because it provided them with a necessary intellectual challenge. 'Ultimately the motivation is to keep your mind fresh' Ben said. 'I found this job [lecturing] could be quite stultifying if there weren't some stimuli, and all the better if I could find those stimuli myself rather than be provoked or prodded in particular directions' James added. For Timothy too, research was something that had the potential to be both interesting and enjoyable. 'I liked being in a library. I liked being up to my neck in dusty books and files and things like that' he said. 'It suited me and it suited the way I am and the way I think and the way I work'.

For many of the post-1992 academics, the desire to engage in research was facilitated (if not indeed prompted) by developments at the macro and meso levels. The creation of a research space within the remit of the RTCs in the 1992 legislation opened up new opportunities for both institutions and individuals and led to various initiatives designed to support applied research in the sector. The introduction of the TSR funding programme stimulated both Tom and Seán to start down the research route, and James too admitted that macro-level initiatives encouraged him to further develop the research dimension of his role. 'Research in Science or Engineering, particularly through Mary Harney when she was in the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment, was being given a huge boost' he said. 'Getting scientific funding was a lot more straightforward and a lot more lucrative and a lot less bureaucratic and so on every front it was more enticing'. At meso level, Waterford responded to these external developments, putting in place structures to support those individuals who were willing to take on the research challenge and thus to take the institution down a development path it was keen to follow. 'There were lots of people who were doing it [research] before but a lot of it was just on a one-off basis and to be honest I don't know how they managed to get the students through' Tom said. 'But shortly after the strand ones [sectoral shorthand for the TSR grants], [name of colleague] was appointed as Head of Development which included the research function and so there was immediately a support structure there.' Although the support structures were a little shaky in the beginning, they developed over time, and Timothy for one felt that the structures currently in place at institutional level to support research, despite their flaws (see below), do serve to help those who wish to be research active. 'Certainly we have found that the School of Research and [name of head of research] in particular have been incredibly supportive of us. He really understands what we're doing and why we're doing it' he commented.

All of the post-1992 respondents claim to be actively involved in research, but what 'being a researcher' actually involves varies from one individual to the next. Most of these individuals are members of research groups or centres, with some being members of more than one such group, and several play lead roles in their particular groups. Four of the eight are what might be described as 'qualified' academic researchers in that they hold doctoral qualifications, but two of these (Ben and James) completed their doctorates prior to embarking on lecturing careers while the other two (Francesca and Alexandra) did not start on their doctoral research until they had lectured for a number of years. Of the remaining four respondents, two (Ronan and Timothy) were in the process of completing their doctoral theses when interviewed for the research, while the other two (Tom and Seán) were considering doctoral work but had not yet engaged the doctoral process.

To date, people have not allowed the lack of formal research qualifications hold them back or limit their research activities and ambitions. Seán and Timothy are leading members of large successful research groups, and despite not being officially 'qualified' as researchers, both Tom and Seán have excellent track records for supervising research masters students to completion. All but Francesca are involved in the supervision of postgraduate students, and in Francesca's case, this is due to a lack of students interested in carrying out research in a very typical Humanities discipline within what remains an applied vocational institution, rather than to lack of interest in supervision. Over time, most of the post-1992 academics have come to engage in the same sorts of activities as their counterparts in the university sector, presenting their work at conferences in Ireland and abroad, publishing in peer-reviewed journals and collaborating on funded projects with colleagues in their particular fields of interest, and a researcher identity which resembles that of university academics has begun to emerge.

While the new generation of 'researchers' at WIT strive to emulate and ultimately compete with their university counterparts, it is an uphill struggle made more difficult by forces that remain largely outside the control of the individuals. The legislation governing the sector does allow the IoTs to engage in research, but the practical conditions in place continue to restrict what institutions and individuals can actually do.

Acquiring funding for research is a major challenge. IoTs are officially funded as teaching institutions, which means that researchers in the sector have to rely on funding from other, usually competitive, sources in order to be able to finance their activities. While some, including Ben and Timothy, have chalked up remarkable successes in

various funding competitions, the hierarchy of institutions in the higher education system tends to be reinforced in the allocation of funding, with the bulk of any money on offer usually going to the university sector. 'There is a certain snobbery in Ireland towards research' Ben said. 'Only five percent of IRCSET scholarships this year went to the IoT sector. We've got a number here over the years. But this year for example we had the highest student graduating results wise in science that we've ever had and she didn't get one. Yet I know people with two ones in universities who got them.' Even the funding competitions designed specifically for the IoT sector seem not to take into account the nature of research in the technological colleges. Interdisciplinarity has always been strongly promoted and research in the IoTs often crosses disciplinary boundaries, yet such research is rarely funded. 'We wrote up some strand one funding proposals which got turned down because the area falls between technology and business' Seán recounted. At the meso level, financial support is made available for research activities where possible, but the supply of funding is, of necessity, limited, and it is generally far outstripped by demand.

A far greater and in ways more serious hurdle for IoT researchers is the fact that research, while increasingly perceived to be part of the job, continues to hold only a marginal position in the official job description of the IoT lecturer. The main role of the lecturer continues to be a teaching role, clearly defined in the contract in terms of hours of classroom contact to be clocked up over the course of ten-month academic year. Research is permitted under the contract but is neither required nor officially allocated hours in the way that teaching is. This effectively means that those involved in research are obliged to carry out their research work on top of their designated teaching duties and often on their own time. 'I feel like Cinderella, as I'm sure any other researcher in the institute feels' Alexandra said. 'I feel that I'm allowed to do my research but only when I've done the rest of my housework. And the Cinderella principle is getting stronger as we are strongly motivated by certain quarters to get more involved in a greater amount of research, to get involved in funding applications and so on'.

Efforts are being made, usually at the level of individual institutions, to open up space for research within the limits of a work allocation model built around teaching hours. 'When you teach on masters programmes, you get a much better teaching allowance and that reduces your teaching hours and does free up time for you to do your research' Ronan pointed out. Lecturers are also allocated hours for supervising postgraduates and efforts are made to ensure that teaching is blocked so that individuals have one day in the week on which they are not scheduled to teach. (The discourse around these

allowances is very revealing. Hours for postgraduate supervision are often described as hours 'off' the lecturer's timetable, while the research day is often described by managers, to the frustration of the research-active, as a 'day off'. Even the term 'research day' is telling, as it implies that research is not seen as a part of the lecturer's everyday activity but rather something done in isolation on a particular day. Interesting, the term 'teaching day' tends not to be commonly used!) A sabbatical scheme was also introduced and though a number of the post-1992 participants expressed dissatisfaction at how this scheme had been implemented and at the limited number of sabbaticals which were offered, nonetheless three members of this group had benefited from sabbatical leave before the scheme was eventually abandoned due to lack of funding.

The post-1992 lecturers appreciate the measures that have been introduced to support their research efforts but are disheartened by the assumptions that seem to underlie these in the perceptions of their managers and colleagues and even those outside the institution. A research day is often seen as a special privilege, but in effect it is not. 'They talk about a research day, but what does that actually mean?' Francesca asked. 'It means that you do a week's work in four days instead of five...It's still sixteen hours and all that goes with it.' The allowances that are made for the supervision of research students are also frequently called into question. 'There's no recognition of the level of work and level of commitment that is required' Seán said. He recalls a meeting at which a senior manager questioned the need to allocate two hours a week for the supervision of a postgraduate research student. 'She wanted to know what people were doing with their two hours allocation. If you're meeting your student on average once a week or once a fortnight for an hour, what are you doing with the rest of it? When in reality even writing the proposal to get the student in the first instance takes that time probably' he said.

Given the limited resources available to institutions and the limited control that they can exercise over the terms of employment of lecturers, it is unsurprising that IoTs are limited in what they can do to support staff members who want to engage in research. The post-1992 academics appreciate the difficulties but find themselves frustrated by the situation nonetheless. 'I feel penalised as researcher' Francesca declared 'There are lots of people going off home after a good week's work teaching but if you are a researcher you have to turn around after your week's teaching and start on your parallel work'. She and others who have taken the research route often find themselves wondering why they continue to be involved in research when they are only paid the same as colleagues who are not research-active and when complying with what the institution seems to

expect of them has no tangible benefits, at least in terms of career progression within the institution. 'Ultimately you ask why you do it' Ben said. 'I could be at home with my kids today...I don't have to do it and at some stage you have to ask yourself why, if there's no employment structure, no reward structure'.

The post-1992 respondents seem increasingly to be asking themselves why they continue to be involved in research, and interestingly, the conclusions they arrive at with seem to be sufficient to keep them on the research track despite the frustrations involved with being a researcher in a teaching institution. For some, research provides them with a sense of personal satisfaction that helps to keep them going. 'Thank God I have that because I think I'd feel at this stage a bit of a failure if I wasn't doing anything else' said Francesca, who operates in a discipline area that has been experiencing difficulties at many levels in recent years. For others, research introduces an element of variety into the job and also gives them more control over their destiny than they would otherwise have. 'You have a lot more autonomy running research' Tom explained. 'For the last nine to ten years I've had my own budgets. It's a small thing because it wouldn't have been huge money...[but] it's having the control and autonomy and flexibility to be able to do things and to make decisions. Whereas when you come in first as a lecturer you have very little empowerment to make decisions. You just accept life the way it is and get on with it'. There is also a sense among these lecturers that conditions for researchers are likely to improve, particularly if Waterford's campaign for university designation is successful. 'As a professional, it would be ideal for me if that [the university application] worked' Alexandra said.

For now and given the hope of positive developments in the future, the post-1992 lecturers seem willing to make the sacrifices necessary to continue in the research role. If the university bid does not succeed however, it could well be the final straw for many of this new generation of academic researchers. 'I suspect if we don't get university status, we will be very firmly put back in the remit that we're supposed to be in today' Alexandra explained. 'And at that point I'm assuming I'll have to move. In terms of my own identity as a professional in this area, I couldn't possibly work in an environment where I know that I am being restricted in terms of research'.

This section has focused on the experiences of the post-1992 participants in the lecturing role, and an overview of the key issues that have emerged may be helpful at this point. The post-1992 recruits came to lecturing with an expectation that the role would involve a lot of teaching, but with a strong sense that teaching at third-level would and should be

significantly different to teaching at second-level. They worked hard to carve out for themselves the kind of specialised teaching role that they felt was appropriate for third-level teachers, actively taking ownership of particular subject areas and in some case even developing new programmes in order to be able to teach in their particular areas of interest and specialism. They engaged rather less willingly with other dimensions of the academic role, in particular the pastoral and administrative dimensions, and while they did and do what is required in terms of student support and administrative work, over time most have developed strategies to limit the time spent on these parts of the job. They prefer to focus their attention on research since, despite variations in terms of what being a researcher actually means, research is seen by all of these individuals as one of the most important elements of the lecturing role. Their stories clearly illustrate the challenges of being a researcher in an Institute of Technology, which range from lack of funding and lack of time to lack of appropriate reward and recognition structures. They do however concede that being a researcher, even in this challenging environment, has benefits in terms of personal satisfaction, autonomy and the opportunity to exercise some control over their working environment, and the possibility that conditions will become more conducive to research if WIT ultimately becomes a university seems to be enough to sustain the post-1992 participants in their efforts, at least in the short term.

7.5 Towards an understanding of professional identity in the post-1992 generation: emerging impressions of academic selves

Initial analysis of the stories of the post-1992 participants suggest that what it means to be a technological sector lecturer has changed over time and is continuing to change. These individuals, for whom an academic career was not a coincidence but a conscious choice for which they were willing to make certain sacrifices (from returning to education in order to acquire extra qualifications to coping with rejection and taking large pay cuts), demonstrate a clear ability to sense and strategically adapt to change. In an institution that has actively embraced opportunities to expand its mission to include research, they have developed professional identities that are strongly research-focused. They do engage with other dimensions of the lecturing role, but they do so in manner that is strongly influenced by their desire to progress their research agendas, seeking out teaching assignments that allow them to integrate their research into their teaching or that, at the very least, have generous hours allocations which create space in their schedules for them to work on their own projects, and minimising their involvement with certain dimensions, including in pastoral and administrative work. Like their pre-

1992 colleagues, they demonstrate a strong commitment to the institution, but in the case of the post-1992 participants, this commitment appears to be contingent upon the institution's ability to provide them with an environment in which to develop the kinds of academic professional identities and progressive professional careers that they see as desirable.

7.6 Conclusion

Having described the contextual conditions in which the research participants practise their profession (Chapter 5) and presented their personal accounts of their professional lives (Chapters 6 and 7), the focus must now shift from a descriptive to a deeper analytical engagement with the data. In Chapter 8, the participants' 'quests' for identities as academic professionals are examined through the lens provided by Margaret Archer's social realist theories on identity formation and the interplay of structure and agency.

CHAPTER 8

THE FORMATION OF ACADEMIC IDENTITIES: ANALYSING THE DATA

8.1 Introduction

Archer (2007) asserts that 'our personal identities are defined by our constellation of ultimate concerns and quests for social identities are deliberative attempts to secure positions in social contexts that allow these concerns to be realised' (p.136). Chapter 5 has described the social context in which the research participants seek to realise their concerns as professionals, and Chapters 6 and 7 have presented in some detail the stories of their 'quests' for professional identities as academic professionals within a specific context. The purpose of the current chapter is to analyse these 'quests' through the lens provided by Archer's social realist theory with a view to addressing the research questions posed at the outset.

In the first section of this chapter (Section 8.2), the analysis will consider these lecturers as 'agents' (Archer 2000 p. 260). Agents are defined as 'collectivities sharing the same life chances' (Archer 2000 p.260). All human beings are characterised by what is described as primary agency: they become, by birth or by default as a consequence of taking up particular positions or roles in society, members of particular collectivities. Their membership of these collectivities is involuntary but is highly significant as it strongly influences the resources and opportunities that they can access and the kinds of social identities they can develop. In addition to this, individuals may also develop what is called corporate agency. This involves actively seeking out like-minded individuals with similar interests and goals and working with them towards the fulfilment of those goals. The activities of such voluntary collectivities, or corporate agents, often result in what is described as 'the elaboration of the institutional role array' (Archer 2000 p.260). This essentially involves the creation of new roles and the opening up of new opportunities both for those who are members of the particular collectivities concerned and for the members of society at large. In Section 8.2 the research participants' stories will be examined with a view to understanding how their primary agency (in this case the involuntary placement as members of particular collectivities that results from accepting positions as lecturers) and their corporate agency (that is, their voluntary

engagement with other collectivities) have affected and continue to affect them and the professional identities they form.

Section 8.3 will consider the research participants as 'actors' Archer 2000 p.261). In order to become actors, individuals must seek out roles in society that allow them to pursue their ultimate concerns and thus to become the kinds of people they wish to be. Once they have found appropriate roles, they must 'personify' (Archer 2000 p.288) them. Personifying a role, in Archer's use of the term, means performing it in a way that is consistent with, and indeed also allows for the further pursuit of, one's own particular set of concerns: it essentially involves bringing one's personal identity to bear on the role and animating it in one's own unique way. By personifying the roles they have chosen, not only do individuals develop social identities, but they may also 'elasticate' (Archer 2000 p.297) the roles themselves: their particular interpretations of how roles can and should be performed may lead to changes in general perceptions of what these roles involve and in relation to the kinds of behaviour that is to be expected of incumbents of these roles. In Section 8.3 the lecturers' stories will be analysed with a view to establishing how they have chosen to 'personify' the lecturing role and to engage with the various activities that the role involves.

In order to pursue their concerns, individual actors devise 'projects' (Archer 2007 p.7), which are essentially courses of action that they see as contributing to the realisation of the different concerns. Such projects activate the powers for constraint and enablement that are present in the social contexts in which the individuals are operating. Certain projects are congruent with the particular structural and cultural conditions under which they are pursued and tend to be enabled, while others push against what is normally expected and accepted and are therefore constrained in various ways. In Section 8.4, the various 'constraints' and 'enablements' (Archer 2003 p.7) activated by the projects pursued by individual lecturers who participated in the study will be examined.

The pursuit of particular projects activates constraints and enablements but the extent to which these constraints and enablements actually impact on individuals is dependent on how the individuals in question decide to react to them. Each individual tends to react in a relatively consistent manner to the constraints and enablements he or she encounters, or, in Archer's terms, tends to adopt a particular 'stance' (Archer 2003 p.243). Some people adopt an evasive stance, avoiding constraints and enablements where possible, while others adopt a subversive stance, choosing to continue pursuing their projects despite obstacles that present themselves, and still others take a strategic stance, working

within the constraints and taking full advantage of the enablements in the hope of achieving their aims in the long term. Section 8.5 considers the research participants' stances in relation to the constraints and enablements activated by the projects they have chosen to pursue as lecturers in an Institute of Technology.

The question of how adopting particular stances has affected participants and their professional identities and of how it has affected the lecturing role and the meso and macro contexts in which the participants in the study and their fellow lecturers operate will be addressed in the Section 8.6. Archer (2003, 2007) suggests that adopting a particular stance has consequences both for the individual and for society as a whole. Taking an evasive stance can involve self-renunciation and can lead to social immobility at the level of the individual. At the level of society, it is linked to what is described as 'social morphostasis' (Archer 2003 p.3), which effectively means that society and its existing structures are protected, maintained and reproduced rather than being changed in any significant way. A strategic stance, on the other hand, requires individuals to demonstrate strong self-discipline but also results in upward mobility for them and is linked to changes in social structures or 'social morphogenesis' as Archer (2003 p.3) describes it. A subversive stance towards constraints and enablements tends to arise out of a desire on the part of individuals for self-transformation and for the transformation of society in line with particular espoused ideals and values. While society may indeed ultimately be transformed as a result of a critical and strongly ideal-based subversive stance, taking such a position may lead to downwards or at best lateral mobility for individuals.

Throughout the chapter, the stories of the pre-1992 recruits will be compared with those of the post-1992 recruits, in an effort to trace the evolution of academic professional identity at Waterford between the arrival of the first of the participants in the late 1970s and the conclusion of data collection for this research in the Summer of 2007.

8.2 Participants as primary and corporate agents: involuntary and voluntary collectivities and their consequences

Of the sixteen research participants, only one can claim lecturing as a first career. The remaining participants had all pursued alternative career paths before moving into higher education: they were, in Archer's terms, mature actors with established social / professional identities before becoming lecturers. These established professional identities had been developed through the performance of roles to which their initial positions as primary agents and their activities as corporate agents had given them access and varied considerably, particularly in the pre-1992 generation. Some participants were qualified and experienced second-level teachers, while others came with professional and trade qualifications and wide-ranging industrial experience and still others arrived with doctorates and research experience under their belts. Some came to lecturing in search of a challenging teaching role, while others were simply looking for steady secure work in an environment in which they felt comfortable. Whatever their reasons for moving into higher education, in doing so all sixteen were affecting 'a reversal of ...commitment' (Archer 2000 p.303) to the social identities they already held and clearly making 'deliberative attempts to secure positions' (Archer 2007 p.136) in which they would be able to pursue their practical or professional concerns.

On taking up their lecturing posts, these individuals began a new cycle of professional identity formation and took up new, though still involuntary, positions on the overall distribution of resources as primary agents: as technological sector lecturers, as WRTC / WIT lecturers and as members of particular schools and departments. Alongside this new primary agency lay the potential for corporate agency: the novice lecturers had the capacity to voluntarily align themselves with others who shared their concerns to advance particular projects. This section examines how their new positions as primary agents affected these lecturers. It also considers whether and how they became corporate agents and the impact of their voluntary engagement with particular collectivities on the overall role array and on their own opportunities to become social actors.

8.2.1 Participants as primary agents

In Archer's model of identity formation, the position of individuals as primary agents 'profoundly influences the kinds of actors they can choose to become' (Archer 2000 p.285), as it affects the options that are available to them and the kinds of projects and social identities they may choose to pursue. What follows considers the lecturers who participated in the research as primary agents within the academic environment and examines the consequences for their development as social actors of their positions as IoT lecturers, WIT lecturers and members of particular schools and departments.

8.2.1.1 The impact of sectoral positioning: being an IoT lecturer

As lecturers in an IoT, the research participants are clearly positioned within the Irish higher education system and are firmly rooted on one side of the policy-determined binary divide. This positioning impacts strongly on the projects that they can pursue, enabling some and strongly constraining others. It must be said that the very existence of the technological sector has been an enablement to the pre-1992 participants, as without it, they would most likely not have developed lecturing careers at all. The RTCs provided the qualified teachers with the level of professional challenge they desired but would have been unlikely to find at second-level. The vocational remit of the colleges made lecturing accessible for individuals who would not have been hired to work in universities because of their lack of academic qualifications but whose industrial experience was seen as a valuable resource in the RTC sector.

This same remit has served as a constraint on the development of those in certain disciplines, however. The determination of the Department of Education to prevent mission drift in higher education means that IoTs are usually only sanctioned to run programmes that can be proven to be 'applied'. Lecturers in the Humanities and other areas that are not particularly 'applied' thus find themselves constrained. They are prevented from developing and running the kinds of programmes that they wish to provide and thus from getting involved in high level specialised teaching or indeed activities like postgraduate supervision that they would like to pursue.

Even those operating in 'applied' disciplines find that being an IoT lecturer can have a limiting effect. Both scientists and engineers comment that they are seen as second-class citizens within the national disciplinary and professional communities. They are

viewed as unable to compete with their university counterparts in terms of outputs, despite evidence to the contrary, and they are allocated a smaller share, or indeed no share at all, of competitive funding offered by various national bodies. Being located within the IoT sector and being obliged to operate within the limits that have been set for institutions and individuals in the sector therefore has a significant impact on what individuals can do and on the kinds of professional identities they can develop.

8.2.1.2 The impact of institutional affiliation: being a WIT lecturer

Despite the fact that all IoTs operate within the same macro-level context, the technological sector is far from homogeneous. How macro-level policy is received, interpreted and implemented at the meso level can differ significantly from one institution to the next. Being located in one IoT rather than in another can therefore affect the extent to which individual lecturers' projects are constrained or enabled and the range of professional identities that are available to them.

Waterford RTC / IT has traditionally been quick to embrace whatever enablements the policy context has provided and has been relatively strategic if not subversive in relation to the constraints activated by the progressive projects it wished to pursue. The data suggest that the research participants are conscious that being in Waterford rather than in another IoT impacts on them as individuals. Members of both generations comment on the differences between WIT and other institutions, suggesting that Waterford has an energy and a sense of progressiveness that is not present in other colleges. Some participants deliberately targeted WIT as a place to work because of its progressive position on research, and even those who are critical of the institution concede that WIT is well developed when compared to other IoTs, which they feel resemble second-level schools rather than higher education institutions. The disadvantages of being located in an IoT are counterbalanced by the advantages of being, as Emma puts it, in 'the best IoT'.

Being a WIT lecturer does however have its downside. There may be a sense that 'the joint is jumping' (Kieran) when compared to other institutions, but this is at least partly due to a culture of high expectations, which leads individuals to get involved in activities that fall outside the requirements of their contracts and to work in the evenings, in holiday periods, and so on. In a higher education system characterised by strong macro-level commitment to keeping institutions in their place and by determination at sectoral

level to ensure that no institution is given any advantage over any other, individual lecturers can and do find that being located in an institution with declared aspirations to become a university means that they are 'nobody's friend' (Laura) and rather isolated within the broader IoT community.

8.2.1.3 Involuntary positioning within the institution: membership of schools and departments

In considering lecturers as primary agents, we must also consider the impact of their involuntary positioning in particular collectivities within the institution on their projects and on the sorts of professional identities that they can choose to develop. The research participants all 'belong' to particular academic schools and departments, and are affected by the structures of these organisational units and the cultures that prevail within them.

At WIT, as in other IoTs, schools and departments are often formed on the basis of size rather than specialism. Disciplines are often combined into schools and departments on the basis of staff and student numbers rather than necessarily of disciplinary coherence and interesting units such as the (now defunct) Department of Languages, Tourism and Sports Studies emerge. Even those departments that appear to be characterised by disciplinary coherence often house quite disparate groups with distinctive specialisms and needs, despite their apparent compatibility at the broader level.

This sometimes arbitrary approach to grouping disciplines means that lecturers can find themselves allocated to collectivities that do not actually meet their needs, either because the school or department in question does not relate to the individual's specialist area or because the unit acts as an umbrella for such an array of different specialisms that the specific needs of particular areas tend to be overlooked or compromised in an effort to meet the basic needs of all. Being assigned to a collectivity to which they do not really belong can have a significant impact on individual lecturers. At best, it leads to tension. At worst, individuals' projects can be constrained because there is no one to champion their cause, particularly in big units where several unconnected disciplines are in competition for scarce resources and support.

The participants' stories suggest that the school or department an individual is assigned to as a primary agent influences the kinds of projects that individual is likely to pursue

and the dimensions of the academic role that individual is likely to engage with. Certain schools and departments have maintained the very strong practical focus that would be expected in a technological college, defining their mission as the preparation of students for specific professional roles in industry and emphasising practically-oriented teaching and engagement with industrial partners and professional accreditation bodies over other activities such as academic research. Other schools and departments are characterised by a commitment to knowledge creation and to academic reproduction that emerges from the fundamental beliefs inherent in the disciplines represented within them: in these units, we see research projects being pursued, often at the expense of other activities such as teaching. Still others, usually those that are home to a more disparate range of disciplines, tend to allow, if not always to actively facilitate, a wide range of projects to be pursued.

The data clearly show that the attitudes of the research participants towards their schools and departments vary both across disciplines and across generations and appear to have changed over time. Despite acting as an umbrella for a reasonably wide range of disciplines, the School of Business seems to provide its members with a comfortable and acceptable conceptual home. Business lecturers appear to identify strongly with the school, rather than with individual departments, and participants from both generations seem to be happy to belong to this particular collectivity.

The diversity inherent in the remaining schools means that individual lecturers are more likely to identify with their departments, which are tend to have a more specialised focus, than with the school. The natural scientists appear to feel very little connection with the computer scientists and mathematicians who share the School of Science umbrella and tend to describe their primary allegiance as being to the department. A similar situation occurs in the School of Engineering, where there is a clear disciplinary distinction between the individual departments.

In the School of Humanities, a certain level of disciplinary incoherence is evident even at the level of the departments. Linguists find themselves in a department with lecturers in tourism and catering, while, up to recently, art, design and music lecturers fell under the same umbrella as colleagues from law, social care, psychology and theology. Individual lecturers from the Humanities disciplines thus have a somewhat ambivalent relationship to both the school and department and some participants explicitly question whether they actually belong at all to the collectivities in which they have been involuntarily placed.

Being a member of a particular school or department does, therefore, appear to have an impact on lecturers. Individuals' views on what being a lecturer involves are influenced by the views that are prevalent in the collectivities in which they find themselves located. Their experiences as lecturers, and the identities they develop, also seem to be affected by the units to which they have been assigned. Those who have been assigned to schools or departments in which related discipline areas are grouped to form relatively coherent entities appear to draw a certain strength from belonging to these units: they seem to feel that their projects are understood and generally supported and to be happy to describe themselves as members of these particular collectivities when discussing their identities. Those who have been assigned to schools or departments which group disparate disciplines are less likely to draw strength or a sense of identity from these collectivities. The competition for attention and resources can be intense in these groupings and those who belong to the disciplines that are less well represented in the school or department often find it difficult to make their voices heard and to obtain support for their projects. Individuals who feel that they do not really 'belong' in the collectivities to which they have been assigned tend to distance themselves from these groups when describing themselves and to feel a need to defend the particular professional identities they have developed, something that is not evident among those who feel that they 'fit' in their schools or departments.

8.2.2 Communities of their own choosing: participants as corporate agents

Taking up a lecturing role means being placed in particular collectivities as primary agents, but these are by no means the only collectivities to which lecturers belong. Where possible, people move beyond the communities in which they have been involuntarily placed, in search of colleagues who share their interests and of contexts in which they can pursue their professional concerns. They align themselves with groups of like-minded individuals to work towards common goals, and thus become what Archer (2000) terms corporate agents. The participants in the current study have all developed corporate agency, although the groups with which they have aligned themselves and the impact of their engagement with these groups vary across the generations.

One factor that influences lecturers in relation to the groups with which they voluntarily seek out connections is their views on the overall purpose of higher education. The pre-1992 participants seem to be concerned with preparing students for industry and

committed to delivering industry-informed and industry-relevant teaching. As a result, they try to maintain their ties to the 'real world' and most have worked out mechanisms of keeping in contact with colleagues in industry, ranging from keeping up their membership of professional bodies to continuing to practise in their professions alongside their lecturing role.

The post-1992 participants, by contrast, appear to be concerned with producing broadly educated, research-literate graduates and thus these individuals align themselves with their academic peers in disciplinary networks within and outside the institution. While some do maintain their ties to professional bodies, they appear to use these connections with the world of professional practice to inform research rather than teaching. Both the pre-1992 and post-1992 Humanities lecturers demonstrate a tendency to align themselves with external networks of academics in their specialist areas, since these provide them with a community of peers and compensate for the lack or limited number of fellow specialists within the institution.

Individuals tend to seek out collectivities that allow them to pursue the projects and the concerns that are significant to them as professionals. Strong institutional loyalty and a concern with making the institution work better for all its members seem to have pushed the pre-1992 participants in the direction of groups such as Academic Council that allow them to contribute to broad change at the institutional level. The post-1992 participants do not tend to align themselves with institute-level groups to quite the same extent as their pre-1992 colleagues. While many have played a role in shaping institutional policy on issues that are important to them, such as research support structures for example, they seem less inclined to join committees like Academic Council whose remit is more broadly focused.

In terms of corporate agency, one of the most interesting developments in recent times has been the trend towards the formation of research groups and research centres. Whereas the pre-1992 participants tend to make the best of their involuntary placement in schools and departments, even where they feel that they do not belong in the units in which they have been placed, the post-1992 lecturers show a willingness to seek out and if necessary set up collectivities that will fulfil their need for an appropriate conceptual home. Most work in research collectivities of some sort, from teams established for particular projects to fully-fledged research groups. Several have leadership roles within their particular groups and most identify more strongly with these units than with the schools and departments to which they are officially assigned.

According to Archer (2000), the actions of corporate agents are significant in that they lead to 'the elaboration of the institutional role array' (p.260) to include new roles in which primary agents can invest themselves and become social actors. The various voluntary collectivities with which the participants in the current study have aligned themselves have changed the landscape for these individuals and / or those who succeeded them in various ways. Through their involvement with various external bodies, whether professional or academic, and with internal committees, lecturers have built networks and established structures to support projects they themselves want to pursue and these networks and structures remain in place to support others who have similar concerns and ambitions. Through their involvement in course boards that push for the development of advanced programmes, they have opened up the possibility of developing a specialist teacher identity, where previously it was only possible for RTC / IoT lecturers to be generalists. Through their involvement in research and their efforts to establish research centres, they have carved out a niche within the structures for researchers that they and subsequent incumbents of the lecturing role can occupy. The actions of corporate agents have significantly 'elasticated' (see Archer 2000 p. 297) the lecturing role to include new activities and new possibilities for all those who choose lecturing as a role in which to pursue their concerns as professionals.

8.3 Participants as actors: how individuals perform and personify the academic role

The previous section considered the research participants as agents. This section will focus on the participants as social actors, investing in the lecturing role as one that they have deemed suitable for the development of social identities which are 'expressive of who they are as persons in society' (Archer 2000 p.261). It will examine how these lecturers personify the role, bringing their personal identities to bear on it and performing it in a manner consistent with their particular constellations of concerns, and how the personification of the role transforms both the individual actors and the role itself.

8.3.1 The impact of existing identities on the personification of the academic role

The personal identity that an individual brings to bear on any social role is essentially that individual's unique constellation of ultimate concerns, which has been given a

precise shape in repeated cycles of reflexive internal conversation. The dialectical relationship which Archer claims exists between personal and social identities means that mature social actors come to new roles bearing the influence of roles that they have previously occupied. The professional concerns of the participants and the projects they choose to pursue as lecturers are at least partially shaped by their experiences in other roles they held prior to coming to Waterford. These individuals have been shaped by their own experiences as students in particular disciplines, as well as by their experiences as practising professionals in industry and / or by experiences of academic work in other contexts.

8.3.1.1 The impact of the discipline or profession

The research participants were all hired as lecturers on the basis of their expertise in a particular specialist field and their stories show that their specialist areas influence their view of the world, their concerns and the projects that they choose to pursue. At a trivial level, people focus their attention on issues that are significant in their professional areas. Thus the accountants and quantity surveyors repeatedly express concern about cost-related issues and inefficient use of resources, while those in construction evaluate progress in terms of new buildings, electronics engineers concentrate on processes and how to improve them and Business lecturers see students as customers to whom they need to deliver a satisfactory service.

At a more fundamental level, the discipline or profession into which an individual has been socialised affects what that individual sees as the appropriate way to personify the lecturing role. Scientists, engineers and Humanities lecturers have different views on what constitute the important dimensions of the academic role, on the extent to which academic work should be collaborative and so on. Ben, as a natural scientist, clearly sees research as being the key activity of the lecturer. His colleagues from certain Engineering and Humanities disciplines, by contrast, place greater emphasis on the practical than on the theoretical and 'academic', and the pursuit of new knowledge, while important, is secondary to the mastery of practical skills and the development of problem-solving abilities.

The natural scientists in the study demonstrate a strong conviction that an academic environment should be characterised by clear hierarchies, headed up by those with proven track records in specialised areas, and that academic staff should work in teams

and share their expertise within a community of peers. Lecturers in the Humanities, by contrast, are far more likely to work alone, pursuing their research in relative isolation. Where they do connect with others, they are far more likely to work within an interdisciplinary framework than their counterparts in the sciences. While Humanities lecturers express concern about the potential for internal institutional politics to hinder or prevent productive collaboration across disciplinary boundaries, scientists see the development of highly specialised discrete research groups under the wider 'sciences' umbrella as the way forward.

Overall then, the discipline or profession in which an individual lecturer has been trained does influence the approach they take to fulfilling the lecturing role. It influences what they consider to be significant in their environment and the issues that they are likely to take action on. It affects how they prioritise the different projects that lecturers can or must pursue: those whose disciplines are strongly focussed on the creation of new knowledge, such as the natural scientists, tend to prioritise research, while those whose disciplines emphasis the development of applied practical skills for implementation in 'real world' contexts, such as computer scientists and the construction-focussed engineers, tend to emphasise the teaching dimension of the role. The discipline or profession also impacts on individuals' views on a variety of other issues, including how academic communities should be structured, whether individuals should work in teams or independently, whether interdisciplinary interaction is possible and / or desirable and so on, and is clearly influential in terms of how individual lecturers ultimately personify the lecturing role.

8.3.1.2 The impact of previous professional experiences

Individuals' personification of the lecturing role has also been influenced by their experiences as practising professionals in education or industry before coming to Waterford. Those who worked as teachers brought with them an understanding of what is involved in teaching that influenced their preparation and delivery of lectures as well as their interactions with students. Those who worked in the private sector brought certain private sector values with them into the lecturing role, which fundamentally affect how they perform their duties. These participants approach their students as their customers and feel a need to perform in a way that ensures customer satisfaction. Those who worked in industry are also explicitly appreciative of the working conditions they enjoy as lecturers, which they see as being far better than those enjoyed in industry, and this appreciation of their privileged position seems to act as a motivating factor for them.

Individuals' experiences of other roles clearly impact on how they go about personifying the lecturing role. Indeed, in many cases, these previous experiences were all that they had to go on when they started out. Most seem to have learned how to be lecturers 'by osmosis' (Emma) through watching established colleagues with whom they shared offices or worked on programmes. Interestingly, this process of learning how to do the job by observing existing incumbents rather than through formal training or from the official role definitions meant that individuals came to perform the informally 'elasticated' version of the role rather than the officially defined version, so that certain activities that have never actually been written in to the job description have become part and parcel of the general understanding of what lecturers actually do.

8.3.2 Concerns and commitments and the personification of the lecturing role

How any individual personifies a social role depends not only on their existing social identities but also on the concerns which that individual hopes to fulfil in the role in question. How lecturers approach their job depends to a large extent on what they are committed to. The participants' stories suggest that each individual is strongly committed to something and that what people are committed to has changed and evolved over time.

The earliest of the pre-1992 participants appear to be committed to passing on their knowledge of and passion for a subject to students, while the later recruits from this generation seem to be dedicated to fulfilling their duty of care. A strong loyalty to the community and a sense that lecturers, as public servants, have a duty to serve are also evident in the members of this generation, as is a commitment to maintaining ties with the 'real world' of professional practice. Among the post- 1992 participants, there is evidence of a commitment to pushing out the boundaries of knowledge. For some members of this generation, this dedication to research and scholarship is born of fundamental curiosity about their discipline area and a strong commitment to learning. For others, it seems to be linked to a desire for personal career advancement.

These commitments or concerns influence individuals' attitudes and approaches to those projects that all lecturers are expected to engage in as well as the extent to which and the way in which they engage with those projects that are not necessarily obligatory.

8.3.2.1 Personifying the lecturing role: the project of teaching

Teaching remains one of a limited number of projects or activities that all IoT lecturers are obliged to pursue and all of the research participants have teaching duties, although what these actually consist of can vary significantly from one individual to the next and from one level and discipline to another.

The data show that the centrality of this dimension of the lecturing role has changed significantly over time. The pre-1992 participants saw and continue to see teaching as their primary function. When they decided to invest themselves in the lecturing role as one that could provide them with the kind of professional identity they desired, they did so in the understanding that it was essentially a teaching role. The post-1992 participants, by contrast, do not assign the same degree of centrality to the teaching dimension of the role. While most acknowledge the importance of teaching and many claim to enjoy it, there is a sense that it is 'only one part of the job and not necessarily the most important part' (Timothy) among these lecturers, and several admit to taking whatever opportunities arise to reduce their teaching loads.

How the teaching dimension of the lecturing role is approached varies from one generation to the next. Individuals' approaches to teaching are influenced by their particular concerns. The pre-1992 participants, who are concerned with preparing students for professional accreditation and practice, feel that teaching must focus on the 'real' world in which the students will ultimately be expected to operate and be industry-led. These lecturers draw on their own industrial experience for examples and avail of all opportunities to keep themselves up to date with developments in the workplace. Among the post-1992 participants, teaching is more likely to be research-led. Several post-1992 lecturers mention how much they enjoy being able to talk about their own research in class and one counts research methods as one of the key areas in which he teaches.

Lecturers from the two generations also differ in terms of the activities that they define to be part of teaching. The pre-1992 participants still see teaching largely as an activity that takes place in structured formal settings with groups of students. The post-1992 participants have worked to stretch the definition of teaching to include activities such as postgraduate supervision, because this creates space within the teaching role for them to pursue the projects that are important to them. Over time, the work undertaken by individual lecturers in this area came to be recognised as making an important

contribution to the institution's ambitions to develop its research capacity, and efforts were made to facilitate research supervision by allocating 'teaching hours' to it. Thus the teaching dimension of the role was 'elasticated' and research supervision has come to be accepted, at least at the meso level, as one of the teaching duties of all WIT lecturers, though postgraduate student numbers are still such that not all lecturers are expected to undertake this particular duty at present.

8.3.2.2 Personifying the lecturing role: the project of administration

Alongside teaching, IoT lecturers have always been expected to perform a certain amount of administrative work and to be involved in regular reviews of existing courses. The participants' stories reveal that, while all are involved in such work to a greater or lesser extent, attitudes towards it vary across the generations.

The pre-1992 participants seem to accept that they have to do a certain amount of administrative and course review work and to simply get on with it. The post-1992 participants, by contrast, question the expectation that they should devote time to administrative duties. They feel that such work is often unnecessary, a distraction that takes up time that could be more productively spent on other activities that contribute to the fulfilment of their own particular practical concerns and the ambitious aims of the institution. While they do what is required of them in terms of completing documentation, participating in course review processes and so on, this kind of activity tends to 'make [their] blood boil' (Timothy) and consequently they try to avoid it if at all possible.

Attitudes to new course development and course management duties also differ across the generations. The earlier pre-1992 recruits were not expected to develop new courses, but simply to deliver the courses that were waiting for them when they arrived. With time, some did get involved in course development out of a desire to move their particular areas forward, and some did take on course leadership roles, though only because openings happened to arise when colleagues who had originally held these roles moved on to other things.

The later pre-1992 recruits showed a greater tendency to become involved in the development of new courses, though their involvement was usually a result of prompting from their managers rather than because of any personal vision in relation to the kinds of

courses they felt the college should run or they would like to work on. Some also took on course leaderships when asked to do so, partly because they held the view that lecturers have a duty to do what managers ask, and partly because a course leadership was seen as a 'treasured possession' (Betty) that would be an asset to them in the pursuit of a concern with career advancement.

The post-1992 period saw tremendous expansion in the course portfolio and most of the post-1992 participants have been heavily involved in course development, with some actually initiating the development of courses that they felt were needed in their particular areas. Members of this generation were willing to take on course leadership responsibilities because, as course leaders, they would have a certain level of control over the running and development of courses in their specific interest areas. The work involved in course leadership can be significant however and several post-1992 participants, particularly those who appointed as course leaders and year tutors before time allowances were given for such work, have stepped down from these roles, preferring to dedicate their time to what they consider more important projects such as research.

8.3.2.3 Personifying the lecturing role: engaging with other projects

The role of the IoT lecturer has further dimensions that are not strictly set out as requirements in the official contract. Chief among these are the pastoral dimension and the research dimension. The extent to which individual participants choose to engage with these voluntary projects varies significantly across the generations, and the manner in which those who do choose to do so actually engage with these dimensions of the role can also differ significantly from one lecturer to the next.

8.3.2.3.1 Personifying the lecturing role: the pastoral project

Given their concern with connecting with students and with fulfilling their duty of care towards their students, it is unsurprising that most of the pre-1992 participants appear to actively engage the pastoral dimension of the lecturing role. Most of the earlier pre-1992 recruits talk at length about their interaction with students and how important they find this, and several express regret that their connection with their students seems to be weakening as they get older and the generation gap widens. The pastoral dimension of

the lecturing role is one that the later pre-1992 recruits also choose to actively engage in, and many have become involved in Academic Council and other committees whose remit is to ensure that institutional structures are designed and implemented in a truly student-centred manner.

The post-1992 participants have a different attitude to the pastoral dimension of the lecturing role. While most are clearly committed to their students and some do take on pastoral duties, many feel that their responsibilities in relation to student care should be clearly bounded and should be limited to academic mentoring rather than involving full-scale personal support for individual students. Many of the post-1992 participants would rather not be involved in pastoral work, either because they are uncomfortable with it or because it takes time that they would rather dedicate to other activities that they consider more important.

8.3.2.3.2 Personifying the lecturing role: the project of research

The most significant difference in terms of how the members of the two generations personify the lecturing role is undoubtedly related to the research dimension of the role. With the exception of the Humanities lecturers, the pre-1992 participants have either chosen not to engage with this dimension of the role at all, or have engaged with it only to the extent that they have acquired higher-level qualifications. The post-1992 participants, by contrast, are all involved in research of some sort and see this as a significant component of what they do.

Although research is now both acknowledged as an activity that IoTs and IoT lecturers may participate in and an activity that is strongly encouraged at WIT, what research is understood to mean can vary substantially from person to person. The post-1992 participants define, or are beginning to define, research in the manner in which it is defined in universities: to them, research involves generating new knowledge, presenting at conferences, publishing and so on. Most hold or are working towards doctoral qualifications, often in areas strategically chosen because of their potential to help individuals carve out academic careers, and tend to define themselves as researchers. The pre-1992 participants have a different perspective on research. With one exception, these individuals seem to associate research almost entirely with the acquisition of postgraduate qualifications. Several of these individuals reacted to the institutional push

for research by signing up for masters degrees, but most have not engaged in research activity outside of the context of postgraduate programmes.

All of the post-1992 participants engage with the research dimension of the academic role but how individuals personify this dimension of the role varies. Being a 'researcher' means different things to different people and indeed it seems that the different personifications of the research dimension of the role have led to the 'elastication' of the researcher identity over time. For some 'research' involves designing and seeking funding for projects to be carried out by postgraduate students and then overseeing the work of these students. For others, chiefly in the Humanities, research as an activity involves working in relative isolation on their own projects and honing their ideas for publication so that they can obtain feedback and input from colleagues in their fields. Some of the post-1992 participants are involved both in the supervision of postgraduate work and in carrying out their own investigative work and building their own research profiles.

For most of the 'researchers', the research dimension of the role also involves membership of project teams or formal research centres. This brings with it additional work but being part of a community of like-minded individuals working towards similar goals and enjoying a certain level autonomy and control over one's own destiny seems to compensate for any extra work that ensues from involvement in research groups.

Overall, the participants' stories suggest that the manner in which the lecturing role is personified at WIT has changed significantly over the lifetime of the institution. Not only have the concerns that people hope to fulfil in the role changed, but the range of approaches that can be taken to the personification of the role has also expanded considerably, resulting in the development of a considerable variety of professional identities in this particular context.

8.4 The formation of academic professional identities: structures and the power to shape projects, to constrain and to enable

Archer's theory suggests that individuals, having identified their ultimate concerns through reflexive internal conversation, seek out contexts in which to pursue these concerns and devise courses of action through which they can be fulfilled. The contexts are characterised by structural emergent properties (including roles, organisations and institutions) and cultural emergent properties (including propositions, theories and doctrines). The emergent properties shape the environment in which people operate and have 'the generative power to impede or facilitate projects of different kinds from different groups' (Archer 2003 p.7). They only come to impinge on individuals, however, when their causal powers to constrain and enable are activated by courses of action or projects which individuals have devised as means of fulfilling their ultimate concerns. This section will examine the impact of context in which the research participants operate on the projects that individual lecturers choose to pursue, with a view to establishing what kinds of projects are constrained and what kinds of projects are enabled within this environment and thus to understanding how structure impinges on agency in this particular case.

As previously discussed, the research participants all chose lecturing as a role that would allow them to develop the kinds of social, and specifically professional, identities that they wished to develop, and they all ultimately came to perform this role in a particular institution within a particular sector of a particular national system of higher education. As IoT lecturers and WIT lecturers, they are obliged to pursue certain projects as part of their job, and are strongly encouraged or discouraged in relation to the pursuit of others. While the very fact of pursuing their various projects under a particular set of contractual conditions in a particular institution and sector within a higher education system that is structured in a particular way activates constraints and enablements, the manner in which any given individual wishes or chooses to pursue any given project may activate further and other constraints and enablements. What follows considers how the various projects that the research participants must pursue or choose to pursue are constrained and / or enabled.

8.4.1 How structures impact on the project of teaching

The project of teaching has traditionally been and continues to be broadly enabled because the RTCs were originally established as teaching institutions and the official remit of the IoTs retains a strong teaching focus. This is mirrored in the contracts held by individual lecturers, which continue to place teaching first on the list of lecturers' duties and which provide considerably more detail in relation to what is expected in this area than they do in relation to other duties. Teaching remains the core activity of IoTs and their lecturers and most of the structures and systems in place are intended to support this particular activity.

While teaching in general is enabled by policy at system, sectoral and institutional level however, the desires and efforts of the research participants to personify the teaching role in particular ways can and do activate constraints. Most lecturers see the project of third-level teaching as being about passing on knowledge of and passion for a discipline area to the coming generation of academics or professionals. Lecturers in Business, Science and Engineering are able to pursue this project without significant obstruction. Their colleagues in Humanities however tend to find themselves unable to personify the teaching dimension of the lecturing role in a manner that fits with this position on what third-level teaching should involve. The macro-level view of IoTs as providers of applied vocational education and the declared unwillingness of those at the macro level to countenance any form of mission drift mean that WIT and other institutions have not traditionally been allowed to offer courses in the broader liberal arts disciplines. Students may take subjects such as languages, philosophy or sociology as components of applied programmes in areas like tourism studies or social care, but do not come to WIT to specialise in these subjects.

As a result, Humanities lecturers find themselves constrained when it comes to passing on their passion for their area and nurturing the next generation of disciplinary experts. They rarely get the opportunity to teach their specialism to novice specialists. At best, they teach one module or part of a module on their particular area of interest on a very limited number of programmes, and they often have to compete with other colleagues for these teaching assignments. At worst, they find themselves teaching basic-level courses in their discipline areas to students with a limited interest in these areas, or teaching subjects that are only loosely related to where their real passion lies. The macro-level constraints on institutional remit thus act as micro level constraints on the teaching project for individuals in particular disciplinary fields.

Humanities lecturers' desire to teach specialists is constrained by the limits of the institutional mission, but they are not alone in finding obstacles to developing 'specialist' teaching identities in their path. The RTCs were originally established to provide sub-degree qualifications. There was a broad assumption, at least initially, that teaching at this level did not require significantly more specialism in the subject area than teaching at second-level. This, combined with a requirement in the lecturing contracts that lecturers spend a significant number of hours per week in the classroom, meant that RTC lecturers were essentially obliged to be generalists.

Many of the pre-1992 participants vividly recall being expected to teach in a wide variety of areas, including areas in which they felt they had very limited expertise, at the beginning of their lecturing careers. Only those who were the sole representatives of their particular areas in the institution got teaching assignments that did not include subjects whose links to their qualifications and experience were rather tenuous. As the institution developed and expanded its course portfolio to include more specialised courses at degree and subsequently postgraduate level, opportunities gradually opened up for people to teach in those areas where they felt they had expertise and to drop some of the courses that they had had thrust upon them to fill their timetables.

The stories of the post-1992 participants suggest that the tendency to expect particularly new staff to be flexible and to teach across a broad range of areas persists even still. Although efforts are made at the meso level to ensure that lecturers are deployed to teach in their specialist areas, individuals' desires to develop specialist teaching identities are constrained by the fact that they are still required under their contracts to carry a heavy teaching load and in many disciplines, there are simply not sufficient hours available to be taught in a particular narrow area of specialism to allow people to divest themselves completely or even substantially of teaching commitments requiring a more generalist perspective.

While teaching is still seen as the primary function of IoTs and their lecturers, for various reasons what is involved in the teaching dimension of the role has changed over time and it appears from the participants' stories that many of the changes that have taken place are more likely to act as constraints than enablements as they strive to personify the lecturing role in a manner consistent with their particular professional concerns.

The pre-1992 participants, in particular, hanker after the early days of their careers when class groups were smaller and students were more focused. While this could be put down to nostalgia for the better old days, it is nonetheless true that that size and composition of the student body has changed over time and this does appear to be having an impact on the teaching dimension of the lecturing role. Successive governments have introduced policies that, viewed on aggregate, have led to the transformation of the Irish higher education system from an elite system to a mass system. These polices have had the overall effect of bringing a higher percentage of the school leaver age cohort and larger numbers of mature and other 'non-traditional' students into the system.

For some participants (though not necessarily for all, as will be discussed below), this has translated into an increase in class sizes, with the result that lecturers are obliged to take a far more formal approach in the classroom, which is not something that is welcomed by those who feel that good teaching involves paying attention to individuals and their progress. Classes have also become more heterogeneous, and individuals find themselves having to deal with a wider range of ability and interest than would previously have been the case. While all seem to welcome this new diversity, some do comment on the challenges of dealing with groups that belie their assumptions that all students bring certain characteristics (including basic manners, and an interest in learning) with them when they elect to study at third-level.

The project of teaching has also been affected by the introduction of modularisation and semesterisation. The restructuring of programmes and individual subjects appears not to have been greeted with enthusiasm by either the pre-1992 or the post-1992 participants. The move to a modular structure is viewed as a constraint by individuals who see learning as an incremental process. Those who work in disciplines where the incremental development of practical skills is central to the learning experience are concerned that the stop-start nature of a modular semesterised system means that they will not be able to bring their students to the same level of competence as was possible under the old system. Lecturers also appear to be fearful that having to divide up the material to be covered into discrete modules that, at least on the surface, may appear to be unrelated will make it difficult to integrate the learning into the kind of coherent overall knowledge package that they feel their students should have on graduation. Certain pre-1992 participants who are strongly student-focussed and intent on teaching in a manner that nurtures the development of the individual student are concerned that the new modular system places the students under greater pressure than before, while

some post-1992 lecturers are worried that cutting up courses into twelve-week chunks leads students to 'surface' learning rather than to a 'deep' understanding of the material they are being asked to engage with.

Interestingly, one result of the implementation of the modular system has proved to be a constraint to some lecturers and an enablement to others. Under the modular system, groups of students that were formerly taught separately are now being combined. This acts as a constraint to some individuals. Those who feel that teaching should take place in small groups, particularly at degree and postgraduate level, may now find themselves faced with large classes which make it impossible to give students the individual attention they wish to give and to tailor the material in order to ensure that it is relevant to the needs of particular learners. The same phenomenon is seen as an enablement by other lecturers. In areas like languages and electronics, where student numbers have fallen dramatically in recent times, the fact that different groups who are taking the same module can now be combined has made it possible to hold on to subjects and hours that might otherwise have been declared unviable and, thus, has allowed, at least some people, to keep teaching in their particular area despite falling enrolments on particular courses.

This fall in student numbers acts as a serious constraint to lecturers in the affected discipline areas to whom the project of teaching is important. The causes for the decline, as outlined earlier, are to a large extent outside the control of individual lecturers and indeed of institutions, but the stories of the research participants from the worst affected areas suggest that this is having significant and detrimental effects at individual level. Lecturers who formerly taught groups of up to thirty students now find themselves facing classrooms with three students, which requires that they alter their approach to teaching considerably. Efforts to ensure viable numbers mean that any and all applicants are welcomed, and managing a class of three students with different ability levels can be far more challenging than it might appear. The numbers of international and non-traditional students in these groups can also be disproportionately high and this brings its own challenges. For lecturers in the affected areas, the project of teaching is simply not what it used to be, it is not the same as it is for their colleagues in other disciplines, and it is no longer necessarily what they feel they signed up for. Participants from these areas say that staff morale is very low in their departments. Not only is it not possible for them to approach the project of teaching in the manner in which they would like to approach it, but there is a sense that their disciplines are under threat and that

there may well come a point when they will no longer be able to pursue this project because there will simply be no one to be taught.

Thus while the 'project' of teaching is broadly enabled in the IoT sector, the pursuit of this project and efforts to personify this dimension of the role in particular ways in line with one's particular professional concerns, be they with passing on a discipline, carving out a specialist niche or nurturing students and encouraging incremental and integrated learning, can activate constraints. It must also be said that the emphasis on teaching in the IoT sector acts as a constraint in itself. The requirement that lecturers spend at least sixteen hours per week on teaching-related activities means that limited time is available for the pursuit of other projects. Research and other projects for which no formal time requirements or allocations exist can only really be pursued once the teaching requirement is fulfilled.

8.4.2 How structures impact on the project of administration

Efforts to pursue the other projects that form part of the IoT lecturer's official duties can also activate constraints and enablements. While none of the participants express any great enthusiasm for the administrative dimension of the lecturing role, all are obliged to carry a certain amount of administrative responsibility. Many individuals feel that the administrative dimension of the role acts as a constraint in its own right as it eats into the limited time that they would rather spend pursuing other projects. The administrative burden on lecturers seems to have increased considerably and become more wide ranging over time: modularisation, internationalisation, delegation of awarding authority and other developments, though apparently beneficial in the overall scheme of things, all come with administrative strings attached and, despite the presence of an increasing number of 'indirects' (Betty) whose role is to assist in carrying out these duties, most participants seem to feel that they are being increasingly tied up with bureaucracy when they could be using their time far more productively and focusing on projects that really matter to them.

While they may not approach the administrative dimension of the lecturing role with particular enthusiasm, most participants accept that it is part of the job and must be done. Doing it can be difficult however. Comments made by several participants from both generations suggest that the informality of structures and the lack of joined-up thinking that have traditionally characterised many internal administrative processes make it

difficult to carry out the required administrative duties in a professional manner. The capacity for informality appears to have been fiercely protected by managers, as more formal structures can close down the room for manoeuvre that they have tended to rely on as a means of getting around restrictions in the past.

Looseness and informality have been used by those at meso level to enable, but the lack of clear rules and structured processes can frustrate the efforts of individual lecturers to do their jobs in what they consider to be an appropriate manner. Participants express concern about the fact that much of what lecturers do is done on an ad hoc basis, with the same problems arising year after year and having to be resolved each year with little or no reference to previous solutions, and about the fact that many of the rules that govern how lecturers carry out their administrative functions are not written down but simply carried around in people's heads. The data suggest that the lack of formal processes to be followed in fulfilment of the administrative dimension of the lecturing role constrains people as they try to fulfil this dimension in a professional way. Interestingly, the pre-1992 participants seem to be largely in favour of the increasing formalisation of structures, seeing this as a way of ensuring that the job can be done correctly, while many of the post-1992 participants appear to feel that the pendulum has swung too far, particularly in recent times, and question whether many of the processes that they now have to go through need to be quite as complex and time consuming as they currently are.

8.4.3 How structures impact on the projects of course review and course development

The projects of course review and course development, like teaching and administration, are part and parcel of the official definition of the lecturing role and thus are pursued by all lecturers to some extent. Course review is an inevitable part of the job and all of the participants have been through their fair share of programmatic and school reviews, and have the scars (metaphorically) to prove it. Reviews involve significant work which has to carried out in parallel with already full workloads and they generally have to be carried out under time pressure to meet externally imposed deadlines, with the result that lecturers often find themselves tinkering around the edges of syllabi and courses rather than being enabled to make substantial and influential changes. Reviews also involve answering to panels that consist of or at least include external experts who may come from competing institutions and whose decisions may be driven by particular agendas,

and they seem to some to involve jumping through hoops for the sake of it rather than for the sake of genuine improvement. Delegation of awarding authority might have been expected to improve this situation but, as many participants point out, many of the procedures put in place at the meso level subsequent to delegation are largely modelled on, if not identical to, those used by the original external awarding bodies. In relation to course review, many participants seem to feel that the processes in place make it difficult to carry out the kind of reflection and improvement that they feel should be involved in the reviewing of courses. The structures and processes in place seem, on the surface, to be designed to enable the reviewing of courses, but the data suggest that efforts at carrying out genuine reflective reviews may actually be constrained.

The extent to which the project of course development is constrained or enabled has changed significantly over time. When the RTCs first opened their doors, they offered courses that had been developed externally either by the Department of Education or the professional bodies in a limited number of discipline areas. Course development was not a project with which lecturers were expected to engage, and the early pre-1992 participants certainly seem to have had little involvement in this area, at least initially. Even when they were asked to be involved in developing programmes, it was clear that there were limits on what was possible. External forces often acted to rein in excessive ambitions: one participant recalls Waterford RTC not being allowed to develop or run particular courses because decisions had been taken at national level that the courses in question were to be done in other colleges in the sector, for example.

As the RTCs grew and developed, they focused on expanding their course portfolios, and the later pre-1992 recruits found themselves being drawn into course development activities, though in the 1980s at least this was more likely to involve working with professional bodies to expand the range of professional courses offered than to involve creating new courses for NCEA validation. By the 1990s, it had become accepted that RTCs would develop and offer degree level courses and Waterford seized this opportunity for advancement and growth.

Thus the project of course development is a project that, while initially constrained, has become enabled to a far greater extent over time. While the pre-1992 participants generally appear to have engaged with this dimension of the lecturing role rather less than with other dimensions, the post-1992 participants seem to have been quite pro-active in this area, taking advantage of opportunities to get involved in or indeed to lead the development of new programmes in their particular areas of interest.

It must however be said that not everyone has been equally enabled. Government policy, particularly of late, has tended to support developments in some discipline areas, such as Science and Technology, while effectively holding back development in others, such as the Humanities. The late 1990s saw resources being poured into the development of so-called skills shortages courses in areas like electronics, ICT and natural sciences and, although the IoTs did not receive quite the same level of support as universities in this drive, lecturers in these areas have tended to be allowed to develop and run whatever programmes they saw as being useful. Humanities lecturers, by contrast, have found their ambitions in this area strongly constrained. All four Humanities lecturers who participated in the current study devoted significant time and energy in the early 2000s to the development of a liberal Arts degree that was validated by HETAC, only to be told by the Department of Education and Science that the development of such a degree constituted mission drift and that WIT would not be funded to run it. The comments of the Humanities participants indicate that this was a significant blow and that this particular experience of being constrained has caused many Humanities lecturers to walk away from the project of course development, at least temporarily.

Other constraints on the project of course development should also be acknowledged. The need for new courses to comply with the National Framework of Qualifications, with its 10 distinct levels and its underlying philosophy that programmes should be flexible, modular and outcome based, has changed the course development task to a certain extent. Lecturers who wish to be involved in course development have had to learn the new language of learning outcomes and many participants have found this rather a time-consuming and painful experience. They have also found themselves caught in the crossfire as those at macro and meso level try to reach agreement on certain fundamental issues and it is clear that they are far from comfortable in this particular space. Course development may be broadly enabled, but it is clear that the pursuit of this particular project can activate constraints and that, in some cases at least, these constraints may be sufficient to make individual lecturers think twice before engaging with this dimension of the role.

8.4.4 How structures impact on other projects

There are a number of other projects that participants in the current study clearly wish to pursue. Some clearly wish to play a pastoral role, while others are anxious to nurture

their connections with industry and to continue to practise at some level in their professional field, and others still are committed to research. What follows considers the extent to which the desire of and capacity for individual lecturers to become involved in these activities are constrained and / or enabled.

8.4.4.1 How structures impact on the project of pastoral work

As outlined earlier, it is mainly the pre-1992 participants who seem to actively engage with the pastoral side of the lecturing role and to deliberately seek out ways of ensuring that students (and indeed staff) are properly looked after. While the data suggest that a certain amount of pastoral work was always seen as part of the job, one participant's account of how hard she and her fellow Academic Council members had to fight in order to get counselling services put in place in the 1980s indicates that at least some projects in this particular area have activated constraints.

Those for whom this dimension of the role was important did not give up in the face of these constraints however. Over time, the activities of these individuals have effectively 'elasticated' the lecturing role so that pastoral duties are now seen as part of the job, to the surprise of some of the later post-1992 recruits who did not anticipate that lecturing would involve dealing with students' personal problems as well as their academic problems. Year tutors and course leaders in particular are expected to get involved in the pastoral side of the job, and the decision, at institutional level, to allocate timetable hours to year tutorship and course leadership could be seen to constitute an enablement of the pastoral project. Other developments act as constraints however. The massification of higher education means that there are now more students than before in the system, while policies on access and internationalisation have led to the diversification of the student body. Not only is it more difficult to take care of so many students with such varied needs, but increasing student numbers increase the amount of work involved in fulfilling other duties in teaching, administration and so on, thus making it harder to find time to fit pastoral work into increasingly busy schedules.

8.4.4.2 How structures impact on efforts to maintain contact with industry

The desire to remain in contact with industry is one that is also more characteristic of the pre-1992 participants than of their post-1992 counterparts. Despite the value placed on

industrial and 'real world' experience in the recruitment process in the 1970s and 1980s, individuals found that once they were appointed to lecturing positions, their capacity to maintain links with the outside world was largely constrained. Heavy teaching loads kept them very busy and their contracts specified that lecturers were not permitted to engage in 'external work' without the consent of the local VEC, which appears to have been far from easy to obtain.

This constraint appears to have had significant consequences for those who accepted it. One participant identified not being able to keep her hand in with industry as the biggest regret of a twenty-four year lecturing career, while another resorted to the dramatic step of taking a career break in order to get out and acquire the industrial experience she felt she needed in order to do the lecturing job properly. Some individuals simply ignored the prohibition and continued to practise their professions outside of lecturing time, while others stopped short of this but were constantly on the look out for opportunities to renew their links with industry, from coordinating industrial placements to arranging site visits and guest lectures and so on.

With the enactment of the RTC Act in 1992 and the subsequent transfer of the powers previously held by the VECs to the RTCs themselves, restrictions on external work loosened somewhat, though not to the extent that one could say that it is now enabled. While several pre-1992 participants have become involved in work outside of lecturing (in their own time and in a manner that seems to add value to the learning experiences of their students), their post-1992 counterparts for the most part do not seem to be interested in engaging in external work or to be at all concerned about whether such a project is constrained or enabled.

8.4.4.3 How structures impact on the project of research

When it comes to research however, the members of the post-1992 generation are clearly very conscious of the enablements and constraints that are activated by a desire to be research-active. The project of research was clearly constrained in the early years of the RTCs' existence. Over time, the notion that RTCs might develop a research function gradually came to be accepted. The 1992 RTC Act gave the technological sector colleges the right to engage in applied research and subsequent developments, including the introduction of funding schemes like the TSR scheme in the mid-1990s, provided an enablement to institutions like Waterford and to individuals who had an

interest in pursuing the project of research and were operating in suitably 'applied' discipline areas.

While research in IoTs is currently, at least broadly speaking, enabled by macro-level policies and structures, it must be said that it is not yet enabled to quite the same extent as in universities. Universities have been and continue to be funded for research as well as for their other activities, whereas RTCs / IoTs have traditionally been funded for teaching only. Universities are allowed to engage in research across the whole broad spectrum of academic disciplines whereas IoTs are expected to focus on applied research only, and indeed the 2004 OECD Report suggested that even applied research should really be left to the universities. While the conditions under which university lecturers operate may not be ideal for the pursuit of research, they are still significantly better than those in which IoT lecturers find themselves. Having to share office space with, in some cases, up to eleven others is, as one participant points out, not particularly conductive to research, and having to fit research commitments around a heavy teaching load makes research a far more challenging and less attractive activity for IoT lecturers than it is for their university colleagues.

It is clear from the participants' stories that WIT has embraced the opportunity to develop a research dimension to its mission. Regardless of whether they agree with the research agenda or whether they choose to engage with it, the participants are in no doubt about the fact that research is now part of what WIT is about. It is also clear that significant efforts are being made at the meso level to enable those who wish to do so to conduct research. The post-1992 participants praise the efforts of the Head of Development to support the work of emergent researchers in the early days of the TSR funding scheme and the support currently available from the more recently appointed Head of Research and the Research Support Unit. Several individuals mention that they have benefited from institutional support for their research efforts, from having fees for postgraduate studies paid by the staff development budget to being granted seed funding for small scale projects they wished to pursue, and a number of participants benefited from sabbatical leave to work on their doctoral research.

While the institution clearly wants lecturers to engage in research, and appears willing to support this engagement, many participants feel that the support that is offered is, in real terms, simply not sufficient to allow them to properly pursue this project or indeed to motivate them to continue to do so. Lack of an appropriate reward structure for those involved in research is mentioned by a number of participants as a factor that affects

their motivation. The lecturers concerned accept that this is a macro-level rather than a meso-level issue and tend not to allow it to dissuade them from engaging in research, but it is clear that research-active participants often feel that they are making sacrifices that non-researchers are not expected to make in order to contribute to an area that the institution claims to be important and they are prone, at least occasionally, to wondering whether these sacrifices are really worthwhile.

The lack of rewards is not quite as powerful a constraint as the lack of time however. All those involved in research mention how difficult it is to find the necessary time for this particular dimension of the role. Most acknowledge that managers have to be quite creative in their interpretation of contracts in order to free up any time for lecturers to research, and most seem to appreciate the efforts that are made to help them in this area, but it is clear that these efforts fall short of what is really needed. 'Research days' are of little benefit when all of the required teaching must be crammed into the remaining four days of the week. Granting time allocations for postgraduate supervision and extra weighting for hours taught on postgraduate courses may appear to free up time for individuals to engage in their own research, but as one participant highlights, the time that is allocated for these activities is actually needed for the activities themselves and in most cases lecturers cannot use it to further their own work. Some participants are also critical of how macro-level measures designed to enable research by providing time have been implemented at local level. Measures that were proposed at national level to facilitate doctoral research, such as reductions in teaching time, have not been introduced in Waterford, leaving participants looking on in envy at colleagues in other institutions who are benefiting from reduced timetables. Other such measures designed to free up time, including the sabbatical scheme mentioned above, have been implemented, but the manner in which they have been implemented has drawn criticism from several participants.

A major problem seems to lie in the fact that the distribution of enablements is not governed by clear and transparent rules and often appears inequitable. Those operating at the meso level are still obliged to generate these enablements by working in the grey areas of the macro-level policies that they must abide by, and some appear to be better at circumventing obstacles than others. One manager may decide to allocate resources at his disposal to pay for cover for teaching hours to allow a member of his staff time off to do research, while another manager may insist that every member of staff carry a full teaching load. This apparently ad hoc distribution of enablements leads some researchers to feel that they are being unfairly treated, not only when compared to non-

researchers but also when compared to other researchers in the institution, and this can impact negatively on their motivation.

It must be noted that the efforts made to support and enable researchers can also impact negatively on the motivation of those who are not involved in research. Researchers get research days and nicely organised timetables and are forgiven if they do not participate in meetings or committees. Some of their colleagues are clearly frustrated by the fact that those involved in research tend to be allowed to minimise their engagement with certain core activities, thus weakening the culture of teamwork that used to prevail and leaving their non-researching colleagues to carry out the bulk of the day to day work of teaching and assessing students, reviewing courses and so on.

All of the projects discussed above are projects that can and do form part of the lecturing role for academic staff at WIT, and lecturers at the college are usually involved in the pursuit of several of these projects at any given point in time. In fact, the academic role has expanded significantly over the life time of the institution: the activities of corporate agents and the performance of the role by individual lecturers have widened out the role and lecturing staff are now expected to be involved in a far wider range of activities than was the case when the first pre-1992 participants were recruited. This in itself can act as a constraint, in that individuals tend to find themselves extremely busy fulfilling a broad collection of responsibilities and thus unable to concentrate sufficiently on the particular projects that are most important to them in terms of developing the kinds of professional identities they themselves desire.

8.4.4.4 The impact of structures on career development

Lecturers are involved in the pursuit of those projects that form part of the lecturing role, but as professionals, they are also pursuing a broader project, that of career advancement. For some individuals, 'getting on' in their career is not necessarily a priority and the ability to move up the nationally-defined pay scales, collecting increments each year, is sufficient for them to consider themselves enabled in respect of the project of career advancement. For others, simply climbing the pay scales is not enough. Those who would like to advance beyond the limits of their particular grade often find that their ambitions activate constraints. Opportunities for 'real' promotions have traditionally been limited as the Department of Education and Science controlled the allocation of posts and tended to restrict the number of promotional posts at L2 and

later SL1 level as well as at Head of Department and Head of School level in any given institution.

Over time, with the growth of the institution and the various new responsibilities that have come with delegated authority and other developments, new promotional opportunities have opened up for those who wish to climb the internal hierarchy. Interestingly, one of the key criteria on which candidates for these newly introduced positions (which include posts such as assistant registrar and quality promotion officer) are apparently judged is research experience. Clearly, advancement is now and will in future be dependent on an individual's research record, a position which is seen as entirely appropriate by the researchers but which is entirely frustrating for some of the ambitious pre-1992 recruits who have chosen not to embrace the research agenda and are thus unable to compete, even when they have a lot to offer and despite the fact that the posts for which they are competing actually have little or nothing to do with research.

How individuals choose to pursue the project of career advancement clearly differs across the two generations of lecturers who participated in the current study. The pre-1992 participants fall into two categories. In the first category are four lecturers who seem not to care about promotion and to be happy with their incremental advancement up the scales. The second category consists of four participants who have all been pro-active in the pursuit of promotion. While three of the four have successfully moved from their entry level grade to higher-level grades over the years, this progression was not necessarily achieved easily, and two of the four have had their hopes of promotion to management positions dashed more than once. These individuals all set their sights on advancement within the organisation and were clearly disappointed when their efforts were unsuccessful.

The post-1992 participants, by contrast, look outwards rather than inwards for opportunities to advance their careers. While a number of them have applied, or considered applying, for management positions, they do not necessarily see climbing the internal promotional ladder as being the only route to career advancement, and therefore they do not feel significantly constrained by the lack of internal opportunities. Instead, they focus on making a name and a reputation for themselves in the broader academic community through their research and publications, following the career advancement model more traditional of the academic world.

8.5 Agency in action: how individuals respond to constraints and enablements activated by their professional projects

The previous section attempted to address the issue of 'how structural and cultural factors impinge upon agents' (Archer 2003 p.3), considering how the different projects pursued by individuals in the lecturing role are constrained or enabled by the structural and cultural contexts, themselves a product of policy at both macro and meso levels, in which these individuals operate. Understanding this 'transmission' dimension is only half the battle however. Social realist theory holds that 'the causal power of social forms is mediated through social agency' (Bhaskar 1989 cited by Archer 2003 p. 2) and thus it is necessary to consider 'the reception of these objective influences, with their potential power to condition what people may do, by reflexive agents whose subjective powers ultimately determine what they do in fact do' (Archer 2003, p.8). This section will consider the 'reception' dimension, examining the stances taken by the research participants in reaction to the constraints and enablements their various projects activate.

Archer's work (2003, 2007) relates the stances adopted by individuals to the reflexive internal conversations in which they prioritise their concerns and elaborate projects for the pursuit of their ultimate concerns. Her research suggests that there are in fact three distinct types of internal conversation and thus three distinct types of 'reflexives', namely communicative reflexives, autonomous reflexives and meta-reflexives.

Communicative reflexives, as the name implies, are driven by a need to communicate with others. Their internal conversations are characterised by a pattern of 'thought and talk': their deliberations in relation to their ultimate concerns begin in their own heads but are not considered to be complete until the issues raised internally are externalised and discussed with trusted 'similars and familiars' (Archer 2007 p.85). Archer suggests that communicative reflexives have three defining characteristics: 'contextual continuity, dovetailing of concerns and contentment with the modus vivendi established' (2003 p.170). They are happy to remain within their original context, because this provides them with a community of trusted interlocutors with whom to complete their internal conversations. Their primary concern is with social relationships, particularly with family and friends, and all of their other concerns seem to be 'harmoniously accommodated' (Archer 2003 p.169) to this main concern. Their general sense of contentment with their lot in life translates into a certain level of resistance to change. Communicative reflexives tend to adopt an evasive stance towards constraints and enablements: not only do they tend to avoid pursuing projects where they are likely to

encounter obstacles en route, but they also choose not to avail themselves of opportunities which promise (or threaten) to remove them from their familiar and comfortable environments.

While communicative reflexives rely to a significant extent on others, autonomous reflexives are characterised by self-sufficiency. Their internal conversations are private dialogues with themselves: they consider that 'only they can know exactly what they value, only they can define which projects constitute the pursuit of the worthwhile and only they can design the life practices which embody such goals' (Archer 2003 p.210). Archer claims that three features set autonomous reflexives apart from communicative reflexives. Firstly, they are not concerned about contextual continuity but are willing to move away from their original context in order to pursue their ultimate concerns. Secondly, while they also manage to harmoniously accommodate their subordinate concerns to their ultimate concern, their ultimate concern is not with social relationships but with performance and achievement, particularly in a work context. Finally, they are characterised by 'individualism with all its most salient connotations' (Archer 2003 p.213): they are independent and self-reliant and strongly convinced that individuals must take personal responsibility for themselves. Unlike communicative reflexives, autonomous reflexives do not shy away from constraints and enablements. Instead, they take a strategic stance towards them, assessing and evaluating them and planning how best to circumvent the constraints and harness the enablements en route to the achievement of their personal goals.

The internal conversations of meta-reflexives, like those of autonomous reflexives, are private deliberations. However, unlike both communicative and autonomous reflexives, who tend to focus their attention on the external actions that are necessary to achieve their particular concerns, the meta-reflexive is 'internally conversing about herself' (Archer 2003 p.256) and engaging in self-interrogation and self-monitoring. Meta-reflexives are fundamentally idealists: their ultimate concern tends to be with 'an ideal which they wish to express in and through their own lives' (Archer 2003 p.258). They often find it hard to accommodate their other concerns to this ultimate concern: although they want all of their concerns to be aligned with their ideal, maintaining this alignment can be challenging if not impossible, and yet they tend to cling to the ideal at all costs. They also experience considerable contextual discontinuity: not only are they not rooted in their original context, but they have difficulty finding and settling in any context, because 'there is always (eventually) something, if not many things, that they find wanting, undesirable or deleterious about a given context, which generically impedes the

full expression of who they want to be' (Archer 2003 p.258). They are highly critical both of themselves and of society and tend to take a subversive stance towards the constraints and enablements activated by their projects as they seek out a 'creative symbiosis between self and society' (Archer 2003 p.259).

8.5.1 Varied experiences of a common context

All of the research participants operate within the same macro-level context: they are public servants working within the IoT sector of the higher education system. They also share the same broad meso-level context: while there are some differences in the cultures of individual schools and departments to which they belong and in how policy is implemented in these units, the overall institutional context is the same for everyone. All lecturers are bound by similar contracts and have the same broad obligations to fulfil. Given this commonality, it was initially expected that all participants would experience similar kinds and levels of constraint and enablement in their performance of the lecturing role. Interestingly, their stories suggest that this is not necessarily the case. People's experiences of their common context seem to differ, in some cases significantly, from one another, so that what one individual considers a constraint or an enablement may be inconsequential to another.

The participants' stories suggest that the policies and structures in which they operate do not impinge on everyone in the same manner or to the same extent. To most of the pre-1992 participants, who see teaching as the core activity of the lecturer and want to focus their attention on this dimension of the role, the teaching focus of the institution and heavy teaching load specified by the contract do not appear to constitute a constraint. To their post-1992 colleagues, who deem research to be at least as important as, if not more important than, teaching, the same contract appears to be a serious constraint, as it obliges them to do a significant amount of teaching, or to find creative ways out of their teaching responsibilities, and it does not allocate any time for research and related activities that they wish to pursue. While the 'researchers' tend to feel constrained by the contract and by the limitations imposed on IoTs vis-à-vis universities in the area of research, they do acknowledge that efforts are being made to enable involvement in research at the meso-level. The 'teachers' by contrast, express concern that the emphasis on research at institutional level may result in teaching and other related activities ceasing to be sufficiently enabled.

Social realist theory provides a persuasive explanation for this phenomenon. Archer (2003) points out that, while social forms do have the power to constrain or enable, this power remains unexercised until it is activated by agents' projects. The research participants do all operate in the same broad context, but they do not necessarily all pursue or prioritise the same projects nor do they pursue the projects they are all obliged to pursue, such as teaching and administration, in quite the same manner. Individual lecturers personify the lecturing role in a manner consistent with their own particular concerns in the practical professional domain, choosing to emphasise particular dimensions of the role and to downplay others, and choosing to pursue those projects that they as individual professionals consider important in a particular manner while avoiding those that they feel will not contribute to the development of the kinds of professional identities they see as desirable. The potential to constrain or enable that is inherent in particular policies and structures may therefore be activated by some individuals but not by others.

8.5.2 Reacting to constraints and enablements

Individuals differ in terms of whether or not they activate constraints and enablements as they pursue their particular projects in particular ways. They also differ in relation to their reactions to those constraints and enablements that they do activate or indeed simply anticipate. Archer (2003) stresses that the extent to which constraints and enablements actually impinge on people depends on how these people respond to them. Over time, reflexive engagement with the various constraints and enablements an individual encounters leads that individual to adopt a particular stance towards them. A stance 'represents an overall pattern of response to the totality of structural powers' (Archer 2003 p.342-3). Some individuals adopt an evasive stance towards constraints and enablements, while others react in a broadly strategic manner and still others take what could be described as a subversive stance. All three stances seem to be represented in the data collected for the current study.

8.5.2.1 Participants' stances in relation to constraints

Among the earlier pre-1992 respondents, an evasive stance towards constraints appears to predominate. Individuals in this group tend to engage largely in activities that do not activate significant constraints. Most seem to pursue relatively humble projects that are

congruent with the broad mission of the sector and institution as well as with the official definition of the lecturing role. While the particular manner in which they wish to approach activities like teaching that are important to them may, in recent times in particular, occasionally activate constraints, they generally seem to be able to pursue most of their chosen projects without encountering substantial obstacles.

Although on the surface this may seem to be wholly accidental, it is in fact at least partly due to the fact that these individuals tend to anticipate potential constraints and to avoid pursuing projects that they know will activate these constraints. Owen in particular provides examples that show that the evasion of constraints can be a deliberate strategy rather than a coincidence. His decision to cease working on the PhD he had started before joining WRTC, on the basis that research was discouraged in the sector in the late 1970s, for instance, attests to a conscious choice to avoid actions that seemed likely to lead to problems. He and his early pre-1992 colleagues demonstrate a strong tendency to accept the policies and structures that bound how they carry out their role and a willingness to work within those structures to fulfil their obligations to the institution as well as to realise their own concerns as professionals.

The later pre-1992 respondents, by contrast, seem to take a more subversive stance towards constraints, ignoring them or actively resisting them and finding ways to pursue their projects despite the obstacles that policies and structures throw in their paths. Many of their stories illustrate a high level of resilience and creativity in the face of obstacles and a determination to pursue their concerns despite the challenges. Where the earlier pre-1992 recruits tend to accept the policies and structures that shape their working context, the later pre-1992 respondents are far more likely to speak their minds and be critical of these structures, as well as to work, either individually or in groups such as Academic Council to challenge the constraints.

An inclination towards subversion is also discernable among the post-1992 lecturers, in comments about finding ways around problematic HETAC regulations and in one individual's assertion that she has worked outside the remit of her official contract since her arrival at WIT. Criticism of the limitations that policies and structures impose on individual lecturers and their chosen projects, particularly the project of research, is also plentiful in the stories of the post-1992 participants, but overall, the stance that the members of this generation adopt in relation to constraints and potential constraints seems to be strategic rather than subversive. When they find themselves faced with

obstacles, they seek to circumvent them rather than plough through them, and to progress rather than protest.

In the face of the various constraints on research activity in the IoT sector, for example, the post-1992 participants have shown themselves to be rather strategic. They have accepted that resources for research are limited, particularly for IoTs, and have entered into collaborative projects with colleagues from universities in order to increase their chances of obtaining funding, as well as participating in funding competitions specifically designed for the technological sector. They have realised that their jobs are likely, at least for the foreseeable future, to continue to be defined in terms of teaching hours and have explored and exploited different mechanisms for getting out of the classroom, from using research funding to buy in cover for their teaching duties to taking on teaching and teaching-related activities with good hours allowances such as postgraduate teaching and supervision in the hope of being able to use at least some of the time allocated to these activities for the pursuit of their own work. They have developed an ability to say no to work, including administrative and course management work, that they are not obliged to do and that has the potential to distract them from their research activities, but they continue to work with groups that are involved with designing structures for research supervision and research activity that may provide enablement for their work and that of their students in the future. They have also accepted, to a greater or lesser extent, that, despite stated meso-level support for research, their chances of being promoted to research-friendly positions within the institution are relatively limited. Most have chosen to live with this constraint for the present, in the hope that WIT will ultimately (and soon) be redesignated as a university and will be able to provide them with the environment and opportunities they require to pursue their research careers. Interestingly, several members of this generation claim quite openly that they are not willing to accept the various constraints that they are forced to face as researchers at WIT in the long term: several admit that they would consider (and indeed have considered) moving to a university if Waterford's university campaign proves unsuccessful. Their efforts to build up their reputations in the external disciplinary communities are clearly at least partially motivated by this long term strategy.

8.5.2.2 Participants' stances in relation to enablements

The research participants appear to react in different ways to the real and anticipated constraints that can be activated by the pursuit of particular projects. Their stories also show significant variation in their reactions to the enablement of particular projects in the institution and in the sector. Lecturers from both generations demonstrate a willingness to embrace opportunities that are available to them, but they are selective in terms of the enablements they chose to activate, focusing in on those that allow them to develop those dimensions of the lecturing role that they consider important.

As committed teachers determined to provide their students with a thorough and relevant preparation for the workplace as well as with appropriate academic and personal support, the pre-1992 participants are quick to avail themselves of chances that arise for them to develop the necessary expertise and experience to allow them to pursue these projects. Their professional development activities tend to include activities designed to enhance their performance of the teaching dimension of the lecturing role. They also seize any chance that comes their way to connect with the 'real' world of industry. Whether by organising site visits for students on which they themselves can also observe and learn, by attending regular seminars on the latest software developments or by visiting the local offices of practising professionals, these individuals are active in their efforts to maintain their links with the world for which they are preparing their students, and they clearly appreciate the fact that this has become easier over time.

The pre-1992 participants are also marked by their desire to ensure that the college provides a suitably supportive environment for students and staff. Most members of this generation have willingly engaged with year tutorship and course leadership roles because, in these roles, they can legitimately advocate for students and take whatever action is necessary to ensure that individuals receive appropriate support. All but two of these lecturers have seized the opportunity to 'bear influence' (Owen) on how the institution is run that opened up to staff with the establishment, under the RTC Act, of Academic Council. While several of these individuals admit to a certain level of disillusionment with the limitations on what they could actually do as Academic Council members, and indeed a number decided to step down because they felt they could make more of an impact by working in other ways, the existence of Academic Council is still broadly perceived by the pre-1992 participants to be an enablement for those whose ambitions include making a contribution at the institutional level.

The pre-1992 participants are quick to take advantage of structures and policies that enable them in carrying out their teaching and pastoral roles and in serving the institution, but other 'enablements' tend to be met with a slightly different reaction. What is striking is that these lecturers have, by and large, taken an evasive stance in relation to efforts to enable research. While some did take advantage of the support that became available for staff to undertake postgraduate courses in the wake of the RTC Act, engagement with research has, in most cases, stopped there for the members of the pre-1992 generation. Only the Humanities lecturers have become research active in the traditional sense of the word. Most of the remaining pre-1992 participants have simply decided to ignore the encouragement, coming from both the macro and the meso level, to pursue a research agenda. While these individuals are generally not opposed to the pursuit of research by their colleagues, it is not an activity that they themselves intend to engage in. Policies and structures may well provide enablements for those who choose to pursue research projects, but these are enablements that many pre-1992 lecturers are quite happy to evade.

While their stance on the enablement of research is, in the main, an evasive one, the comments of several of the pre-1992 participants hint that this evasive position is coloured by slightly subversive undertones. On the one hand, they question the value of research to the IoT lecturer. One individual wonders why Assistant Lecturers now seem to need doctorates in order to teach undergraduates and others are sceptical about the value of academic research in practically oriented areas, where what is needed is quick innovative solutions to immediate and real problems. On the other hand, the pre-1992 lecturers question the definition of research, arguing that research can take many forms and that many of the activities that they themselves are involved in could and probably should be classified as research. While neither of these positions fully constitutes a subversive stance towards the enablement of research, each does act to counterbalance the prevalent enthusiasm for research with a critical perspective on what it is and what value it adds in an IoT context.

The majority of the pre-1992 participants thus appear to be happy to take advantage of certain enablements inherent in current policies and structures but they seem to be deliberately evasive in relation to others. They concentrate largely on fulfilling the duties that are set out in the official lecturing contract and avail themselves of whatever supports are available to help them fulfil these duties and to serve the institution in a fitting manner. They consciously choose not to pursue other projects such as research that would, at least in recent times, activate enablements, despite being aware that this

act of evasion may have undesirable consequences for projects that are important to them, such as the project of career advancement.

The post-1992 participants, by contrast, are more likely to be strategic in their approach to enablements, choosing to activate those most likely to result in professional progress for them. Like their pre-1992 colleagues, the post-1992 lecturers tend to activate the enablements that exist in relation to the dimensions of the lecturing role that they are obliged to perform, but interestingly the two groups seem to engage with these enablements in different ways. This is the case in relation to teaching, for example. While the pre-1992 lecturers avail of opportunities that arise to develop their teaching skills, the post-1992 lecturers are more likely to seek out and take advantage of opportunities to expand their teaching portfolios. These individuals jump at any chance to teach in their specialist areas on advanced programmes and several have been instrumental in creating such chances for themselves, proposing and developing degree and postgraduate programmes in their particular fields of expertise. The post-1992 participants are also more likely than their pre-1992 counterparts to be involved in more loosely structured activities such as postgraduate supervision that now count as teaching, but do not involve the kind of work that is traditionally associated with teaching. The members of this generation have thus taken advantage of potential enablements not to improve their performance of their existing teaching role but rather to carve out a teaching role for themselves that is both interesting and varied and that allows them to establish at least some connection between a project they must pursue, namely teaching, and a project that they wish to pursue, namely research.

It is in relation to research that the strategic stance of the post-1992 respondents vis-à-vis enablements is most clearly visible. In the early 1990s, it became clear that research was set to become a significant activity in Waterford. In the very year that the RTC Act expanded the remit of the colleges to include research, candidates for lecturing posts found themselves being quizzed on their research achievements and ambitions at interview. While involvement in research was not a prerequisite for appointment, it was obvious that research was going to become an increasingly important part of the lecturing role and that research qualifications were going to become an essential element of the CV of anyone with a progressive career agenda. Those without postgraduate qualifications were quick to avail themselves of the support that was on offer to those wishing to upskill. Unlike their pre-1992 colleagues who also signed up for postgraduate courses around this period and who pursued courses in areas that they personally found interesting, however, the post-1992 lecturers were quite strategic in

their choice of direction for their postgraduate work, choosing to work in areas that would help them to carve out a niche for themselves institutionally as well as perhaps nationally and internationally in the long term.

Members of the post-1992 generation who already held postgraduate qualifications also sensed the winds of change and decided that it could be beneficial to them to take advantage of the various schemes that were being put in place in an effort to enable research activity in the technological sector and in particular discipline areas. A number of these participants trace their involvement in research to the introduction of the TSR funding scheme or to the availability of funding for research in Science, Engineering and Technology in the late 1990s.

While, in the overall scheme of things, it would appear that engaging in research at an IoT still activates more constraints than enablements, the post-1992 lecturers seem to feel that being involved in research will serve their long term interests and ambitions well and thus they continue to take advantage of whatever enablements are available and to operate in the spaces that have opened up in the policy and structural context in the hope of carving out a niche for themselves as researchers. Several also admit that involvement in research has immediate benefits for them. As researchers in an institution that is still, relatively speaking, at quite an early stage in the process of developing the research dimension of its remit, they get to play a part in shaping the structures and processes that are being put in place to support research at institutional level. As individuals who are clearly committed to an activity that has become an institutional priority and 'big fish in a small pond' (Timothy), they are given a great deal of support (albeit not as much as they would like, largely due to macro-level limitations on what can be done in the technological sector) and a significant level of freedom to control what they do and how they do it, and thus, for many of these respondents, there is a lot to be gained from making the most of the enablements that do exist for research at WIT.

8.5.3 Micro level actions mirroring meso level attitudes

While the reactions of individual participants towards particular constraints and enablements sometimes vary from those of colleagues who joined the institution at around the same time, certain trends are clearly discernible in the data, and the stances

adopted by the different groups of participants appear to mirror the behaviour patterns and culture of the institution when these individuals first joined it.

Archer's work (2003, 2007) suggests that particular stances are related to particular modes of reflexivity and that these modes of reflexivity in turn are 'proposed' by particular contexts. A continuous context tends to lead to the practice of communicative reflexivity and communicative reflexives generally take an evasive stance towards constraints and enablements. A discontinuous context encourages the development of both autonomous reflexivity and meta-reflexivity. Meta-reflexives tend to be ideal-oriented and to take a subversive stance towards constraints and enablements, while autonomous reflexives tend to be driven by a desire for practical achievement and to take a strategic stance in relation to constraints and enablements. Individuals are by no means compelled to practise the form of reflexivity proposed by their context, particularly if this happens to be at odds with the ultimate concerns that they wish to pursue, but context can and does influence the form of reflexivity practised and the stances held.

While it is clearly impossible to claim categorically that there is a relationship of causality between the culture of the institution at a given time on the one hand and the stances towards constraints and enablements adopted by individual lecturers on the other hand, the participants' stories do suggest that individuals' attitudes and actions may have been influenced by the attitudes and actions of the institution in the early stages of their lecturing careers.

The largely compliant attitude that characterises the behaviour of the early pre-1992 respondents appears to mirror the culture that was prevalent at WRTC in the 1970s. In the early days of its existence, the college seems to have worked quite happily within the limits of the niche that it occupied in the higher education system, cooperating with the Department of Education, the local VEC and the external professional and awarding bodies and fulfilling the applied vocational remit that was set out for the sector. It was first and foremost a teaching institution, and the early pre-1992 respondents were for the most part trained teachers. Thus WRTC, while providing new challenges for these individuals, also provided them with what Archer (2003) would describe as a 'continuous' context.

Despite the changes that have taken place in the intervening period, the early pre-1992 lecturers appear to have enjoyed contextual continuity throughout their careers. WIT

still counts teaching as one of its core activities and still supports those whose main focus is teaching. The early pre-1992 participants stress that they are not put under any pressure to engage in research or other 'new' activities but are allowed to continue to perform the lecturing role in much the same way as they have traditionally performed it. This contextual continuity appears to have given rise to a generally evasive stance towards constraints and enablements, suggesting that these individuals may, in Archer's terms, be communicative reflexives. They seem to make the best of the structures and processes that are in place to support the traditional core activities of the lecturer but on the whole tend to avoid projects that are likely to meet with resistance or involvement in activities that are not linked to what they see as their main duties, namely teaching and serving their students and their institution.

Over time, the Waterford college grew to be more ambitious and its culture started to change. It began to question the limitations that were being placed on its activities and to work on pushing out the boundaries that it felt were holding it back. WRTC in the 1980s seems to have been characterised by a strong desire to resist efforts to rein it in and a willingness to fight for what it believed in and to find ways of making possible what seemed to be impossible. Quietly but determinedly, it fought to expand its course portfolio to include higher-level courses and courses in discipline areas not included in its original remit, to gain a greater level of control over areas where it had previously been answerable to external professional bodies and so on.

The new and somewhat subversive attitude that emerged in this period is mirrored in the broadly subversive stance, of the later pre-1992 recruits. The career paths of these individuals are marked by the contextual discontinuity that can encourage people to develop subversive reactions when faced with constraints and enablements. Most had started out in careers that were in no way teaching related. Their decision to move into lecturing was, at least in some cases, provoked by a desire to move out of a context that was not conducive to the pursuit of their particular professional concerns. Arriving in an institution that was clearly growing and changing and that seemed to be willing to fight for what it believed it, they were encouraged to do the same, and to develop a subversive stance. Sometimes openly critical, sometimes quietly resistant, these individuals' stories show them to be both highly committed to the projects they have chosen to pursue and willing to take on the system and if necessary make personal sacrifices in order to achieve their goals. Like the earlier members of the pre-1992 generation, they demonstrate a high level of loyalty to the institution, but among these later recruits there seems to be less willingness to accept and adapt and a more marked desire to shape as

well as to serve. Their subversive stance suggests that these individuals may perhaps be what Archer would describe as meta-reflexives.

In the stories of the post-1992 respondents, a more strategic stance towards constraints and enablements, which Archer suggests is connected with the practise of autonomous reflexivity, is evident. For these individuals, professional advancement appears to be a key concern and they demonstrate a strong ability both to sense what they need to do in order to advance and to take advantage of whatever supports and opportunities are available to help them along the way. Like their pre-1992 colleagues, they are committed to the institutional community, but in the post-1992 lecturers, this commitment is counterbalanced by a strong desire for personal achievement and for a level of independence and control over their own destiny. Although sometimes frustrated by the limitations imposed on their projects and ambitions by macro and meso-level policies and structures, they tend to work within the system in the hope that their efforts will be properly rewarded as soon as the system is in a position to reward them.

The strategic stance of the lecturers mirrors a tendency at institutional level to behave in a strategic rather than a subversive manner that has developed since the early 1990s. While the 1992 RTC Act may have fallen short of the aspirations that the technological colleges held for it, it did open up more spaces in which they could legitimately operate. Later legislation expanded these spaces, removing the colleges from the control of the VECs and opening up the possibility for institutions to be granted delegated authority to make their own awards. Even Waterford's most subversive ambition, namely its desire to cross the binary divide and become a university, became theoretically achievable under the 1997 Universities Act. Where the institution had previously found itself forced to work around the hurdles that had been set in its way, these macro-level changes all worked to reduce the need for stealth tactics in pushing out the boundaries in certain areas. It appeared that the ambitions of WRTC / WIT would now be better served by playing patiently within the system than by trying to find ways to work around it, and the adoption of a more strategic approach to constraints and enablements at institutional level seems to have encouraged the development of a similar stance among those who came to work in the institution in the post-1992 period.

8.6 The results of reflexivity: how lecturers' stances impact at the micro, meso and macro levels

The previous sections suggest that the research participants differ from each other in many ways: in how they choose to personify the lecturing role; in the extent to which their personifications of the role activate the potential to constrain and enable that exists in the context in which they operate; and in the stances that they adopt towards the constraints and enablements they encounter. Archer (2007) suggests that the adoption of a particular stance has consequences, both for the individual and for society as a whole. This section will consider how the stances taken by the individual participants may have impacted at the micro, meso and macro levels.

8.6.1 The effects of evasive, subversive and strategic stances at the level of the individual

Archer's own research (2003, 2007) suggests that an evasive stance towards constraints and enablements results in self-renunciation and social immobility at the level of the individual. The data collected for the current study seem to support this notion to a certain extent. The early pre-1992 recruits, in particular Mark and Kieran, demonstrate a tendency to evade constraints by simply sticking to their original job description and avoiding projects that would evoke obstacles or opposition. While both seem to be ambitious and willing to embrace certain opportunities for professional growth, and while evidence suggests that they are both very good at what they do, what they do does not appear to have changed significantly over the time they have spent in the institution. They have accepted limitations that have prevented them from doing things they would like to have done. They have progressed up the incremental scales and moved to higher scales when national agreements made this possible, but have not actively sought promotion, with the result that both have remained basically lecturers.

The other early pre-1992 recruits have shown slightly more proactive tendencies, and have made some progress in the area of career advancement. Both Owen and Simon have successfully applied for promotion and have moved well beyond the entry level scales, but Owen at least has dissuaded himself from trying to climb further on the basis that the next step would take him into a management position where he thinks his innate tendency to worry could make the job untenable for him. In his case as in the case of other pre-1992 colleagues, the evasion of constraints has lead to a certain of curtailment

of ambition and perhaps less obvious professional progress than individuals might have been expected to achieve or even aspire to.

While an evasive stance towards constraints and enablements is thought to lead to social immobility for the individual, a strategic stance towards constraints and enablements, by contrast, is said to lead to upward mobility for the self-disciplined individual. The post-1992 lecturers' stories suggest that they are highly strategic in their approach. Driven by a desire for success and measurable practical achievement, these individuals are quick to grasp opportunities for advancement that present themselves. Their most strategic decision has been their decision to embrace the research agenda, seeing involvement in research as a way of ensuring that their professional development is not limited by a job that has the potential to be 'stultifying' (James) and as a tactic to help them advance their careers in the long term.

The decision to become involved in research clearly calls for a willingness to make sacrifices and for strong self-discipline. All the post-1992 participants, as well as the research-active pre-1992 participants, mention how hard it is to find time for research, given the other duties that must be fulfilled, yet all of them manage to find the time somehow. In most cases, this involves working in the evenings, at weekends and in holidays, when their colleagues who do not research are free to do other non-work related activities. Some clearly struggle with the fact that they are putting in significantly more time and effort for the same or less financial reward, but continue despite the temptation to opt for an easier life. Most have come to realise that finding the time to research is only possible if they reduce the time that they dedicate to other activities, and they have had to train themselves to refuse when asked to participate in such activities, something they find difficult to do.

The post-1992 participants' stories show both that these individuals are capable of self-discipline and that this is necessary if they are to pursue their chosen projects. The question of whether their strategic stance in relation to constraints and enablements actually results in upward mobility for these individuals is one that must also be addressed. In terms of progression up the internal hierarchy, the members of this generation could be said to have made no more progress than their pre-1992 counterparts. Only one of the post-1992 participants held an SL1 post when interviewed for the study, although a further three have been promoted since then. Most have simply progressed incrementally up the scales, though those who were appointed at AL level did tend to transfer across to the L scale in the minimum possible time. The key reason

why these individuals do not seem to have moved up the internal hierarchy seems to be that the higher posts on offer do not seem to appeal to them. While a number admit that they have at times considered applying for posts at Head of Department level, most have ultimately decided against it because they were not convinced that the activities involved are activities they would be interested in or that they could actually contribute in a meaningful way in a Head of Department role.

The majority of the post-1992 participants seem to have decided instead to focus their attention on developing their research reputations. Several have been involved in founding research groups and centres within the institution and in most cases they continue to play a leading role in these groups. Most are also active in disciplinary research networks outside the institution and have established or are establishing strong reputations through presenting at conferences and publishing their work. They aspire to make their mark in their disciplines and the indicators suggest that most are indeed upwardly mobile in their particular fields.

The evidence suggests that the later pre-1992 recruits are neither evasive nor strategic in their stance. Their tendency to pursue their goals despite constraints and to resist certain enablements, despite being aware of the negative consequences of such resistance, suggests that their position is more of a subversive one. Archer's research indicates that a subversive stance tends to lead to self-transformation and lateral mobility for the individual, and this does seem to be reflected in the stories of the later pre-1992 participants

Betty's strong commitment to the pastoral dimension of the lecturing role is well known throughout the institution, but this commitment was not quite as strong when she started lecturing as it ultimately became. Her decision to focus her energy on the caring side of the job seems to have been provoked by the fact that her initial dedication to the teaching dimension of the role was not sufficient to earn her a promotion to an L2 post on her first attempt, and her determination to ensure the provision of appropriate supports for staff and students seems to have been strengthened rather than diluted by the opposition she encountered along the way. While she has not moved up the internal hierarchy since she was became an L2, she is a highly-respected member of the institution and her achievements are recognised both in her own school and further afield. Emma too is recognised as a leader by her peers, but has so far been unsuccessful in her bid for promotion to a management level post because of her unwillingness to pursue a doctoral qualification. This unwillingness seems to be rooted in a strong

concern that the time and energy that she would have to dedicate to research in order to acquire a doctorate would leave her with less time and energy to dedicate to activities like teaching which, as a highly-paid public servant, she feels honour-bound to fulfil to the best of her ability.

Laura's story similarly shows a lack of upward mobility but a significant degree of self-transformation. Unwilling to continue to be 'communications light relief', she took a decision to engage in research, initially for postgraduate qualifications and subsequently on funded projects, in the discipline area that she herself was passionate about, and she pursued this path despite the lack of support for either her discipline or the project of research in the late 1980s. While she has not climbed the internal hierarchy, she has clearly reinvented herself against the odds and appears to be happy to maintain the subversive stance she has adopted.

8.6.2 The effects of evasive, subversive and strategic stances at the meso and macro levels

Archer's work (2003, 2007) suggests that each of the different stances towards constraints and enablements has implications for society at large as well as for individuals. An evasive stance is thought to be linked with social and structural reproduction, which Archer (2003 p.3) describes as social 'morphostasis', while a strategic stance appears to lead to to promote social change and structural elaboration or 'morphogenesis' to use Archer's terminology (Archer 2003 p.3). According to Archer, those adopting a subversive stance fulfil the role of a critical conscience for society, as they aim to change it for the better and to transform it in ways that reflect the ideals that they themselves feel are worthy of pursuit. What follows considers the extent to which the stances adopted by the participants in the current study have had the theoretically expected effect at the meso level of the institution and indeed at the macro level.

The impact, at the meso and macro levels, of the early pre-1992 participants taking an evasive stance towards constraints and enablements would be expected to be the maintenance of the status quo. One would have expected the lecturers to continue happily with their teaching, the institutions to continue happily with the fulfilment of their remit as applied vocational subdegree education providers and the binary divide to continue to stand firm and unchallenged. Even a superficial glance at the history of WRTC / WIT and of the Irish higher education system proves that this is by no means

what has happened. Change has occurred, particularly at the meso level, despite a tendency to take an evasive stance at the micro level.

How can this apparently contradictory situation be explained? The answer would appear to lie at least partly in the fact that the pre-1992 recruits, while evasive, were also largely compliant in their overall behaviour and thus were happy to go along with what their managers, at the meso level, felt was the right course of action for the institution. One manager who was interviewed as part of the background data collection for this study specifically commented that, in the early days, staff were willing to do whatever they were asked to do because they trusted their managers to have the best interests of the college at heart. The individual early pre-1992 participants may not have been inclined to push the boundaries of the lecturing role themselves, but they do appear to have been willing to back leadership efforts to push the boundaries of this institutional remit, and indeed their strong support for the university campaign, despite their fears that there will be no place for them in a university, indicates that this attitude has not changed over time.

What is also significant is the fact that many of the changes that have taken place over time have taken place relatively informally at the meso level and have been slow to translate into formal adjustments, leaving the status quo at the official and macro levels relatively untouched. In practice, the roles of both institutions and individual lecturers have expanded over time, and almost all participants claim that their workload has increased, but in theory, there have been few changes to what either the colleges or their academic staff are officially required to do and individuals are not necessarily obliged to engage with all the 'new' dimensions of the lecturing role. Several of the pre-1992 participants comment that, while newcomers may be expected to get involved in activities like research, they themselves are allowed to continue on performing the lecturing role in more or less the same manner as they have traditionally performed it. This is partly due to a strong desire at the macro level, particularly on the part of the Department of Education and the universities, to keep the IoTs and their staff firmly in their assigned place, but it may well be indirectly a result of the evasive stance that individual lecturers have adopted being filtered through representative bodies such as the union. Despite the changes that have occurred over time, the TUI remains committed to the view that an IoT lecturer is a teacher and its aim in all recent national negotiation processes appears to have been to ensure that the duties of lecturers are not expanded to include activities not seen as being directly related to teaching. Although this position appears to run counter to the desire of some union members, (many of the post-1992

participants in the current study who are union members express a clear wish to have the lecturing contract altered to make space for research), there must be some basis for it, and it is not inconceivable that this determination to maintain the status quo is linked to an evasive stance towards constraints and enablements among longer serving union members.

The adoption of a subversive stance is thought to be linked to critique and to efforts to transform society in line with particular ideals. The data show that the later pre-1992 recruits have traditionally been and continue to be willing to speak their minds, particularly when they feel strongly about issues or about how things are being handled by their superiors. These individuals admit that their critique may not ultimately make any difference, but they persist because it gives them a sense that they are at least taking action. The facts also show that their persistence does pay off, and that at least some of their critical comments and actions have led to change at the level of the institution and possibly beyond. Betty's refusal to accept that the remit of the college and its lecturers was limited to academic affairs contributed in no small way to the development of a more caring culture in the institution and her persistent criticism about the lack of counsellors eventually led to the introduction of a counselling service. It may also be the case that the refusal of individuals to accept the contractual ban on external work or to accept that RTC lecturers should focus entirely on teaching in a limited range of applied areas contributed in some way to the loosening up of restrictions in relation to external work and research in the 1992 RTC Act.

The adoption of a strategic stance, by contrast, is expected to lead to social change and the reactions of the post-1992 participants to the constraints and enablements they have encountered do seem to have contributed to change at the level of the institution. Some of this change is clearly positive and progressive. Individuals who took up the enablements initially offered for research have contributed to the development of a culture of research in the institution that has flourished in recent times. The pursuit of doctoral studies by members of this generation has enhanced and is continuing to enhance the qualification profile of WIT, which in turn increases the capacity of the institution to run postgraduate programmes, attract research students and generally expand the research dimension of its remit. The level of autonomy currently enjoyed by the college, which holds delegated authority to make awards to NFQ level 10 in the Sciences and to NFQ level 9 in all other discipline areas, is also in no small way linked to the fact that the post-1992 participants and colleagues were able to show a strong track record in research at accreditation panel visits. The success of members of this

generation in attracting research funding has also contributed to the growth of the institution. The activities of staff members who are pushing the boundaries of their individual remits have allowed the institution to take full advantage of the spaces for expansion that have been opened up for IoTs by various policies and pieces of legislation that have come into being since 1992.

The strategic pursuit of research and research-related goals has caused other changes that are potentially less positive however. The focus on research seems to go hand in hand with the development of a more individualistic culture. Whereas previously there was a strong sense of belonging to a community and of working together with colleagues towards common goals, now it seems, at least to some participants, that individuals are focused on their own particular projects and only interact with the broader community of colleagues when they have to. The sense of being part of a team, and being expected to contribute to the team, that the pre-1992 participants identify as having been a key part of being a WRTC lecturer seems to be disappearing as individuals who have chosen to become involved in research are allowed to plough their own furrows and to limit their engagement with group activities. Not only is the traditionally collectivist culture being replaced by a more individualistic one, but also, and perhaps more worryingly, a divide has opened up between the still relatively elite group of 'researchers' and the larger community of 'teachers' within the institution. The discourse of both the pre-1992 participants, who see themselves as teachers, and the post-1992 participants, some of whom describe themselves first and foremost as researchers, is marked by references to the distinction between researchers and teachers and by 'them v. us' comparisons. This divide is a worrying development in a staff that has traditionally, according to managers, been characterised by a strong sense of cohesion and an ability to present a united front to the world.

8.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, the theoretical tools provided by Archer's framework were applied to the stories collected from the sixteen research participants in an effort to better understand how the professional identities of these individuals have been influenced by the collectivities to which they belong and the structures and policies under which they operate. In Chapter 9, the key issues that have emerged from this analysis will be related to the research questions posed at the outset of the study.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSIONS

9.1 Introduction

The overall aim of the research presented in this thesis was to examine the nature and evolution of academic professional identities in an Irish IoT and to investigate the impact of macro and meso-level structures and policies on these identities. In Archer's social realist terms, the work aimed to illuminate how individuals form social identities as lecturers, and how lecturers, as agents and actors, are affected by the causal powers for constraint and enablement that are vested in the structures in which they operate and activated by the projects they choose to pursue as they strive to create social identities as academic professionals. This chapter reviews the key findings of the study in relation to the research questions posed at the outset (see Chapter 1). It also acknowledges the limitations of the study and suggests some directions for future inquiry.

9.2 Key research findings

Analysis of the life histories of the research participants (presented in Chapter 8) suggested that, in this particular context, there is indeed 'more than one way to construct an academic professional self' (Nixon et al 1998 p.292). The professional identities formed by lecturers at WIT appear to be complex and characterised by diversity. The values and concerns of the pre-1992 participants differ in a number of ways from those of their post-1992 colleagues, and the different value sets lead to different approaches to the personification of the lecturing role. These academics and the professional identities they develop do appear to be influenced by macro-level policies and structures, which constrain some of their projects while enabling others. However, the impact of these macro-level forces seems to be significantly mediated both at the meso level of the institution, through creative interpretation and implementation of policy, and at the micro level of the individual lecturers, through their decisions in relation to the projects they wish to pursue and their reactions to the constraints and enablements activated by those projects. The following sections highlight the key issues that emerged from the data collected in relation to the specific questions the research proposed to address.

9.2.1 *How are IoT lecturers and the professional identities they form affected by the structures and policies that shape the environment in which they practise their profession, and how do these individuals react to these structures and policies?*

One of the assumptions underlying the research was the assumption that macro and meso-level policies and structures have an impact, albeit one that is perhaps not immediately obvious or usually highlighted, on individual lecturers and the professional identities that they form. Other studies of academic identity formation had suggested that this was the case in other contexts and the current study aimed to investigate the precise nature and extent of this impact in the Irish IoT context.

Interestingly, the data suggest that the impact of policy on individual academics in the Irish higher education context is both more gradual and more subtle than has been shown to be the case in countries like the UK and Australia. Many radical changes have been suggested over the years, from the replacement of the binary system with a comprehensive system in the 1970s to the introduction of various new bodies to control the different sectors of higher education in the 1990s and the re-introduction of third level fees in the early 21st century. Relatively few of these changes have actually been implemented, however, and those proposals that have been followed through have tended to be thoroughly diluted between their conception and their (generally much later) implementation. Strong resistance and lobbying on the part of institutions and of representative bodies in both the university and technological sectors has proved effective over the years, and change in Irish higher education occurs slowly, if at all. Against this backdrop, individual lecturers appear to have developed a rather sceptical attitude towards policy and tend to carry on pursuing their projects regardless of threatened, or promised, policy shifts.

One of the major challenges facing the participants in this study is directly related to the slow pace of change at the macro level. While the IoTs have clearly become third level institutions, they are still forced to operate within what are fundamentally second level structures. IoT lecturers are still perceived primarily as teachers, while IoTs continue to be viewed and treated as applied vocational teaching institutions. Although, in theory, individuals and institutions are no longer prevented from engaging in activities such as consultancy, external work and research, in reality the structures and conditions under which IoTs and their academic staff are expected to operate continue to resemble those

in place in the second-level system rather than those which prevail in the university sector.

The IoT lecturer's job is still defined chiefly in terms of hours in the classroom, with the (high) number of hours per week that must be devoted to this activity being clearly specified in the official contract, while no such detail is given in relation to other activities in which lecturers can be expected to be involved. The IoTs themselves have only recently been freed from the direct control of the Department of Education and Science, which has traditionally dealt mainly with first and second-level institutions, leaving responsibility for the 'real' third-level colleges of the university sector in the hands of the HEA. It must also be said that the quest of individuals and institutions to move beyond their perceived 'two and a half level' (Alexandra) status has not been helped by the fact that academic staff at IoTs are represented by what is fundamentally a second-level union, which has tended to oppose efforts to bring the terms and conditions of IoT lecturers into line with those of academics in the university sector.

The fact that the 'elastication' of the role of academics and colleges has been largely informal and has not been accompanied by significant changes to the official status and roles of individuals or institutions results in tension that impacts significantly at both the meso and the micro levels. Possibly the most significant issue affecting IoTs and their staff in the early twenty-first century is the disconnection between what they actually do and wish to do, on the one hand, and what they are officially expected and / or allowed to do, on the other. The removal of constraints has not been counterbalanced by the provision of enablements, leaving lecturers and their leaders in an uncomfortable limbo. At the meso level, the desire of ambitious institutions to push out the boundaries often means engaging in activities for which they are not really supported or resourced, and working very creatively within the limited spaces that exist in the policies and structures to enable projects they wish to and are technically allowed to, though not officially expected to, pursue. At the micro level, individuals find themselves being strongly encouraged to engage in new activities, such as research, for no extra reward, while being expected to continue to fulfil all of the core duties set out in their teaching-focused contracts.

The role of the meso level in mediating the effects of macro-level policies at the micro level of the individual lecturer must also be taken into consideration. It is at the institutional level that policies are interpreted and implemented, so how an institution reacts to what is happening at national level can have a significant bearing on how

individuals will be affected. The study suggests that, in the case of WIT, the institution has tended to act as both a buffer and an enabler. It appears to have worked to protect individual lecturers from the worst excesses of macro-level policy. Not only has it resisted efforts to restrict ambitious individuals in the pursuit of their chosen projects, from the development of higher-level programmes to involvement in research, but it seems to have actively sought ways to enable them to pursue their particular concerns as professionals.

Mediating the effects of macro-level policy is a significant challenge for the institution. The funding and other support available to it and the regulations with which it must comply mean that its potential to resist constraints and to enable is limited. What it can do to enable individuals must often be done quietly and in some cases even covertly, and it is not always possible to ensure that each individual receives the kind or level of support that he or she desires. This lack of transparency and the perceived lack of equity in the distribution of enablements is, at one level, inevitable, but at another level, it is very problematic. While many participants acknowledge that the institution does its best to support their endeavours in activities such as research which it seems particularly anxious to see them undertake, and while most seem to be willing to accept that there will be no monetary or other reward for their involvement in these new extra activities, at least in the short term, they do appear to feel that more could and should be done by the institution. They are less than satisfied with the fact that their efforts in certain areas continue to activate constraints rather than necessarily being enabled and with the idea that some individuals seem to receive more support than others. In a context characterised by disconnections, this particular disconnection has the potential to do damage to both individuals and the institutions in which they operate. There is a clear need for individual lecturers to develop an appreciation of the limits within which their managers are obliged to operate, and for managers both to facilitate this appreciation by being more open with staff about what they can and cannot enable and to try to reduce inequities in the distribution of enablements in order to avoid disenfranchising and demotivating lecturing staff.

While the impact of macro-level policy can be mediated at the meso level, significantly, it appears that it can also be mediated at the micro level. Individuals may be influenced by the structures in which they operate but social realist theory asserts that they are not determined by them. As agents and social actors, they can, and the data collected for this study suggest that they do, control the extent to which structures impinge on them

by virtue of the manner in which they react to the constraints and enablements generated by the projects they pursue.

The analysis of the participants' stories reveals that different stances towards constraints and enablements are prevalent in the different generations. The earlier pre-1992 recruits seem to take a broadly evasive stance towards constraints, avoiding involvement in projects that they know will throw up obstacles and focusing on activities that are clearly within their remit such as teaching. These individuals do tend to take advantage of enablements that have become available in recent times relating to projects they have traditionally pursued, but most have chosen not to engage in new projects like research despite the fact that these are now, albeit to a limited extent, enabled. The later pre-1992 participants react in a more subversive manner. They generally refuse to bow to constraints, pursuing their projects doggedly despite hurdles that may arise in their paths, and some also decline to take advantage of enablements, even though they know that this would potentially, if also indirectly, help them to achieve certain of their practical professional concerns. The post-1992 participants adopt a strategic stance towards constraints and enablements, choosing to work in the spaces available within the system to pursue their projects rather than to fight the system.

One assumption made at the outset was the assumption that the impact of policies and structures would be similar for all of the research participants, since they all practise the same profession in the same broad context. The data clearly showed that this was not the case. How structures impinge on individual lecturers seems to be dependent on how those lecturers react to them. The extent to which individuals feel constrained or enabled by the structures in which they work depends on the kinds of projects they choose to pursue. Not only do the participants in the current study choose different projects to pursue, with many of the pre-1992 lecturers focusing on the pastoral dimension of the role, while their post-1992 counterparts are more likely to be involved in research, but they also pursue those projects that all lecturers are required to pursue in different ways. The different approaches to the personification of the lecturing role, coupled with different stances towards constraints and enablements, lead to a situation where the impact of policy and structures can differ significantly from one individual to the next, despite the fact that they share what appears to be a common context.

9.2.2 *What are the implications of such reactions for the individual lecturers and for their professional identities, as well as for the broader context in which they operate?*

Archer (2007) suggests that individuals' stances in relation to the constraints and enablements generated by the projects they choose to pursue have implications both for the individuals themselves, particularly in terms of their social mobility, as well as for their context. This seems to be borne out in the current research.

The different stances adopted by the different groups of participants do seem to have different effects at the individual level. The evasive stance of the earlier pre-1992 recruits has led to less movement up the institutional hierarchy than might have been expected of long-serving members of staff, but most of these individuals seem quite happy both with their positions within the institution and with the fact that they are allowed to get on with activities that are important to them, such as teaching, but are not under any pressure to pursue research or other projects that seem to have become part of the lecturing role in recent times, unless of course, as is the case for Simon, they choose to engage in these activities.

The later pre-1992 participants, with their tendency to the subversive, have fought to pursue the activities that are of significance to them, despite the fact that these activities were not necessarily deemed particularly important by the institution at the point when they decided to pursue them, and to be what they want to be as professionals. Although this has not led to upward mobility, they have succeeded in carving out very distinctive niches for themselves and gaining the respect of their colleagues and superiors in the process.

The strategic stance of the post-1992 participants has been somewhat slow to translate into promotions to higher-level internal posts for many of these individuals but their decision to play along with the research agenda, despite the sacrifices and the frustrations involved, has not been without benefits. By and large, the 'researchers' in the institution tend to receive whatever support is possible for their particular projects, allowing them to build up their reputations in the external community and to develop CVs which in many cases compare to those of their university peers and would allow them to compete for posts outside the technological sector if they so wished. The freedom to establish and run research groups and centres has also given many of the

post-1992 participants a level of independence and control over their own activities and progress that has not traditionally been enjoyed by lecturers in the IoT sector.

The different stances also appear to have implications at the level of the institution and potentially at the level of the sector and the system as well. Archer (2003) suggests that an evasive stance towards constraints and enablements generally leads to social morphostasis, while subversive and strategic stances lead to change at the level of society. While the evasive stance of the earliest recruits appears not to have impeded change and development at the institutional level in Waterford, it may well have contributed in some way to the slow pace of change and the maintenance of the status quo at sectoral and system level, as individuals' desire to avoid constraints and enablements is filtered upwards through the TUI and other representative bodies.

The subversive stance of the later pre-1992 recruits has led to transformation and improvements in particular areas which these individuals felt were worth fighting for, from pastoral work to course development and quality assurance. These individuals, with their willingness to speak out and to stand up for their vision of how they think a publicly funded third-level institution should operate, provide a critical voice that plays an important role in ensuring that attention continues to be paid to core activities like teaching and student support as institutional remits expand and IoTs engage in new activities that require significant support, particularly in the beginning.

The strategic stance of the post-1992 participants has also contributed to change at the meso and macro levels. These individuals demonstrate a high level of awareness of what Bourdieu (1993 p.74 cited in Lucas 2001 p.1) would describe as the 'game' that is being played at institutional and national level. In a manner similar to that of the early pre-1992 colleagues, they appear to be willing to play by the rules of the game (although it must be pointed out that both the game and the rules have changed somewhat between the late 1970s and the early 2000s), but they differ from these earlier recruits in that they are not content to simply take part but are clearly determined to control the game and to win. Their efforts in the name of professional advancement clearly support the institution's ambitions for advancement, and the actions of ambitious institutions can, albeit in the long term rather than the short term, lead to change at the level of the sector and system. There is a suggestion in the stories, however, that these individuals might not continue to support the progressive agenda being pushed at both the meso level, as the institution pushes for university designation, and the macro level, as higher

education institutions are pushed, though not necessarily resourced, to produce the knowledge and knowledge workers needed for a knowledge economy, if there continues to be little by way of tangible reward for them for doing so. The goodwill on which so much of the progress that has been made to date is based appears to be running low, and this is something that needs to be taken into consideration at both the meso and the macro levels.

9.2.3 What individual values and 'concerns' (Archer 2000 p.2) characterise IoT lecturers and how have these values and concerns developed and evolved over time?

The development of a range of different professional identities in this particular context is due at least in part to a marked heterogeneity in the value sets and the personal and previous social identities the participants brought with them when they were recruited to lecturing posts in the technological sector. Recruitment in the RTC days seems to have been characterised by a willingness to value a variety of different kinds of qualifications and experiences and the colleges welcomed people with very diverse 'narrative histories' (Henkel 2000 p.16) and prior professional experiences, from teachers to practising professionals and trades people, with open arms. While the emphasis has shifted somewhat in more recent times, so that what is now effectively (if not necessarily officially) required to secure a lecturing post in an IoT is more reminiscent of what is traditionally expected of candidates for posts in universities, there still appears to be some room in the sector for those whose backgrounds are not 'academic' (Alexandra), but who can bring other kinds of experience to the table, and this accounts at least partly for the existence of a range of different professional identities at WIT.

The emergence of different identities is also partly related to the fact that the range of identities open to individuals who have chosen lecturing as a role in which to pursue their practical professional concerns and IoTs as the context in which to practise their profession has clearly evolved significantly over the lifetime of the technological sector. From being pre-dominantly teaching-focused, the lecturing role has been 'elasticated' to include new sub-roles and tasks in which identities can be shaped. This role elastication has resulted from a combination of factors. At the micro level, individual lecturers stretched the original boundaries of the lecturing role to include activities that were of particular importance to them as professionals, such as pastoral duties or research, and over time, these activities have come to be accepted, informally at least, as being part

and parcel of a lecturer's job. At the meso level, efforts to push out the boundaries of the institutional remit have also contributed to the expansion of the role array and the creation of new opportunities, as well as new challenges and new obligations, for academic staff. All of these developments have created new 'patches' (Griffiths 1998) from which individuals can choose as they create the patchworks that are their professional identities.

Henkel (2000) emphasises the link between academic professional identities and values, while Margaret Archer's work suggests that social identities, of which the professional identities under investigation in the current study are an example, are formed when individuals seek out contexts and roles that allow them to pursue their various concerns. Analysis of the research participants' stories revealed clear and in some respects quite distinct sets of values in the pre-1992 and post-1992 generations, and suggested that the concerns that drive IoT lecturers have changed over time. The pre-1992 participants seem to have been and indeed to remain broadly concerned with passing on competence in and passion for their professional areas and with maintaining ties to industry to ensure the ongoing relevance of their teaching to the future careers of their students, as well as with taking care of their students and with serving their employer and the various collectivities of which they are members to the best of their abilities. The post-1992 participants, by contrast, appear to prioritise investigation and the creation of new knowledge over other activities and are keen to be at the cutting edge of their academic disciplines. They are concerned with developing specialism and with professional advancement and their ties to the various collectivities of which they are a part tend to be loose and often dependent on the extent to which those collectivities can support them in the pursuit of their own individual ambitions.

9.2.4 How are these values expressed in everyday practice? How do IoT lecturers perform and prioritise the various dimensions of the lecturing role and how are they and their professional identities influenced by the various communities to which they belong?

The differences in the values and concerns that individuals bring to the job result in the lecturing role being personified in different ways. The pre-1992 participants (with the exception of the Humanities participants) seem to be happy to accept a generalist identity. They focus on the teaching and pastoral dimensions of the role and on developing structures to support themselves and their colleagues in carrying out their

work in these areas. They seem to see themselves, broadly speaking, as professionals who lecture, and do whatever is possible to keep their fingers on the pulse of what is going on in industry, from playing an active role in their particular professional bodies to taking all opportunities that present themselves to connect with colleagues in practice. They are community-focused and personify the role in a manner that could be described as selfless, showing a willingness to make sacrifices for the overall good of the groups to which they belong.

The post-1992 participants and the pre-1992 Humanities lecturers, by contrast, are anxious to have a specialist identity, as evidenced by their use of far more specific job titles when they are asked to label themselves. They appear to see themselves as professional lecturers. They focus on the research dimension of the role and expect to be supported in their research ambitions. They are of course involved in other activities, in particular teaching, but many try to limit their involvement in areas like pastoral work and administration, and where they serve on institute-level bodies, these tend to be bodies which are focused on the development of structures to support research and research supervision rather than on bodies whose remit is broader. They are individualist rather than collectivist in their focus, and while they demonstrate strong loyalty to the institution and to various collectivities within it (chiefly research groups and centres), they have a tendency to evaluate opportunities not just in terms of how the group stands to benefit but also in terms of how they themselves are likely to benefit. All in all, these individuals are conscious of making their mark and making their way forward and they try to personify the lecturing role in a manner that will make them stand out from the crowd.

Individuals in both generations show a tendency to define themselves in terms of the particular dimension or dimensions of the lecturing role they prioritise as they practise their profession. Some participants define themselves chiefly in terms of one particular dimension of the role, labelling themselves as teachers or researchers for example, while others lay claim to more multi-faceted personas in which the identities drawn from the performance of a variety of different dimensions of the role co-exist, albeit not always entirely comfortably or harmoniously.

Both Archer's sociological framework (Archer 1995, 2000, 2003, 2007) and the studies on academic professional identities conducted by researchers such as Henkel (2000), Kogan et al (2000) and others suggest that such identities are affected by the various

communities or collectivities to which individuals belong, and although some of the communities which have been found to be influential in other contexts (in particular the discipline) appear to have less of a role in shaping professional identities in the context studied here, lecturers in this context are clearly susceptible to the influence of groups of which they are members.

The activities and professional identities of the research participants are affected by their positions as primary agents, that is to say by their membership of collectivities to which they were involuntarily assigned when they became lecturers. Their status as public servants has both positive and negative impacts. On the one hand, the security they enjoy as tenured members of the public service opens up the space and, within limits, the freedom for individuals to pursue the projects that are important to them. On the other hand, the fact that public servants are all treated in the same way, so that pay rises and other rewards are not necessarily linked to professional performance and not reserved for or necessarily available to those who excel, and the fact that promotional opportunities tend to be limited, can be very demotivating for more ambitious lecturers. The participants also seem to be affected by the fact that they work in the IoT sector rather than in the university sector. Operating in what is still perceived to be the inferior sector of the higher education system, with its clearly defined and delimited applied vocational remit, affects the nature and level of programmes they get to teach on, the kinds of students they get to work with, the extent to which they can research and the level of seriousness with which their peers view their research outputs and so on, and all of these issues ultimately impact on their professional identities, contributing to the sense of inferiority that is discernible in so many of the participants' stories.

IoT lecturers are also assigned to collectivities within their institutions, specifically academic schools and departments. The literature (e.g. Kogan 2000) asserts that the department as a community can be particularly influential in shaping academic professional identities, but the data collected for the current study suggest that the impact of the department, and of the school, in the IoT context can be relatively weak. The stories of several of the pre-1992 participants seem to indicate that schools and departments were indeed significant and formative communities for lecturers in the WRTC days. As the institution grew and these units became umbrellas for increasingly large groups of staff and students as well as for increasingly wide ranges of disciplines that, at least in some cases, did and do not necessarily sit comfortably together, the likelihood of lecturers drawing a strong sense of identity from the departments and schools in which they are based seems to have diminished. Where these units furnish

individuals with a relatively coherent 'conceptual home', as seems to be the case in School of Business, they appear to continue to exert a positive influence. Where they do not, as is the case in the Schools of Science and Humanities, participants' reactions vary from regret to active efforts to join or create new collectivities which will provide them with the sense of belonging and professional identity that their departments and schools do not provide.

In voluntarily seeking out and aligning themselves with particular collectivities, lecturers become corporate agents. They become members of a wide range of different collectivities which include the disciplines and / or professions with which they are aligned by virtue of the qualifications they have chosen to pursue, the particular institution they have chosen as a location in which to pursue their lecturing careers and the various groups and committees that they have chosen to become involved with as lecturers. The stories of the participants suggest that each of these collectivities can have a significant influence on professional identity.

The discipline is broadly held to be the community which most strongly influences academic identities (see Becher and Trowler 2001 among others), as becoming an academic usually involves socialisation and specialisation in the particular discipline in which one then goes on to pursue an academic career. In the current study, only a very small proportion of the participants took this traditional route into academic life, and while it is possible to see the influence of the discipline on the professional identities that individuals have formed, in many cases the impact of professional practice outside of the academic world appears to be more significant. The pre-1992 participants in particular seem to identify more strongly with the professions for which they trained than with the kinds of disciplinary networks with which traditional academics align themselves, and to interact more frequently with their colleagues in industry and the professional bodies rather than with those in academia. The post-1992 participants, as well as the pre-1992 Humanities lecturers, do however seem to be seeking out and nurturing links to the academic disciplinary communities through their research and as the emphasis on specialism replaces the former emphasis on generalism and flexibility at institutional level, it is likely that the influence of the discipline on professional identities in the IoT sector will grow.

The institution in which they have chosen to lecture appears to have a significant impact on the professional identities of the participants in the current study. WIT, with its particular 'institutional saga' (Henkel 2000 p.20), provides a distinctive environment in

which to operate. The ambitious and energetic character of the institution sets it apart, in the eyes of the participants, from other institutions in the sector and many explicitly acknowledge that their own progression as professionals has been greatly facilitated by the fact that they work in an institution that is willing to do what it can support the ambitious projects of its staff. Being part of an institution in which pushing the boundaries has become a way of life also has its downside for individual lecturers however. They are caught in what seems to be a running battle between the institution, which is constantly striving to move forward, and various external forces, which seem determined to keep WIT firmly in its assigned place. The need to jump repeatedly and often blindly through new hoops and the constant sense that 'an earthquake is about to happen' (Laura) leads to tension, and this tension has clearly taken its toll on many of the participants.

All of the participants have also voluntarily aligned themselves with particular groups and communities within the institution. While the kinds of groups individuals choose to work with vary from one generation to the next, with the pre-1992 participants gravitating towards institute-level bodies such as Academic Council and the post-1992 participants joining or indeed establishing research groups and research centres, these collectivities all serve a similar purpose, providing lecturers with opportunities to pursue the projects that are important to them as professionals, to bear some influence on the workings of the institution and to acquire a certain level of personal control over their destinies. By seeking out and working with like-minded colleagues, not only do individuals find communities from which they themselves can draw professional identity, but they often create new positions that upcoming social actors can choose to occupy.

The willingness of individuals to participate voluntarily in one particular collectivity is however somewhat surprising. The vast majority of the participants are members of the TUI, with a number having served as union officials at various points. Some participants present very plausible arguments for union membership, stressing the fact that the union provides them with a voice and provides a necessary counterbalance to meso and macro-level forces. What is more surprising is that others, particularly among the research-active post-1992 lecturers who acknowledge that the union does not necessarily support their particular interests and in fact sometimes takes positions that result in their projects being constrained rather than enabled, choose to remain part of this collectivity and to support it in its efforts, many of which seem to be focused on maintaining the status quo.

The participants are clearly influenced in many different ways by the communities to which they belong. The data suggest, however, that the importance of collectivities in the lives of individual lecturers is declining somewhat. The collectivist worldview that characterised the pre-1992 participants seems to have given way to a more individually focused perspective. While this reflects a general societal shift from collectivism to individualism in recent times, it could well have significant long term implications in an institution whose progress thus far appears to owe much to the willingness of all its staff to bond together in the face of adversity and work as team towards common goals.

9.3 Reflections on a research journey

This thesis is, at many levels, very different to the thesis I envisaged myself producing at the start of the Ed.D process, and probably quite different to the thesis I would produce if I were to start this process again with the benefit of the knowledge, particularly self-knowledge, that I have gained over the three-year journey that has led to this point. It is however the product of a voyage that I am very glad to have taken, as it has led me to a deeper understanding of my professional context, with its various contradictions and tensions, and of the professional identity that I have developed and am continuing to develop in that context, as well as to significant personal growth. This section focuses on some of the key challenges that I have faced in the course of my research journey.

One of the most significant challenges related to the content of the research project. As soon as the data collection began, it became apparent that certain assumptions underlying the research as initially framed were, at least to a certain extent, flawed. Having considered studies from other countries, I assumed that Irish higher education policies and changes to these would impact quickly and clearly on individual IoT lecturers, that their impact would be consistent from one individual to the next and that the individual participants would be both conscious of the impact of policies and likely to articulate how these affect their activities and ultimately their professional identities. As soon as I began interviewing my participants, these assumptions were challenged. The stories I was hearing suggested that policies were actually impacting at a far slower pace and in a far more subtle and nuanced manner than I had anticipated, and that, far from affecting everyone in the same way, their impact seemed to vary, in some cases significantly, from one individual to the next. Participants were also far less likely to comment explicitly on their professional identities, or indeed on how they felt the policy context in which they operate influences those identities, than I had anticipated. To

uncover the kinds of professional identities that were represented and the effects of policy on those identities was clearly going to require a far closer analysis of the data and more interpretive skill than I had initially imagined would be necessary.

Another issue that I have grappled with throughout this journey has been the inherent 'messiness' of the research process. As an individual who innately craves structure and control, I found it difficult to deal with the fact that I was unable to carry out the research in the orderly manner that I had envisaged when writing the initial proposal. Not only did it seem impossible to complete any given stage of the process before moving on to the next – the literature review that had seemed complete needed to be revisited as new work on academic identities emerged, and the conceptual framework that had been worked out had to be replaced when key deficiencies in it emerged during the initial analysis of the data, for example – but it also proved necessary to work on several sections of the work at once rather than focussing attention on one issue at a time - data analysis started while data collection was still under way, and the need to recruit extra participants and to return to collecting data only became apparent during the initial data analysis phase and so on. While I have come to realise that the need to constantly review and adapt one's previous work and ideas in the light of what one has most recently learned is not only a normal part, but also a valuable part, of the research process, I must admit that, at least at times, dealing with the messy reality that lies behind what is usually presented as an orderly, structured and logical process was something I found quite challenging.

A further challenge was presented by the fact that there was something of a mismatch between the methodological approach adopted for the research and my own personality. While I remain convinced that a life history approach was in fact the most appropriate approach for the research, given the nature of the questions the study aimed to address, it was an approach that I personally found difficult to implement at times. I realised at the outset that I was likely to find conducting loosely structured biographical interviews and analysing what was likely to be quite unstructured data difficult, but I was anxious to stretch myself and to try something I had not tried before, as well as committed to my research questions. My tendency to focus on detail and my strong if somewhat misguided sense that there had to be were 'right' answers to my overall research questions and that I would find them only if I made sure to ask (all) the 'right' questions of my research participants meant that I struggled at various stages in the process. When preparing for the data collection interviews, I struggled to reduce the interview schedule from a very long list of very specific questions that would ensure that I explored as

many as possible of the issues that my reading had suggested were important in the formation of academic professional identities to a short list of prompts that I would use mainly to ensure that participants, in telling their own stories in their own ways, touched on the broad themes that it seemed needed to be addressed. When initially analysing the data, I struggled to deal with the fact that each of the research participants told very different stories and raised relevant issues that I myself had not thought to explore with the other participants. I instinctively felt the need to return to all of the participants with a list of specific questions, now even longer than my original list because it incorporated the interesting issues raised in the initial interviews, but also knew that this was neither appropriate, for reasons outlined earlier, nor ultimately practical. While I saw, and to an extent still do see, myself as belonging to the 'incurably curious who are interested in, and fascinated by, the minutiae of others' lives, and particularly in how people make sense of their experiences and of the world around them' (p.20) who Goodson and Sikes (2001) claim are usually drawn to life history research, the experience of conducting a qualitative life history study has led me to believe that it may be wise for me to consider alternative methodologies and methods when engaging in future research.

The final issue that has troubled me throughout the process is the question ' what is the significance of this research?'. I had always envisaged the doctoral process work as an opportunity to carry out research that would generate 'really useful knowledge' that could lead to practical solutions for practical professional problems. Ironically, it was at least partly the fact that I was prevented by my own context from carrying out the kind of practically-oriented research that I had hoped to conduct (my plan to carry out action research into the development of learner autonomy in third-level language learners proved unviable since the dramatic fall in the number of students taking languages in the IoT sector meant that I was unlikely to have sufficient participants for this project) that led me to consider the significance of contextual factors for what individual lecturers like myself can do and can be as professionals. I believed, and still do believe, that this issue merited investigation, and am hopeful that a better understanding of how individuals are affected by national policies and structures and local efforts to interpret and implement these policies will have benefits at both the level of the individual and at the meso and macro levels. It should, it is hoped, demonstrate to policy makers how their policies actually affect real people and contribute to their understanding of how staff on the ground are likely to respond to new policies and why they are likely to react in this way, thus enabling them to factor this into the policy making process and to generate more enabling policies with which lecturers will be more willing to comply. I also know that investigating this issue has completely altered my own personal attitude

to my work context, as the experiences of my colleagues have shown me that it is possible, in this particular context, to mediate the influence of what may occasionally seem to be very constraining structures through the committed exercise of reflexive agency.

9.4 Contribution of the study

The study was motivated by a perception that existing research on academic identities did not adequately account for the professional identities formed in the particular context that is the technological sector of Irish higher education, and by a desire to understand these identities and the impact on them of the context in which they are formed. It aimed to add to the ongoing debate in the literature about the nature and evolution of academic professional identities but also to speak back to those responsible for policy in Ireland, at both national and local level, and to reveal to them how their decisions and actions impact on those individuals charged with implementing them and on what these individuals can do and can be. This section considers what the completed research has to contribute both to academic knowledge and to practice.

The work confirms the view expressed in the existing research on academic professional identities that such identities are profoundly affected by the contexts in which they are formed and contributes to the literature in this area by describing and explaining professional identities and professional identity formation in a previously unexplored context, using a theoretical lens that has not yet been widely applied in higher education research. Studies exploring issues related to the professional identities of academics in Ireland have been very limited to date and any work that has been published in relation to academics in the country (e.g. Killeavey and Coleman 2001) has focused on university lecturers. This study provides a unique insight into the experiences and identities of those who work in Institutes of Technology. This should be of interest to those involved in researching Irish higher education, but it also speaks to the broader international conversation on the effects of changing conditions on academic professionals: there are lessons to be learned about the impact of macro-level forces on individual academics and their professional identities from the research participants' experiences of operating, in some cases over a period of almost thirty years, in an environment that is, and has long been, characterised by many of the structural conditions and limitations (e.g. defined heavy workloads, lack of funding for research

etc) that are threatening to become prevalent in higher education in a wide range of countries under neo-liberal, managerialist regimes.

The research aims to contribute to the literature on academic professional identities but it also raises a number of issues that those involved in the creation and implementation of policy at the macro and meso levels would do well to consider. The study illustrates that changes in higher education policy, particularly changes which remove existing constraints on institutional remits, can indeed have a fundamental impact on the experiences and professional identities of individual academics. The expansion of the remit of Regional Technical Colleges in the 1992 legislation opened up the possibility for individuals to pursue new projects and to develop new kinds of professional identities as specialist teachers, researchers, active participants in institutional governance and so on. The research also suggests, however, that the impact of such macro-level policy shifts is not necessarily consistent or predictable. Macro-level policy is mediated by at the meso-level and its effectiveness is largely dependent on how it is interpreted and implemented by individual institutions. Waterford made a conscious decision to actively embrace and occupy the spaces created by the RTC Act and this opened up opportunities for individual lecturers that the research participants suggested are not necessarily available in other technological colleges where the reaction to policy shifts has been rather more conservative.

The impact of policy changes is influenced by the reactions of higher education institutions but the research illustrates that it is also connected to how the individual academics themselves respond to them, and that even those who seem to share a common context will not necessarily all respond in the same manner to a given set of changes. They may chose to evade the constraints and enablements that are presented by the policy context in order to avoid change to comfortable and familiar circumstances, or to engage strategically with them in ways that help them to pursue their own professional concerns, or indeed to adopt a critical and subversive position. While all of the participants in the study had the same opportunities in the post-1992 period, they reacted in different ways to these opportunities. Most pre-1992 recruits made a conscious decision not to avail themselves of the opportunity to engage in research, for example, while their post-1992 colleagues actively embraced this chance and challenge. The experiences of the latter group in relation to research serve to illustrate another important issue highlighted by the study, namely that the removal of constraints does not necessarily equate to the provision of enablements, and that the

willingness of even the more strategic individuals to support change and its implementation has limits that need to be acknowledged.

These findings have implications for those involved with making and implementing higher education policy. They suggest that policy makers need to pay heed to the heterogeneity that characterises the context for which they legislate, and to be cognisant of the variety of stances that may be adopted by the institutions and individuals and of how these stances will effect the actual implementation of their policies. They also imply that, if they wish to actively encourage institutions and individual academics to engage in what it considers to be strategically important activities, those responsible for creating and implementing policy will need to do more than simply remove prohibitions on those activities in particular contexts. They will need to look closely at all of the factors which may serve to prevent institutions and individuals from occupying the spaces that their policies are attempting to open up and at how these obstacles may be removed, as well as at putting in place structures to that will actively, and fairly, support the pursuit of policy goals.

The research also has lessons for individual academics. It raises awareness of the fact that policy and structures do impact on individuals, even if they themselves are not necessarily always conscious of this impact, and offers an explanation for the fact that one individual's experiences may differ substantially from those of a colleague working in the same context. It shows that individuals, while influenced by the structures in which they operate, are not determined by them, but can and do exert influence on these structures. It demonstrates that it is possible to take different stances in relation to the constraints and enablements generated by individual projects and shows what the consequences of adopting each of these stances are likely to be. It offers the reflective academic professional who wishes to better understand her context and her own practice, as well as how she might change or improve these, food for thought, as well as reason to believe that the exercise of agency is still possible, even in tightly regulated and seemingly inflexible contexts and in changing and challenging times.

9.5 Limitations of the study

While the study has generated interesting insights into the nature of academic professional identities in the IoT sector and the interaction of structure and agency in

this particular context, the limitations of the work and the challenges that arose during the research process must be acknowledged.

The choice of a particular research approach necessarily eliminates other approaches that might have been taken. While the decisions taken in relation to issues such as data collection, analysis and presentation can be justified (see Chapter 4), it has to be acknowledged that there may well have been other ways of addressing these questions and of understanding and telling these stories. The impact on the study of my personal struggle against the lack of precision inherent in the life history approach implemented (as outlined in section 9.3) must also be recognised. In analysing and presenting the data, I was anxious to listen to the voices of my participants and to let these voices be clearly heard, but I was also concerned with presenting a precise and meaningful analysis of their stories and the challenge of intervening without controlling was ever present. What has emerged here is a somewhat awkward compromise in which the voices of the research participants are retained but the presence of the researcher in the research is rather stronger than might traditionally be expected in life history work.

Other choices made in the research process have also led to limitations that should be acknowledged. Clearly the knowledge gained from one in-depth study of the professional identities of a relatively small group of lecturers in one institution by an insider researcher is not the same as the knowledge that might be gained from, for example, a large-scale cross-institutional survey. Archer's social realist theory is only one of a number of possible lenses that might have been used to analyse and interpret the data, and the conclusions reached on viewing the data through this lens are by no means the only conclusions that could be drawn from the stories collected. This particular piece of research is undoubtedly 'partial and perspective bound' (Usher 1996 p.19) and makes no claims to generalisablility or indeed to replicability, but within the acknowledged limits does, I contend, contribute to a deeper understanding of the interplay of structure and agency in the IoT environment and of the academic professional identities formed in this context.

9.6 Future research directions

As mentioned in Chapter 2, there has been a significant increase in the volume of research into academic professional identities in general and into the impact on these identities of the policy contexts in which academics operate in particular. There

continues however to be a paucity of published work in relation to these issues in the Irish context. The current work hopes to contribute to the filling of this gap in the literature but the knowledge gained from the indepth study of the experiences of a small group of lecturers in one institution is necessarily limited. The insights generated by this work could however be deepened by carrying out a larger scale study involving participants from several or indeed all of the institutions within the IoT sector. Such a study would allow for cross-institutional comparisons and would open up the possibility of investigating in greater depth the impact of local context and the role played by those at the meso level (i.e. institutional managers) in mediating the impact of policies and structures on the micro level of the individual lecturers. A comparative study involving lecturers from the Irish university sector as well as IoT lecturers could also prove interesting, as could work comparing the Irish experience to experiences of the implementation of comparable policies in other countries.

Other avenues for further research are also suggested by the current study. Work focussing specifically on the impact of particular policies at institutional and individual level, along the lines of the studies carried out by Lucas (2001) or Trowler (1998) in the UK, could be interesting. The data suggest that Irish government policy in relation to higher education access and equity, for example, has significantly altered the composition of the student body and thus what is required of both higher education institutions and their staff and this issue would seem worthy of further investigation. The influence of other policies, such as those designed to promote research, particularly in those disciplines seen as essential to the knowledge economy the government wishes to grow, would also seem to merit examination.

As the Irish government struggles to deal with the current economic downturn, the higher education system here is likely to face new challenges. Higher education institutions are already being called on to make a greater contribution to the economy, while simultaneously being expected to operate with greatly reduced resources and support, and talk of reductions and redundancies is striking fear into the hearts of individual academics. It is suggested that ongoing research of the kind presented here, which tracks and seeks to understand and evaluate the effects of macro-level policy at the meso and micro levels, could play a significant role in helping policy makers, institutions and individuals chart an appropriate path through the interesting but undoubtedly challenging times that lie ahead.

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APPENDIX 1

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

Research Project Title:
(Trans)forming Homo Academicus in Irish Higher Education: macro structures and micro academic lives in an Irish Institute of Technology[2]

Researcher:
Carol O'Byrne, Lecturer in German, Waterford Institute of Technology

Research supervisor:
Dr. Melanie Walker, Director of Research and Programme Director of the Ed. D (Dublin) Programme, University of Sheffield.

What is the purpose of the project?
This project is being carried out in fulfilment of the requirements for an Ed. D. at the University of Sheffield.
The project aims to explore the nature and evolution of academic professional identities in the Institute of Technology sector of Irish higher education, taking Waterford Institute of Technology as a sample case. In particular, it aims to investigate how national and local or institutional structures and policies impact on the identities we form as academic professionals within the Institute and to examine whether and how these identities have been transformed by changes which have occurred at both national and local level over the relatively short life span of the sector. These issues will be investigated by conducting life history interviews with individual academics at Waterford Institute of Technology from various discipline areas and with varying lengths of service in the Institute.

Who will be involved in the project?
A total of sixteen participants are being recruited from within Waterford Institute of Technology for this research project. This group will include members of academic staff with differing lengths of service from four of the six academic schools in the institution. It is hoped that four academics of different 'generations' (ideally one with up to five years service, one with between five and ten years service, one with between ten and twenty years service and one with between twenty and thirty years service) from each of the four longest established academic schools (Business, Engineering, Humanities and Sciences) will be involved in the study.

What will be involved if you take part in this project?
If you agree to take part in this research project, you will be asked to participate in at least one and possibly two interviews between January and September of 2006. In these interviews, you will be asked to talk about your own professional identity, how this identity has developed and changed over time and how it has been influenced by the national and local structures in which you operate as an academic.
It is expected that initial interviews will take approximately two hours, while subsequent interviews, if required, may be of shorter duration. Some post-interview contact (e.g. by e-mail) may also take place e.g. if clarification on any issue raised in the interviews is

[2] This title, which drew on Bourdieu's *Homo Academicus,* was altered when the decision was taken to analyse the data using an alternative conceptual lens.

found to be necessary. These interviews will take place at a time and location that suit you.
Interviews will be recorded and transcribed and you will be asked to review the interview transcripts to ensure that these provide a faithful and acceptable record of the discussion that took place.

Do you have to take part?
You are being invited to participate as it is felt that your contribution to this research project could be particularly valuable. However, it is entirely up to you to decide whether or not to take part. Refusal to take part will involve no penalty of any sort. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep (and be asked to sign a consent form). If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time, without penalty or loss of benefits, and without giving a reason.

Will your taking part in this project be kept confidential?
Every effort will be made to ensure that your identity and privacy are protected and that any data that you as the participant deem to be confidential will not be allowed into the public domain. You will not be referred to by name in any documentation related to the project, and personal details by which you could potentially be identified will not included in any such documentation. Pseudonyms will be used to mark all interview recordings and in all transcripts and documents produced in connection with the project, including the final dissertation document and any subsequent related publications. All data will be held securely by the researcher and will not be accessible to any other person at any time.

What will happen to the results of the research project?
The data collected from you and from other participants will be analysed and the results of this analysis will be presented in the form of a dissertation that will be submitted to the University of Sheffield. It is also anticipated that the research will be presented at relevant academic conferences and / or published in relevant academic journals. In all cases, both the true identity of the individual participants and any information which such participants have deemed confidential will be protected and will not at any stage be published.

Who has reviewed the project?
The project has been reviewed by the appropriate ethical review bodies at both the University of Sheffield and of Waterford Institute of Technology and has been deemed to be ethically acceptable by both bodies.

Contact details for further information
Should you require further information on this project, please feel free to contact me. I can be reached at the following locations / numbers:

Office location:	Portacabin 2 (behind CHART Office), Cork Road Campus, WIT
Mailbox location:	Cork Road Campus Staff Mail Room, Box No. 10, 10
Phone numbers:	Ext. 2686 (WIT internal), 051-841830 (home), 087-6750721 (mobile)
E-mail:	cobyrne@wit.ie

APPENDIX 2

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of Project:
(Trans)forming Homo Academicus in Irish Higher Education: macro structures and micro academic lives in an Institute of Technology[3]

Name of Researcher:
Carol O'Byrne

Participant Identification Number for this project:
XXX

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated October 1st 2005 for the above project and have had the opportunity to ask questions. ☐

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason. ☐

3. I understand that my responses will be anonymised before analysis. ☐

4. I agree to take part in the above project. ☐

Name of Participant	Date	Signature
Name of Person taking consent (if different from researcher)	Date	Signature
Researcher	Date	Signature

Copies:

One copy for the participant and one copy for the Principal Investigator / Supervisor.

[3] This title, which drew on Bourdieu's *Homo Academicus*, was altered when the decision was taken to analyse the data using an alternative conceptual lens.

APPENDIX 3

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FORM

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research project.

For the purposes of this project, some factual background information is required. This information may be used in the writing up of the research but you as an individual will not be identified and the information will be used in such a way as to ensure that you cannot be identified.

It would be appreciated if you would answer the following questions and bring the completed sheet with you to your interview.

1. What are your academic and professional qualifications?
2. What academic discipline area do you consider you belong to?
3. When did you join the academic staff here at WIT?
4. What school and department do you currently belong to?
5. What is your job title?
6. What is your job grade? (AL / L / L1 / L2 / SL1 / SL2 / other)
7. What courses do you currently teach on, and at what levels?
8. Do you currently supervise research? If so, how many research students do you supervise and at what levels?
9. Do you currently fulfil administrative / management responsibilities? If so, could you please explain briefly what these are?
10. When asked what you do, what word would you normally use to describe yourself? (academic / intellectual / lecturer / teacher / researcher / profession (eg accountant, engineer etc) / other)
11. In presenting the data, pseudonyms will be used for participants. If you would like to choose your own pseudonym, please suggest here what you would like to be called.

APPENDIX 4

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD

INTERVIEW THEMES

The main purpose of these interviews is to collect the professional life stories of individuals currently working as academic professionals at WIT.

The following list outlines some themes that are of particular interest in this study and the kinds of questions that may arise in relation to these themes.

Theme 1 – Your professional life before WIT

- Could you tell me about your education and professional experience before you came to WIT?
- When did you decide you wanted to pursue an academic career? How did you come to that decision? Were there other options you might have taken?
- How and why did you come to be working here at WIT?
- Were there other options you could have taken?

Theme 2 – Your professional life at WIT

- What did the job involve for you when you came here first? How has that changed for you over the time you've been here? What does the job involve for you now?
- The academic role, as defined in the literature, involves teaching, research, administration and service to the community. Are you involved in all of these areas? Are you involved in other activities as an academic professional that are not included in this list? Are all of the roles you play equally important to you?
- In relation to the different roles from the above list that you fulfil, could you please tell me:
    - What did fulfilling this role involve for you when you first came here / when you first started to be involved in this area?
    - How has that changed over time?
    - How would you explain the changes that you have mentioned?
    - How do you personally feel about these changes?
- How has the college changed since you started out? Why do you think these changes have occurred? How have the changes affected you personally? How do you feel about these changes?
- What have been the critical turning points in the development of the college in your estimation? What impact did these events have in general? What impact did they have on you as a member of academic staff?
- What impact do you think university designation would have on the college? And what impact do you think it would have on you as a member of the academic staff?

Theme 3– How the structures you work in have influenced your professional life

A lot of what we do as academics is shaped by different structures and policies that operate at different levels (at local levels from the department up to the school and the institute and at national and even international level).

- How do the structures you work in affect you?
- How are you influenced by the structures of your academic discipline?
- How are you influenced by the fact that you work in the department of _____?
- How are you influenced by the fact that you work in the school of _____?
- How are you influenced by the fact that you work in WIT rather than in another Institute of Technology?
- How are you influenced by the fact that you work in an Institute of Technology rather than a university?
- How do local policies and structures impact on you and on what you do?
- How do national policies and structures impact on you and on what you do?
- Do you feel that you as an academic have control over your own work and professional development?
- Do you feel that you as an academic have the opportunity or the power to shape the structures and policies that govern your work at local level? At national level? Do you make use of this opportunity?

Theme 4– How other people have influenced your professional life

As individuals and academics our lives and careers are often strongly influenced by other people.

- How have you as a professional been influenced by others in your academic career?
- How have you as a professional been influenced by those close to you personally (family and friends)?
- How have you as a professional been influenced by the people you work with (mentors, colleagues - here and in other institution, in your discipline and in other disciplines - managers, students etc)?
- How have you as a professional been influenced by the various bodies and organisations that play a role in professional life for an academic (your professional body or disciplinary networks, academic bodies such as NCEA / HETAC / NQAI / HEA, the Department of Education, unions etc.)?

Theme 5 – Other factors which may have influenced your professional life

- Have there been significant events or issues in your personal life that you feel have impacted on your professional career?
- Have there been significant events in the wider world that you feel have impacted on your professional career?

Theme 6 – Your personal evaluation of your experiences as an academic professional at WIT

- What did you think being an academic / working in higher education would involve when you first started out? Was it / Is it what you expected it to be?
- Would you say that working as an academic has been a positive experience?
- To what extent are you able to be what you want to be and do what you want to do as an academic professional here at WIT?
- Given your experiences as an academic, would you choose an academic career again?
- Would you choose to pursue an academic career at WIT again?

APPENDIX 5

FINAL HEADINGS AND SUB-HEADINGS USED IN CODING INTERVIEW DATA

- **Life before academia participants**
  - Their own higher education experiences
  - Their choices on finishing their own higher education
  - Arriving in academia – how participants came to be lecturers

- **Starting off life in academia**
  - What participants expected when they started lecturing
  - The backdrop against which these participants started their careers
  - How the context changed
  - Elements of the context that haven't changed
  - Initial experiences of academic life

- **Academic roles**
  - Teaching
  - Research
  - Administration
  - Course development
  - Pastoral and other roles
  - Opportunities for progression in their profession

- **Interaction with significant communities**
  - Impact of the academic discipline
  - Impact of the Institution
  - Impact of the school and department
  - Impact of colleagues
  - Impact of students

- **Interplay of structure and agency in the lives of individual academics**
  - Evaluation of existing structures and policies
  - Structures and policies that are desirable
  - How individuals react to structures and policies
  - How individuals evaluate their academic careers

APPENDIX 6

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TECHNOLOGICAL SECTOR:

A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Introduction

Irish higher education today is characterised by what Killeavy and Coleman (2001) describe as a rigid binary structure, with the university sector on one side and the technological sector on the other. While this binary system officially came into existence when the first institutions in the technological sector opened their doors to students in 1970, the first indications of the development that would change Irish higher education date back to the 1950s.

Education for economic expansion in the 1950s and 1960s: The birth of the binary system

The 1950s saw significant change in Irish political thinking, particularly in relation to economic policy. White (2001) points to a clear movement away from protectionist policies which had prevailed in the early years of the Irish Free State's existence and towards the promotion of free trade and export led growth. As a consequence of this shift, many issues that had previously been unconnected to economic development came to be seen in terms of their potential to contribute to economic success, and unsurprisingly, education was among these. While education had traditionally been highly prized for its own sake in Ireland, Coolahan (2004) notes that 'economists were now emphasising that education was an economic investment' (p.76) and that there was a sense, new to the then unindustrialised Ireland, and most probably fuelled by increased interaction between the Irish government and the fledgling OECD, that 'the prosperity of a modern society and economy depended on the availability of an educated workforce' (p.77).

The general concern with the economic contribution of education translated into a specific focus on the area of technician education in the late 1950s and early 1960s. There was a commonly held view that the educated workforce on which the country's future prosperity was to be based would have to include 'a sufficient supply of technicians and those technologically qualified' (Coolahan 2004 p.77). The technologically qualified were in relatively short supply: Coolahan (2004) asserts that 'at the beginning of the 1960s Ireland had a very underdeveloped provision of higher education technical colleges' (p.76) and that 'their output of technicians and higher technical graduates was modest' (p.76). Despite the lack of substantial evidence that there were problems in the area of technician education (White (2001) points out that neither the OECD's study of technician training in Ireland, which was published in 1964, nor its 1965 Report, *Investment in Education*, actually found evidence of deficiencies in the educational provision in this area or indeed of a skills gap in this area coming from industry), a strong belief developed that Ireland needed to improve its approach to technical education and to increase its output of skilled technicians.

Responsibility for ensuring that the perceived, or imagined, deficits in the area of advanced technical education were remedied fell, at least partly, to the Department of

Education. It was a role for which that Department was ill prepared. Established in 1924, it had traditionally focused its attention on primary and secondary education. Third level education, as higher education has traditionally been known in Ireland, was the domain of the universities, which received their funding directly from the Department of Finance and operated autonomously under the terms of the 1908 Universities Act. White (2001) highlights the fact that the Department of Education 'only inherited university funding from the Department of Finance in the late 1950s and it had no tradition of policy making for higher education and hence no policy' (p.17).

Such technical education as actually existed in Ireland at this point was provided in vocational schools and technical colleges under the terms of the 1930 Vocational Education Act and was generally considered to be second level rather than third level education. As such, it did fall within the Department of Education's remit, but in this, as in other areas of education, the Department pursued a largely non-interventionist approach. White (2001) comments that 'the self-concept of the Minister for Education (and by inference of many of his officials) tended to be modest' (p.28) and cites as evidence of this a parliamentary speech made in 1956 by the then minister Richard Mulcahy in which he described the role of Minister for Education as 'that of a kind of dungaree man, the plumber who will make satisfactory connections and streamline the forces and potentialities of the educational workers and educational management of this country' (p.28).

Neither this 'hands-off' approach nor the limited provision of high level technical education by the Department of Education through the Vocational Education Committees was likely to suffice in the face of strong pressure to ensure the education system's 'fitness for purpose in relation to new plans for industrial development' (Coolahan 2004 p.77) and a sea change in the Department seemed inevitable. White (2001) notes that there was a shift in the thinking of the Department of Education in this period. An increased concern with the economic dimensions of education was accompanied by the more general shift towards a more interventionist approach that affected all government departments at this time, and successive Ministers for Education started to seek out opportunities for active change. It was in this context that, as White (2001) puts it, 'the Irish state entered into a social engineering project which built up technological and vocational education outside the universities' (p.vii).

The first concrete step in the process that culminated in the creation of the technological sector came in May 1963. In a statement on post primary education made at a press conference, the Minister for Education Patrick Hillery announced plans for the introduction of a new technical leaving certificate, with courses leading to the award being delivered in new technological colleges with regional status. The establishment of these new Regional Technical Colleges (RTCs) seemed to be part of a broader effort to raise the status of technical education in the public eye: in 1963 such education was still provided by vocational schools and White (2001) points out that 'the social perception and esteem of vocational schools in general was not very high' (p.33) and that 'the vocational schools were widely viewed as being there for pupils unable to get into secondary schools and those others who were filling in time until the statutory obligation of school attendance no longer applied' (O'Connor 1986 cited in White 2001 p.33).

In 1964, Minister Hillery outlined in more detail the functions of the proposed Regional Technical Colleges. As well as preparing students for the new technical leaving certificate, it was envisaged that they would provide training for apprentices and some higher level technician training. By providing training for apprentices and technicians, the proposed colleges would constitute what was described by the Minister as 'a missing rung in the educational ladder' (White 2001 p.42) between the second level sector and the university sector, which did not consider technical and vocational education to be

part of its remit. Planning for the new colleges continued under the new Minister for Education, Donogh O'Malley, who took office in 1966. O'Malley moved swiftly to set up the Steering Committee on Technical Education. The Steering Committee was charged with advising the Minister on issues related to technical education. Its terms of reference also included advising the consortium which had already been set up to build the proposed eight new colleges, and providing a brief for the colleges with projected courses, outline curricula and so on which fitted in as far as possible with national and international thinking on the future of technical education. The Steering Committee's report, which was presented to the Minister in 1967, combined with that of the Commission on Higher Education, which reported in the same year, served to provide the government with the arguments and the impetus needed to make the Regional Technical Colleges a reality.

The Commission on Higher Education had been established in 1960 to provide the Department of Education with advice on how best to discharge its recently acquired responsibilities in the area of higher education. Its brief was to 'inquire into and make recommendations in relation to university, professional, technological and higher education generally' (White 2001 p.42). In relation to technological education, its report was, broadly speaking, a plea for preservation of the status quo in the university sector and for the protection of the universities from being 'overwhelmed by the claims made upon them to provide the country with its requirements of skilled manpower' (White 2001 p.4). White (2001), in his commentary on the Commission's document asserts that 'there was little in the Report to suggest that the universities had any role as catalysts for the growing economy or that they could be relied upon to provide responses to the economic and social demands which the Department of Education and successive ministers felt for some years that they should be addressing. On the contrary, the report provided strong arguments for setting up an alternative provision that would cater for some of these perceived demands' (p.50).

The case for such 'alternative provision' was strongly supported by the report of the Steering Committee on Technical Education. The Committee concluded that 'Irish people generally had not had the opportunity to become technically skilled and that that this had left a serious gap in the stock of knowledge and skills necessary for the development of productive enterprise' (White 2001 p.53). It expressed the view that the proposed Regional Technical Colleges could be used to artificially stimulate people's interest in acquiring the required knowledge and skills, since such interest did not appear to be occurring naturally. In defining the role of the colleges as 'educating for trade and industry over a broad spectrum of occupations ranging from craft to professional level, mainly in engineering and science but also in commercial, linguistic and other specialities' (Coolahan 2004 p.77), the Committee effectively decoupled them from the idea of a technical leaving certificate (which was abandoned in the mid 1960s as a result of strong opposition from the second level sector) and provided the Minister with a strong justification for continuing with the plan to establish them even though the purpose for which they had initially been proposed was no longer valid.

As well as supporting the case for the proposed Regional Technical Colleges, the Steering Committee made strong recommendations in relation to the kinds of students they should recruit, the nature of the courses and awards they should provide and the management and administrative structures that should be put in place for these new institutions. Contrary to the views expressed by the Commission on Higher Education in its suggestions in relation to non-university third level provision, the Steering Committee expressed the view that entry standards in the Regional Technical Colleges should not automatically be lower than those applied by universities, believing that 'an undesirable dichotomy in higher education would be created by establishing admission norms in those institutions inferior to those of the universities' (White 2001 p.55). In

relation to course provision, the report recommended that the colleges should provide 'senior cycle post-primary courses leading to the Leaving Certificate; junior and senior trade certificate courses; courses for technician qualifications at various levels; course leading to higher education qualifications or in some cases to professional level; and adult education courses' (Coolahan 2004 p.78). In relation to awards, both the Commission on Higher Education and the Steering Committee recommended that a national awards council be established to oversee programme development and delivery and to make awards to graduates. The Steering Committee did not however agree with the Commission's position that any new non-university higher education institutions should be only be allowed to make awards to at pass degree standard and below: it did not wish to see the potential of the Regional Technical Colleges limited and concluded 'that no arbitrary limits should be set to their achievements' (White 2001 p.55) since the imposition of any such limits would lead to 'artificial disadvantages in terms of the calibre of staff and students and a disincentive both to the development of new courses and facilities and the improvement of existing ones' (White 2001 p.55). In relation to the management structures, the Committee was of the opinion that the colleges 'would benefit from a fresh image for technical education' (Coolahan 2004 p.78) and proposed that they should not come under the administrative structures laid out in the 1930 Vocational Education Act, but should be administered by regional education councils instead of the local Vocational Education Committees (VECs).

Unsurprisingly, given the increasingly interventionist approach to government being pursued at national level, the growing interest in the potential economic benefits of investment in education, particularly technician education, and the sense that technician education was 'the area of education most amenable to direct influence and direction from the Minister for Education' (White 2001 p.33), the Report of the Steering Committee on Technical Education was warmly welcomed by the government and the Department of Education and action was quickly taken to implement its recommendations. While it was to prove impossible to translate the entire vision into reality, the basic commitment to the establishment of the Regional Technical Colleges was honoured and the first five colleges finally opened their doors to students in the autumn of 1970.

Rolling out the Regional Technical Colleges in the 1970s: the technological sector takes shape

The original vision for the Regional Technical Colleges had been that these new institutions would provide a mix of second level and sub degree third level vocational and technical education in a regional context under the auspices of the regional education councils. The second level provision was to include courses leading to a new technical leaving certificate as well as senior cycle courses leading to the existing 'standard' leaving certificate exams in certain subject areas. It was also envisaged that apprentice education in the regions would be based in the colleges. Third level provision was to play a significant but relatively small part in the overall provision of the colleges. White (2001) reports the Steering Committee projected that in 1972 only 20 percent of the output from the Regional Technical Colleges would be at technician, higher technician and professional level, while 32 percent would be at Senior Cycle (i.e. higher second) level and the remaining 48 percent would be apprentices, and comments that 'on the face of it there was no evidence that the Committee was planning a major initiative in third-level education' (p.59) and that 'the general perception of the colleges [...] was that they were to be second-level institutions' (p.81).

The new colleges, when they eventually opened, differed in many ways, some of them significant, from this original vision. The balance in terms of levels of course provision

had shifted somewhat and continued to shift in the early years of the colleges' operations. Resistance from within the second level sector had led to the idea of a technical leaving certificate being abandoned as early as 1966. Pressure from both the private secondary schools and the second level vocational schools was less effective in relation to the standard leaving certificate courses: the Minister was determined that these should be offered 'both as an incentive and as part of the effort to raise the status of technical schools, and also to help the Regional Technical Colleges build up their numbers in the early years' (White 2001 p.82) but he did eventually concede that senior cycle provision should cease within five years of the colleges opening. Apprentice education remained part of the brief but developments outside of the education sector, chiefly the setting up of the Industrial Training Authority (an Comhairle Oiliúna or AnCO) in 1967, served to 'transform and reduce the role of the education system in the training and education of apprentices' (White 2001 p.59), so that the potential for the Regional Technical Colleges to shape this area was drastically diminished before they even opened. The focus therefore was largely on the provision of third level education: the third level courses offered in 1970 included full-time certificate courses in engineering, science and business as well as courses leading to examinations and membership of certain professional bodies.

While the shift in terms of course provision helped to redefine the Regional Technical Colleges as third level institutions, the management structures under which they initially operated effectively served to ensure that they did not enjoy the level of autonomy normally held by higher education providers. The Steering Committee on Technical Education had recommended against placing the colleges under the control of the thirty eight Vocational Education Committees which were responsible for technical and continuing education under the terms of the 1930 Act, advocating instead the establishment of regional education authorities to administer the new institutions. The Department of Education seemed set to act on these proposals: Minister Donogh O'Malley proposed that the Regional Technical Colleges be run by 'a regional board on which local industrial interests, the Vocational Education Committees and the Minister for Education would have representation' (White 201 p.81) while his successor Brian Lenihan went a step further and announced that each college would be run by a small management committee which would be answerable to a college council composed of 'representatives of the local authorities, industry, the trade unions, teachers' associations, the Roman Catholic bishop of the diocese and Department of Education' (White 2001 p.81).

The desire for a fresh approach was not shared by those outside the Department of Education, however, and the Irish Vocational Education Association lobbied strongly against what it saw as an effort to reduce the role of the Vocational Education Committees, with one VEC going so far as to pass a motion 'declaring that it found the constitution of the college council and the board of management repugnant to the 1930 Act' (White 2001 p.83). The pressure of this lobby was to prove effective, as was clear from the announcement by the Minister for Education in 1969 that each of the Regional Technical Colleges would be managed by a board of management that would be appointed as a subcommittee of the local Vocational Education Committee under Section 21.2 of the Vocational Education Act.

This change of mind in relation to management structures was to have serious implications for the Regional Technical Colleges and indeed for the individual staff members within them from when they opened in 1970 until legislation for the technological sector finally took them out from under the control of the Vocational Education Committees in the 1990s. As VEC subcommittees, the boards of management had their constitution determined by the 1930 Act, which specified that subcommittees should 'consist of not more than twelve members, and may, at the

discretion of such [Vocational Education] Committee, consist exclusively of persons who are members of such committee or partly of persons who are and partly of persons who are not members of such committee' (Government of Ireland 1930 Section 21.4). While each Regional Technical College was to have a Principal (a term drawn directly from second level discourse), its Chief Officer was effectively the Chief Executive Officer of the parent VEC, a situation which, as Coolahan (2004) comments, 'produced ambiguity regarding the role of the principal of the RTC vis-à-vis the CEO' (p.78). The 1930 Act also specified that 'the acts of every sub-committee of a vocational education committee shall be subject to confirmation by such committee save where such committee with the sanction of the Minister dispenses with the necessity for such confirmation' (Government of Ireland 1930 Section 21.5): since the VECs had no intention of dispensing with this necessity, this effectively meant that all decisions and actions taken by the boards of management of the colleges had to be sanctioned by the Vocational Education Committee. This included decisions on what courses the colleges would run, on student recruitment and support and on staff recruitment. The funding of the institutions was not completely in the hands of the Vocational Education Committees. The Regional Technical Colleges were to be funded directly by the Department of Education by means of an earmarked grant. This grant was, however, to be channelled through the Vocational Education Committees, meaning that the colleges were obliged to make annual 'programmes and budgets' submissions to the VECs and could only proceed with their plans in terms of course provision and general spending with VEC approval.

The structures within which the Regional Technical Colleges operated when they opened in 1970 scarcely reflected the 'fresh image for technical education' which had been so strongly desired by the advocates of the alternative system of technological higher education. Coolahan (2004) comments that 'the consequences of these structural arrangements, which existed until the Regional Technical Colleges Act (1992) was put in place, were many and proved constricting to the colleges as they shaped their future predominantly as third level institutions' (p.78), not least because there was clearly 'a tendency to treat the RTCs somewhat in the way second level schools in the VEC system were managed' (p.79). Nor was the development of the third level mission helped by the fact that academic staff were to be represented by the Teachers' Union of Ireland (TUI). The TUI was essentially a second level union, and it 'adopted a second level attitude to teaching and management matters, including an agreement with the Department of Education that teaching staff would be free of duties from June 20th to September 1st each year' (Coolahan 2004 p.79).

Not only were the Regional Technical Colleges subject to outside control in terms of their management processes, they were also subject to external authorities in terms of the content of the courses they delivered and the qualifications they awarded. At no point had it been envisaged that these institutions would operate independently in terms of course development and quality assurance. The Commission on Higher Education, the Steering Committee on Technical Education and the first report of Higher Education Authority (HEA), which was established on an ad hoc basis in 1968 and then on a statutory basis by the Higher Education Authority Act of 1971 to advise the Minister for Education on third level education, all suggested that some form of national awarding body be set up to oversee the advanced technician courses to be provided in the Regional Technical Colleges. The actual form of this body had not been decided by the time the colleges opened in 1970. The first higher level students therefore took either courses leading to the examinations of professional bodies or courses designed specially for them at national level under the supervision of the Department of Education (rather than by the academic staff who would deliver them, since such staff were not appointed to the colleges until shortly before they opened and most of those recruited were from industrial and technical rather than teaching backgrounds). The first graduates in 1972

received certificates from the very newly established National Council for Educational Awards (NCEA), which was set up initially on an ad hoc basis in that year.

The relationship between the Regional Technical Colleges and the NCEA developed throughout the 1970s and is generally evaluated as having been a broadly positive one. The awards body, even in the ad hoc incarnations before it was statutorily established in 1979, had its own clear sense of its remit and of the need to allow the institutions under its authority room for agency. White (2001) points out that 'although the terms of reference of the Council [NCEA] did allow it to discharge the function of an examining body, it did not see its role as devising courses, issuing syllabuses or setting examinations. From the outset it effectively became a matter of principle that the initiative on all of these matters was to rest with the individual colleges, the Council's role being to validate their proposals and monitor their implementation' (p.89). In order to fulfil this role, the NCEA established four boards of studies (one for Physical and Biological Sciences and Mathematics, a second for Architecture, Construction and Engineering, a third for Business Studies and Commerce and a final board for General studies and Education) which, through panels made up of board members and others with specialist expertise in the key discipline areas and through external examiners, carried out 'much of the detailed work of evaluation and assessment of course arrangements and standards of student attainment' (White 2001 p.88).

The design of the system of boards, panels and external examiners was in keeping with the generally held belief that the Regional Technical Colleges needed to be responsive to the needs of the economy and the 'real' world outside the education sector: White (2001) asserts that they 'were unique in many ways in Irish education in the extent to which they involved individuals from outside the sphere of education in the detailed assessment and evaluation of courses' (p.89). The fact that this belief in the need for economic relevance also informed recruitment strategies in the colleges themselves meant that the NCEA did find itself, at least in the early days, having to become more actively involved in the actual course development processes in the individual institutions than it may have originally expected: 'course approval was often a lengthy process because many of the staff had been recruited from business or industry rather than teaching, and as a result the role not only of the assessors but also of the external examiners became one of advisors and consultants on curriculum development' (p.89). The course framework developed by the NCEA in collaboration with the Regional Technical Colleges included a National Certificate (awarded to students after two years of full-time study) and a National Diploma (which could be 'add-on' and awarded to Certificate holders on completion of a third year of full-time study, or 'ab initio' and awarded on the completion of a three year programme). In principle, completion of four years of full-time study would lead to a degree award, though in practice there were no degrees awarded in the RTCs in the 1970s.

The technological sector seemed to be developing well in the early years of the decade but Coolahan (2004) tells us that 'the progress of the NCEA and the RTCs encountered a very buffeting policy period, following the surprise decision of the coalition government in December 1974 to abandon the binary policy for higher education in favour of a comprehensive model' (p.80). While the Irish binary system was still very much in its infancy, the logic behind it was clear to those who had been instrumental in establishing it, and mirrored that expressed out by the British Secretary of State for Education and Science, Anthony Crossland, when he first set out the binary concept in 1965. Crossland provided a number of reasons for his preference for a binary over a unitary system of higher education: he felt that 'the ever increasing demand for vocational, professional and industrialised courses could not be fully met by the universities [and] required a separate sector with a different tradition and outlook' (White 2001 p.117); he also considered it to be 'desirable that a substantial part of higher education be under social

control and directly responsive to social needs' (White 2001 p.117), and stressed that the public sector colleges that were to counterbalance the universities 'were expected to have closer and more direct links with industry, business and the professions and to be interested in applying knowledge to the solution of problems' (White 2001 p.117).

It was clear that the new coalition government that took power in 1974 was not convinced of the appropriateness of the binary model. Arguments for the new comprehensive system came from many quarters: White (2001) reports that the Minister for Industry and Commerce Justin Keating 'argued that a unitary or comprehensive system was necessary to abolish the distinctions between these dirty fingernail, not quite respectable technological subjects and other subjects and to recognise that technology had come of age and was worth its place at the pinnacle of academic life' (p.118) while his party colleague Garrett Fitzgerald stressed that 'the comprehensive system was designed to solve the problem arising from the lack of mobility between the universities and the other colleges and to put all colleges on a par' (White 2001 p.118). Others in government presented similar arguments, and although no official policy document on the comprehensive system was ever published, White (2001) asserts that 'it appeared to be implied that the only degree worth having was from a university and that the technical colleges needed the respectability of universities' (p.119).

The government's decision to develop a comprehensive higher education system in place of the budding binary system involved drastic changes for the NCEA and, by association, for the Regional Technical Colleges. The NCEA was to lose its degree awarding powers but, in being restructured to form the Council for Technological Education (CTE), it was to retain its validation powers at sub degree level and it was to gain a planning and coordination role in the non-university sector. The NCEA's gain in terms of planning and coordination functions was to be the RTCs' loss. Not only was the Council for Technological Education to take over control of the limited range of areas in which the colleges had autonomy from the VECs, but it was also being given a say in their financial issues: under the proposed comprehensive model, the VECs were to consult with the CTE on how to channel funding to the RTCs. Coolahan (2004) reports that 'the change of direction caused considerable upset to the non-university sector [and] the principals and staff of the RTCs expressed their concern at what they regarded as the downgrading of this developing sector' (p.80). The NCEA on the other hand was, as White (2001) describes it 'the one major body which kept its own counsel in the immediate aftermath of the announcement' (p.116).

The Minister for Education, Richard Burke, pressed ahead with his plans and in 1976 asked the Higher Education Authority to establish a working party to draft the necessary legislation to make the comprehensive system a reality. This group consisted of representatives of the Department of Education, the HEA and the universities. White (2001) observes that this was a highly unusual approach to the drafting of legislation and considers that the Minster's decision to take this approach 'reflected not so much the undoubted absence of a tradition of legislative activity within his own Department as the lack of any tradition of policy making with relation to universities and the absence of any precedents within the Department [as] the major legislation on universities, the Irish Universities Act of 1908 and its associated charters, had pre-dated the founding of the state' (p.127). The working party acted rapidly to produce the heads of an education bill, but it was overtaken by political developments: an election in 1977 resulted in a change of government and Minister Burke's bill was never considered by the Oireachtas. The newly elected Fianna Fáil government favoured a binary system of higher education over the proposed comprehensive system and moved to remedy the damage which appeared to have been done to the technological sector over the lifetime of the preceding administration: it immediately reinstated the NCEA's degree awarding powers and

restored the role of the individual colleges in the course planning and coordination process.

Legislation in relation to higher education was indeed passed at the end of the 1970s but it was not the legislation that might have been expected earlier in the decade. In 1979, the National Council for Educational Awards Act was passed into law, thus solidifying the position of the NCEA. The Act defined the functions of the NCEA: it stipulated that the body's role was 'generally to encourage, facilitate, promote, coordinate and develop technical, industrial, scientific, technological and commercial education and education in art or design, provided outside the universities, whether professional, vocational or technical and to encourage and promote liberal education' (Government of Ireland 1979 Section 3.1), and more specifically 'to confer, grant or give degrees, diplomas, certificates or other educational awards' to individuals who satisfactorily completed 'courses of study or instruction conducted by or provided under the supervision of an institution to which this Act applies and which are courses which for the time being stand approved of by the Council' (Government of Ireland 1979 Section 3.2). The institutions to which the Act, and therefore the powers of the statutory NCEA, were to apply were clearly specified and included 'any Regional Technical College' (Government of Ireland 1979 section 1.1) as well as the National College of Art and Design, Thomond College of Physical Education in Limerick and the two National Institutes for Higher Education (NIHE).

The Council itself was to be made up of 25 five members, all appointed by the Minister for Education, to whom both the NCEA and the designated institutions were still answerable on a great many issues. While the nine direct Ministerial nominations could in theory have included representatives of the Regional Colleges, the Act only guaranteed the appointment of three members 'from amongst those who are members of the Governing Body or managing body or the staff of or are students of any institution to which this Act applies' (Government of Ireland 1979 Section 5.1) and these could technically have been appointed from the other designated institutions. In discharging its responsibilities, the statutory NCEA was to be allowed to continue with the practice of appointing boards of studies that had developed during its ad hoc incarnations. Among the conditions laid down for these boards was that they should, in making their recommendations on courses and awards, 'have regard to any corresponding standard required by a university in the State and shall not recommend a standard which is lower than such a standard (if any)' (Government of Ireland 1979 Section 9.4), a condition which appeared to have been inserted to ensure suitable status for qualifications in the 'dirty fingernail not quite respectable technological subjects' (White 2001 p.118) and for the non-university institutions which provided them.

By the end of the 1970s, the Irish binary system of higher education had stabilised. The Regional Technical Colleges had successfully established themselves on the higher education landscape. The five original colleges had enrolled a total of 472 students in 1970, 194 of these on third level courses. By 1979 there were 4945 students registered on third level programmes in eight Regional Technical Colleges, who would graduate with National Certificates or National Diplomas awarded by the now statutory National Council for Educational Awards. The growth in numbers was due in part to the availability of student funding from the European Social Fund for technician level courses from 1975 on: in directing European money earmarked for training into the non-university sector, the government made what White (2001) describes as 'an undeclared choice ...to alter the pattern of supply in higher education' (p.165), a choice that enhanced the success of the 'social engineering project' (White 2001 p. vii) that was the technological sector.

White (2001) points out that 'one of the most striking aspects of the change in direction in Irish higher education in the period from 1960 to 1980 was that the push towards meeting the manpower needs and the requirements of a rapidly industrialising society [through education] came almost entirely from within the education sector' (p.184). Beyond the boundaries of the education sector, however, other initiatives related to manpower were being undertaken, some of which were not necessarily complementary to the efforts of the educational policy makers.

Among these initiatives was the establishment by government of a Department of Labour, which was, among its other duties, to take responsibility for manpower forecasting. This was followed by the creation, in 1967, of the Industrial Training Authority (AnCO). AnCO's remit was very similar in ways to that envisaged for the Regional Technical Colleges, but no connections were established between the new institutions and the industrial training body, which was to become a powerful force in the 1970s. White (2001) comments that 'with the establishment of AnCO and its subsequent dramatic growth from 1967 onwards, the provision of trained manpower for industry tended to be viewed as its bailiwick' (p185). The reason for its success was simple: economic policy remained focused on attracting foreign capital into the country and 'it was much easier for incoming foreign industry to deal with a single body like AnCO on matters of training and labour force skills than to liaise with one of the thirty eight VECs which had no similar clear cut brief' (White 2001 p.185).

AnCO worked closely with the Industrial Development Authority (IDA), which, though in existence since 1949, had been given a new lease of life by legislation enacted in 1969. In the 1970s, the IDA 'virtually took over responsibility not just for the implementation but almost for the making of industrial policy' (White 2001 p.185). Human capital development did not feature strongly in its approach to industrial policy. It did have some responsibility for ensuring that the training needs of technicians and other skilled workers were met, but it did not consult with the educational authorities on these issues, choosing instead to work with industrial representative bodies and trade unions in discharging this responsibility. White (2001) points out that 'during the period of the Authority's hegemony in industrial policy, there was little contact between it and the education sector ...[and] the industrial planners were not cognisant of what was happening in the education system' (p.185)

Thus the early 1970s were characterised by a rather ludicrous disconnect between the educational and industrial sectors, which saw the establishment of educational institutions to meet needs which industry apparently had but was unaware of, and the development of a traditional of industrial planning under the auspices of the Department of Labour which took no cognisance of what was happening in education. It was only in the later years of the decade that this situation was remedied. The emergence of technological skills shortages in the late 1970s threatened to adversely affect the country's potential to attract foreign investment and the IDA established a Manpower Consultative Committee was established to address this issue. With the establishment of this particular committee, which included members of the IDA and of the various higher education institutions, what White (2001) describes as 'the pattern of minimal interaction between the decision makers in education and those charged with industrial development' (p.184) was finally altered. While increased interaction was to be welcomed, it was to have disadvantages as well as benefits for the non-university institutions: in setting up the committee, the IDA turned to not only to the technological sector but also to the university sector, thus bringing the universities, which had not been considered capable of providing technological education 'in from the cold' as White (2001) describes it, and effectively undermining the position of the Regional Technical Colleges in this area.

While it may have appeared in 1979 that the 'the higher education system, after a decade of development and at times turmoil was about to enter a period of further and quiet consolidation' (White 2001 p.211), there were subtle indications that interesting times lay ahead in the 1980s and beyond.

Mixed messages in the 1980s: action on institutional autonomy but variations in vision for higher education

The new technological sector had developed in an Ireland that was in reasonable economic health. There had been a conscious decision on the part of those in power to 'switch from protectionism to outward orientation' (O'Donnell 1998 p.4) in the mid 1950s, a switch which, O'Donnell (1998) asserts, 'coincided with, and was encouraged by, the emergence of economic growth, which continued strongly until 1973' (p.4). From the 1973 on, things began to change and despite the beneficial effects of membership of the European Economic Community, which Ireland joined in 1973 and which provided it with an enlarged market as well as financial support for key areas such as agriculture, the economic climate deteriorated. By the start of the 1980s, the country was in dire straits: internally, the coffers were empty and even with increasing tax rates, high borrowings were necessary to fund operating expenditure, while externally, global economic problems boded ill for a nation which had come to depend to a great extent on foreign investment. The 1980s were a bleak period in Irish economic history, characterized by high unemployment and mass emigration.

Against this backdrop, faith in the importance of education and in its potential to turn the domestic economic situation around, or at least to ensure that those forced to emigrate in the face of high levels of unemployment at home were suitably qualified to make a better life elsewhere, remained strong. The education sector in general and the higher education sector in particular were the subject of political interest and there was a significant degree of legislative and policy activity in this period. While only some of this interest and activity related directly to the Regional Technical Colleges, much of it was to impact on the colleges and the seeds of dramatic changes that were to take place in the 1990s were sown in this period.

1980 saw the publication of the government's White Paper on Educational Development. White (2001) comments that this White Paper was significant in that 'for the first time in the fifty six years since the establishment of the Department of Education, a comprehensive statement from the Minister for Education on the entire spectrum of education in the state had been issued' (p.170). The chapter on higher education reasserted the view that higher education had a role to play in ensuring the availability of a pool of highly qualified manpower to meet the needs of the economy and made a commitment to supporting the higher education sector in this role. It acknowledged the likelihood that, given the economic position in which the country found itself, funding would be somewhat constrained and would have to be focused on areas that were considered to be a priority for national development. One such priority area was technology. The White Paper referred to significant developments in the area of technology in the preceding fifteen years and stressed that there was a need for continued emphasis on and expansion in technology related discipline areas such as engineering. As White (2001) puts it 'higher education was, at the end of 1980, primarily about technology and it was the intention that the power of the purse would be used to ensure that this would continue to be the case' (p.173)

Given the emphasis on technology, it was to be expected that the government's plans for the development of higher education would involve the Regional Technical Colleges. The White Paper proposed the setting up of a committee 'to review the operations of the

RTCs in the light of their original purposes' (White 2001 p.171). It also proposed the establishment of four new Regional Technical Colleges in the Greater Dublin area. While the tone of the document seemed to suggest strong support for the RTC sector, the projections for future growth in higher education told a slightly different story. White (2001) reports that the projections for the year 1990/91 'implied that the Regional Technical Colleges, apart from the four proposed in Dublin, had reached steady state' (p.172). The White Paper envisaged only 1000 extra places being created in the existing RTCs by 1990, 'yet no mention was made of this brake on their development [and] indeed the text seemed to imply the opposite' (White 2001 p. 172). While the White Paper did provide 'an insight into the thought processes of the official mind on the arrangements nationally for third level education' (White 2001 p. 171), these thought processes appeared, at least in some regards, not particularly rational.

1980 also saw the enactment of legislation to establish the two National Institutes of Higher Education at Limerick and Dublin as well as Thomond College of Physical Education. The two NIHEs were seen as the flagships of the technological sector. While the logic behind their establishment was ostensibly the same as that which led to the establishment of the Regional Technical Colleges, the NIHEs owed their existence and their special status within the technological sector (they were the only institutions in the sector initially allowed to run degree level courses leading to NCEA awards for example) to a large extent to local politics. NIHE Limerick was established as a compromise solution to appease the long-standing calls of those in the Mid West region for a university, while NIHE Dublin was intended to pull together the provision of higher technological education in the capital. Despite resistance from the City of Dublin VEC, which countered the attempt to take higher vocational education out from under its control and place it in the new institution by combining its third level colleges to form the Dublin Institute of Technology in 1978, NIHE Dublin and its 'older sister' institution in Limerick were placed on statutory footing in 1980.

This legislation in itself brought about little substantive change: the NIHEs still had to have their programmes validated and awards conferred by the NCEA and White (2001) comments that 'the striking element in all three statutes was the degree of control which the ministers and the Department of Education wished to retain for themselves' (p.160). The Acts did however place the institutions on a solid footing from which to mount what were ultimately to be successful campaigns for university status. A decade which opened with legislation related to the National Institutes of Higher Education was to close with legislation related to the same institutions: in 1989 both NIHE Limerick and NIHE Dublin were statutorily designated as universities and officially moved across the binary divide. While not directly affected by either the 1980 or the 1989 legislation, the Regional Technical Colleges were inspired by the success of the NIHEs, both in gaining initial statutory recognition and in becoming full blown autonomous higher education institutions. The NIHE experience gave significant impetus to the RTCs' own quest for increased autonomy.

That quest received support from a number of quarters in the course of the decade. The 1985 Green Paper *Partners in Education* acknowledged that the existing structure 'makes it difficult for the education system, centrally administered, to respond in a flexible way to specific local or regional needs and conditions' (Department of Education 1985 p.9). For the Regional Technical Colleges, which the Green Paper described not only as 'essentially third level institutions' (Department of Education 1985 p.20) but also as 'essentially regional institutions' (Department of Education 1985 p.20), this situation was deemed to be particularly problematic, and a desire 'to strengthen their role and standing within the third level sector while retaining their links with the local councils' (Department of Education 1985 p.5) was clearly articulated. The policy makers claimed that 'the actual work of the colleges had grown away considerably from

the original concept of the RTCs and it can be argued that it is no longer valid that their administration should be undertaken by the VECs but rather than they should be more closely related to the rest of the third level area' (Department of Education 1985 p.20). In particular, the limitations imposed on the boards of management of the RTCs as subcommittees of the VECs were acknowledged and deemed to be inappropriate.

While it did not go as far as advocating independence for the institutions, the Green Paper did make a number of clear recommendations to enhance the level of autonomy enjoyed by the Regional Technical Colleges. It suggested 'that the Boards of Management might be larger and more representative than they are at present. More importantly, the Boards ought to be in a position to carry out important functions without the necessity to refer back to a parent body such as a VEC. Such functions would include the recruitment of staff, subject to general guidelines laid down by the Vocational Education Committee / Local Education Committee (LEC), and the keeping of their own accounts. In short, provision ought to be made to allow the RTCs to operate with considerably more autonomy than heretofore while retaining their links with the VEC / LEC system' (Department of Education 1985 p.22). The recommendations were not initially implemented but their mark was to be seen on the legislation for the technological sector, which was finally enacted in 1992.

The suggestion that the RTCs be given more autonomy was echoed by the International Study Group Report *Technological Education.* The Group, under the Chairmanship of Tim Hardiman, was established in 1986 and charged with 'examining the arrangements for the provision of third level technological education outside the universities and examining the case for the establishment of a technological university with NIHE Limerick and NIHE Dublin as constituent colleges' (White 2001 p.213). While its most significant achievement lay in making a case for the designation of the two NIHEs as universities which was accepted and acted on by government, it also strongly advocated 'that statutory provision be made to allow the RTCs to operate with more autonomy' (White 2001 p.217).

Coupled with this support of increased levels of autonomy were calls for the role of the Regional Technical Colleges to be widened. The National Board for Science and Technology indicated in its 1980 budget that the absence of research and consultancy functions in the technological sector constituted a significant deficiency in the national policy on science and technology in relation to higher education and urged government to remedy this deficiency. A working party set up by the Association of Vocational Education Colleges in 1982 to look into this area produced a report that 'recommended that research and consultancy should form an integral element of third level teaching activity in vocational colleges [and] that each college should establish a management framework to foster them' (White 2001 p.217). Even the Minister for Education seemed to be in favour of this extension of the RTCs' functions: White (2001) reports that Minister Hussey's estimates speech in 1984 contained a proposal to introduce 'a more flexible system which would allow the RTCs to make a greater research and development contribution in their regions' (p.217)

Despite the dismal economic outlook, the Regional Technical Colleges blossomed in the 1980s. They continued to experience growth in student numbers: by 1985 the number of students taking third level programmes in the RTCs (9885) was almost double the number of registered third level students in the colleges in 1980 and that figure grew to 15353 in the final academic year of the decade. Despite initial resistance, they had developed and started to deliver degree programmes and the continued availability of finance from the European Social Fund meant that their sub degree programmes remained attractive to students. The signs seemed to suggest that significant positive developments were on the cards for the RTCs.

The path to successful further development was not without its obstacles however. While some were in favour of expanding the role of the Regional Technical Colleges to include research and consultancy and increasing their autonomy, others were not so disposed. The Vocational Education Committees in particular were anxious to hold on to their position and power within the technological sector. Their reaction to the report of the Association of Vocational Education Colleges' working group in 1982 was far from positive: White (2001) reports that concepts such as research and consultancy were 'novel in the context of the VECs and did not always fit comfortably with the Weltanschauung of some VEC committee members' (p.217). He also points to the insistence of the VECs that the assistant registrars from the NCEA should meet with the college principals to discuss issues related to assessment and course validation rather than with the heads of school as had traditionally been the practice (thus effectively diminishing the status of the both the principals and heads of school and ensuring that the higher ranking officials in the NCEA would meet not with the college principals but rather with the CEOs of the VECs) as an example of the determination of the VECs to rein in the ambitious Regional Technical Colleges. As the end of the decade approached, it seemed that the VECs' position was shared in powerful places. In 1987 the new Minister for Education Mary O'Rourke implied that she 'did not see a necessity to make any radical alterations to the RTC structures' (White 2001 p.217).

Another, more subtle, obstacle that presented itself in this period was the return to favour of the universities. In the 1960s and early 1970s, the universities were seen as rather 'aloof entities whose scholarship and standards required preservation and protection' (White 2001 p.50). There was a general perception, underscored by reviews such as that carried out by the Commission on Higher Education, that they were in no way interested in providing the kind of the technological higher education required to meet the manpower needs of the state and the level of autonomy which they enjoyed meant that 'they could not be expected to give regard to government programmes' (White 2001 p.106). Accordingly, efforts to develop technological education were focussed on the non-university sector. The Manpower Consultative Committee established by the IDA in 1978 to address the issue of technological skills shortages proved to be a catalyst for change in this regard. The Committee realised that meeting the skills shortages would require collaboration with the higher education sector and it called on the university sector as well as the technological sector to assist it. It worked with the HEA to put in place programmes that would help to alleviate the predicted shortages of engineers and technologists and many of these programmes were provided by the universities. White (2001) claims that 'the involvement of the IDA with the universities through the Manpower Consultative Committee (MCC) from 1978 onwards was a vital turning point in how the universities came to be perceived. The funding which arose from the MCC programme was very helpful to some of the universities and the Hardiman report in 1987 commented that the programme had underlined the commitment of the university sector to technological education and its readiness to respond quickly and flexibly' (p.188). Thus by the late 80s, the universities had claimed a space for themselves on the landscape of technological higher education.

At the same time, there was a renewed interest in Ireland in liberal arts education, which was the domain of the university sector. White (2001) points out that 'antipathy towards the arts degree and what it was deemed to stand for, finally began to decline in the 1980s' (p.188). Students were starting to look beyond the highly specialised vocational and technological qualifications which had long been promoted, as were politicians: White (2001) reports that two ministers and several members of parliament articulated the view that 'support for better technological education need not be accompanied by an onslaught on the values represented by the arts and the humanities' (p190). While the importance of technology was still acknowledged, it appeared that at least 'some of

those charged with developing education policy had weakened slightly in their commitment to making technological and vocational requirements the overriding priorities in higher education' (White 2001 p.191). The Regional Technical Colleges were therefore faced with new challenges: not only would they have to compete with the universities in the area of technological higher education, but they would also have to work on integrating liberal arts values into their programmes while remaining true to their vocational and technological orientation.

The end of the 1980s was characterised by a certain level of confusion for the Regional Technical Colleges. Support for their mission, while still strong, was waning somewhat. (Significantly, the chapter on education in the 1987 *Programme for National Recovery*, the first in a series of social partnership agreements designed to try and pull the Irish economy out of the doldrums, focused on the need to combat educational disadvantage and increase second level participation rather than on the need to ensure that the education sector met the economy's needs for a skilled labour force). The university sector was starting to compete with RTCs in the area of technological education, and with the designation of the two NIHEs as universities, there was little doubt that this competition was likely to intensify in the coming years. Support for the RTCs' desire to broaden their remit and increase their level of autonomy had been clearly articulated, yet nothing had come of the recommendations that they be taken out from under the control of the VECs and allowed to develop research and consultancy functions alongside their teaching function. While they had continued to grow and develop, their place on the Irish higher education landscape seemed slightly less secure at the end of the 80s than it had done at the beginning of the decade, and it appeared that imagination and innovation would be called for if they were to hold their own in the 1990s.

Irish higher education in the 1990s: Turbulent times in the technological sector

The 1990s were a period of increased consultative and policy activity in relation to the education sector in Ireland. 1992 finally saw the enactment of legislation for the technological sector with the passing into law of the Regional Technical Colleges Act and the Dublin Institute of Technology Act. A Green Paper on Education was also published in that year, to be followed by a National Convention on Education in 1993 and the publication of the White Paper *Charting our Education Future* in 1995. A Steering Committee on the Future of Higher Education established to examine the third level sector and make projections for its future development also reported in 1995, and its recommendations were to provide the catalyst for dramatic change in the technological sector. Change was also on the cards in the university sector, with the abolition of undergraduate fees in 1995, the enactment of the Universities Act in 1997 and increased emphasis on the research dimension of the university mission provoked by the 1995 Circa Group report on university research as well as by a growing general concern at national level with science, technology and innovation. A focus on reducing educational disadvantage and increasing participation by adult learners led to the publication of a Green Paper on Adult Education in 1998. The final year of the decade saw further legislation which was to have a significant impact on the technological sector make its way onto the statute books in the form of the 1999 Qualifications (Education and Training) Act.

In keeping with what White (2001) describes as the penchant for the ad hoc which characterised Irish education, 22 years had passed between the actual establishment of the first Regional Technical Colleges and the enactment of legislation for these institutions. The 1992 Regional Technical Colleges Act finally established the colleges on a statutory basis and clarified their role and how they were to be run, increasing both

the functions they were allowed to fulfil and the level of autonomy they enjoyed in the process.

The Act set out a clear statement in relation to the mission of the RTCs. Their general function was defined as being to 'to provide vocational and technical training for the economic, technological, scientific, commercial, industrial, social and cultural development of the State with particular reference to the region served by the college' (Government of Ireland 1992 Section 5). In fulfilling this overall function they were expected to 'provide such courses of study as the Governing Body of the college considers appropriate' (Government of Ireland 1992 Section 5) and 'to enter into arrangements with the National Council for Educational Awards, with any university in the State or with any other authority approved by the Minister from time to time for the purpose of having degrees, diplomas, certificates or other educational awards conferred, granted or given' (Government of Ireland 1992 Section 5). The Act also conceded that the colleges should be allowed to go beyond the teaching remit originally envisaged for them and empowered them 'subject to such conditions as the Minister may determine, to engage in research, consultancy and development work and to provide such services in relation to these matters as the Governing Body of the college considers appropriate' (Government of Ireland 1992 Section 5).

The RTCs were still obliged to seek validation for their programmes and awards from external bodies, but the 1992 Act did appear to give them more control over their own destiny than had previously been the case. It stipulated that each RTC should have a Governing Body which was 'to manage and control the affairs of the college and all property of the college' and to 'perform the functions conferred on the college' (Government of Ireland 1992 Section 7.1). Each Governing Body was to appoint an Academic Council 'to assist it in the planning, coordination, development and overseeing of the academic work of the college and to protect, maintain and develop the academic standards of the courses and the activities of the college' (Government of Ireland 1992 Section 10.1).

The provision for the establishment of governing bodies meant that much of the power previously vested in the Vocational Education Committees was passed over to the colleges themselves, but the Act did not completely remove the RTCs from the control of the VECs. For one thing, the constitution of the governing bodies was clearly stipulated in the legislation and the majority of their members were to be nominated by the Minister for Education on the recommendation of the local VECs. For another, and indeed more significantly, the VECs were still to have a say in decisions relation to course provision and funding: the Act granted the Governing Bodies 'all such powers as are necessary' for the purpose of fulfilling their functions but specified that these powers were to 'subject to such policies as may be determined by the Minister from time to time and to the programmes and budget approved annually by the Vocational Education Committee and the Minister' (Government of Ireland 1992 Section 7.1). Despite the fact that the legislation fell some way short of granting the colleges the level of autonomy that they had hoped for, it did both clarify and expand their role and thus to place them on a more secure footing within the higher education sector.

The 1992 Green Paper *Education for a Changing World* clearly articulated the achievements of the Irish higher education sector, acknowledging that it had 'contributed greatly to the personal education of students, to cultural, economic and social development, to the promotion of the professions and to the provision of knowledge and scholarship' (Department of Education 1992 cited in Coolahan 2004 p.46). It set out a variety of proposals for the sector in relation to areas ranging from course structures and quality assurance to research and funding coordination. Many of these proposals remained unimplemented but they clearly 'signalled many new

directions for policy within the higher education sector' (Coolahan 2004 p.47). They provided for extensive debate at the National Education Convention in 1993 What was particularly significant was the subtle discourse shift that was evident in it: White (2001) notes that 'while there was still much of the pragmatic and the utilitarian in the Green Paper ...the crude utilitarian arguments promoting the narrowly technical over the academic had ceased to have the same force' (p.192 and observes that 'when the 1995 White Paper on Education came to be published, the utilitarian focus was further diluted' (p.192)

Charting our Education Future, as the 1995 White Paper was entitled, was an ambitious document which laid out what it described as 'a comprehensive agenda for change and development' (Department of Education 1995 p.1) as well as articulating a set of 'key considerations which should underpin the formulation and evaluation of educational policy and practice – principally the promotion of quality, equality, pluralism, partnership and accountability' (Department of Education 1995 p.4-5). While stressing, interestingly in the chapter on further education rather than the chapter on higher education, that 'an important element of the government's industrial strategy, arising from the implementation of the Report of the Industrial Policy Review Group, the Culliton Report 1992, is the priority attached to the acquisition of high quality technical and vocational education' (Department of Education 1995 p.80), and acknowledging the importance of the economic dimension of education, it clearly stated that 'the government's concern with this key dimension of education complements and reinforces the fundamental contribution of education to individual and social development' (Department of Education 1995 p.7).

The chapter on higher education began by defining the purpose of higher education: such education, it claimed 'promotes social well-being through preserving, widening and advancing the intellectual, cultural and artistic accomplishments of society through rigorous, sustained and critical evaluation of the past, the present and the possible futures of society, through commitment to the highest standards of research in the various branches of learning and through equipping society with the particular skills and qualities necessary for economic growth and prosperity' (Department of Education1995 p.91). Higher education institutions were seen as having a responsibility for 'the education of students' (Department of Education 1995 p.91), and to 'develop new ideas, new knowledge and new applications of existing knowledge' (Department of Education 1995 p.91) through research as well as an overall duty to 'respond to the changing needs of society and the legitimate interests of the state' (Department of Education 1995 p.91). Given the multiple purposes of higher education and the multiple roles higher education institutions were expected to fulfil, the authors of the policy held that 'no single type of institution could carry out effectively all the tasks the system as a whole needs to accomplish' (Department of Education 1995 p.91) and that consequently, the country needed a 'differentiated system of third level education' (Department of Education 1995 p.97).

This differentiated system was in fact already in existence in Ireland in the form of the binary system, with the universities on one side of the binary divide and the Regional Technical Colleges and the Dublin Institute of Technology on the other. The White Paper clearly defined the remit of each sector within the binary model: the universities, it stated, were 'essentially concerned with undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes, together with basic and applied research' (Department of Education 1995 p.97), while 'the main work of the Regional Technical Colleges [was] in certificate and diploma programmes with a smaller number of degree programmes and a growing involvement in regionally orientated applied research' (Department of Education 1995 p.97). The position of the policy makers on the binary system was expressed in no uncertain terms: the White Paper stated that 'the diversity of institutions and the separate

missions of the two broad sectors will be maintained to ensure maximum flexibility and responsiveness to the needs of students and to the wide variety of social and economic requirements' (Department of Education 1995 p.98)

A number of proposals with the potential to have a significant impact on the Regional Technical Colleges were made in the White Paper. Proposals to extend the remit of the Higher Education Authority to include all publicly funded third level colleges, and to establish a new National Certification Authority (TEASTAS) which was to be responsible for 'the development, implementation, regulation and supervision of the certification of all non-university third level programmes and all further and continuation education and training programmes ... the plans, programmes and budgets necessary for the achievement of [these] functions...[and] the establishment, direction, supervision and regulation of a national qualifications framework' (Department of Education 1995 p.89) would, if they had been implemented, have considerably alter the operating context of the RTCs. The policy document also suggested that there was a need for the Regional Technical Colleges to 'establish modern financial, management and administrative structures', to introduce 'more flexible academic staffing structures' and to cooperate with the HEA in that body's 'development of a system of modular course structures and related credit transfer arrangements' (Department of Education 1995 p.99).

The White Paper left little ambiguity in relation to the vision of the policy makers for the Regional Technical Colleges going forward. It clearly stated that 'the primary function of the Regional Technical Colleges will be to provide non-degree level programmes and a limited level of degree provision' (Department of Education 1995 p.100). It also stressed that programme provision in the colleges would be informed by 'an appropriate balance between the major fields of study within the colleges (Business Studies, Science and Engineering), an applied orientation in all programmes, limited levels of degree provision, taking account of student, economic and social needs as well as the academic capability of individual institutions to provide degree level programmes [and] an appropriately balanced output of graduates from certificate, diploma and degree programmes with reference to the occupational and skill needs of the economy' (Department of Education 1995 p.100)

1995 also saw the publication of the Report of the Steering Committee on the Future Development of Higher Education. The Committee was set up in response to claims made in the Report on the National Education Convention that 'the present strategy of making statistical projections on the likely future demand for [third level] places is not a sufficient basis for planning [and that] the setting of enrolment targets for higher education should be made on the basis of an explicit statement of policy objectives and should be accompanied by appropriate implementation decisions' (National Education Convention 1994 p.91) and its task was 'to set out parameters for growth in higher education over the next twenty years' (Steering Committee on the Future Development of Higher Education 1995 p.5).

The Steering Committee considered various options for expanding access to higher education as well as a number of possible growth scenarios for the sector, and presented these in its report. Specific cases that had been made for the expansion of higher education provision in Dublin, the West and the South-East were examined in detail. While acknowledging the importance of education to the economy, it did warn against over-emphasising the economic dimension, arguing that linking higher education planning to labour market demands was not necessarily a sensible approach for the government to pursue. The report also addressed a number of issues which were increasingly being highlighted by government in other contexts, from the National Development Plan to the various social partnership agreements: these included the need

for appropriate mechanisms to ensure both quality and equality in higher education institutions, the need to increase participation in higher education by socially and economically disadvantaged students, and the need to ensure the necessary flexibility in the system to facilitate disabled, mature and part time students wishing to engage in higher level studies.

The Report had a very clear view of the role of the Regional Technical Colleges and presented the government with detailed plans for the future of the technological sector. It fully endorsed 'the diversity of the higher education system and the retention of two distinctive sectors, the university and extra-university sectors' (Steering Committee on the Future Development of Higher Education 1995 p.5). It highlighted the 'more applied nature of the programmes and forms of delivery in the extra-university sector, compared with the more 'academic' nature of programmes in the university sector (Steering Committee on the Future Development of Higher Education 1995 p.6) and the fact that 'the extra-university sector is distinguished from the university sector in particular as a source of technician training' (Steering Committee on the Future Development of Higher Education 1995 p.6). It recommended that the role of the RTCs in technician training be maintained, and also stated that 'the regional character of these colleges [was] an important factor which the Committee [considered] should be maintained and strengthened' (Steering Committee on the Future Development of Higher Education 1995 p.7). Thus the Regional Technical Colleges were to remain both regional and technical. The Steering Committee did however concede that it was important that 'the changed and still evolving role of the RTCs in technology and research be reflected in their title, without changing the current thrust of their activities or the distinctive roles of the colleges' (Steering Committee on the Future Development of Higher Education 1995 p.7) and recommended that the colleges be redesignated as Regional Institutes of Technology.

The Steering Committee also presented its projections for the future growth for higher education (with the caveat that the Department of Finance representative did not accept these, thinking them too high!): it proposed an increased intake of 6000 students across both sectors of the system by the year 2000 and a further marginal increase of 500 between 2000 and 2015. The RTCs were expected to enrol 4000 of the initial 6000 but the report recommended that 'as a planning guideline across the RTC sector as a whole, not more than 20 percent of those completing their courses of study should be at degree level' (Steering Committee on the Future Development of Higher Education 1995 p.7). An exception was to be made in the case of Waterford Regional Technical College. The Steering Committee dismissed the case being made for a university in the South East but did recommend that Waterford Regional Technical College be upgraded to become a higher level technological institute with delegated authority to make its own awards, along the same lines as the Dublin Institute of Technology, in recognition of its unique position as the sole higher education provider in the south east region. The report recommended that the total number of places at the college be increased in the medium term from 3500 to 5000 and specified that 'the major focus of expansion [should] be at degree level, with the percentage of award recipients who graduate with a degree in a given year increasing from the current 22 percent of total to 33 percent' (Steering Committee on the Future Development of Higher Education 1995 p.21)

The Report of the Steering Committee on the Future Development of Higher Education was to spark chaos in the technological sector in the second half of the decade. The chaos kicked off in January 1997 when the Minister for Education, decided to follow the recommendation on Waterford and announced that college was to be upgraded and become known as Waterford Institute of Technology. The reaction in Waterford was positive: while university status still seemed a distant dream, the upgrade at least acknowledged both the needs of the region and the contribution that had been made by

Waterford RTC to meeting those needs to date. Elsewhere in the system, however, the decision drew a distinctly negative response. Cork Regional Technical College in particular interpreted the Waterford upgrade as a downgrading of its own status and started a campaign to have all of the Regional Technical Colleges redesignated as Institutes of Technology.

The campaign drew a swift reaction from government. The Minister for Education called on Professor Dervilla Donnelly to lead 'a high level group to advise her on the technological sector and specifically to advise on the criteria which should be applied to the redesignation of a Regional Technical College and the most appropriate means whereby institutions should be independently evaluated in relation to such criteria' (White 2001 p.231). The Donnelly Report recommended that all eleven RTCs be upgraded to Institute of Technology status under a new Irish National Institute of Technology, which would initially act as an awarding body but would ultimately devolve awarding authority to individual institutions that it deemed competent to exercise this authority. White (2001) reports that 'the Minister proceeded to implement the name change for Waterford RTC immediately but promised to change the names of all the others as well' (p.231), a promise which had been fulfilled by early 1998.

All of the Regional Technical Colleges may have been renamed Institutes of Technology but the title was of little value, as it was not accompanied by the delegation of authority to make awards which had originally been proposed for Waterford and supported, albeit in the context of an altered overall structure for the technological sector, by the Donnelly Report. The Minister for Education Niamh Breathnach did propose that an Interim Review Group be set up under the chairmanship of Professor Donnelly, to establish a procedure for delegating awarding powers to Waterford. By the time this Group was launched by Breathnach's successor, Cork minister Mícheál Martin, in July 1997, its terms of reference had changed slightly and it was charged with considering applications for delegation of authority from any Regional Technical College / Institute of Technology. As it transpired, only the colleges in Waterford and Cork initially made submissions to the Interim Review Group. Having reviewed these submissions, in October 1998 the Group 'recommended that the Cork and Waterford colleges should be given the right to award their own qualifications in all existing sub degree courses but left to a further review the determination as to whether they should award their own degrees' (White 2001 p.232). By 1998, however, work was under way on new legislation to regulate higher education awards. The recommendations of the Interim Review Group were put on hold pending the enactment of this new legislation and the newly created Institutes of Technology carried on very much as before until the early years of the new millennium.

The late 1990s saw considerable legislative activity related to higher education. A draft Universities Bill produced in 1996 led to intensive debate and lobbying by the universities and a substantially amended Universities Act was placed on the statute books in 1997. This Act was the first piece of legislation directly related to universities to be enacted since the founding of the State and it was quite comprehensive: it 'set out the ground rules for the establishment and identity of universities, defined the objects and functions of universities and laid down rules for their governance [as well as setting out] the state's requirements for planning and evaluation, finance, property and reporting' (White 2001 p.228). Although it was to have little direct impact on the technological sector, one section within the Act was potentially relevant to the Institutes of Technology and in particular to the Dublin Institute of Technology. Section 9 of the Universities Act allowed for the establishment of additional universities by means of a process involving a review of an applicant institution by a body made up of 'international experts and national experts, including employees of universities to which this Act applies' (Government of Ireland 1997 Section 9.1) to be put together by the

Higher Education Authority. While the more ambitious Institutes of Technology viewed Section 9 with optimism, no new university has yet been created under the Act, though three institutions have applied for university designation in that period. The Dublin Institute of Technology's application was reviewed and rejected in 1999, while the Minister for Education, as of December 2008, is still considering whether to instruct the Higher Education Authority to establish a panel to review the application lodged with the Department of Education and Science by Waterford Institute of Technology in February 2006.

The second piece of higher education legislation to be passed in the late 1990s was to have a far greater impact on the technological sector. The 1999 Qualifications (Education and Training) Act was described as 'an act to establish an administrative structure for the development, recognition and award of education and training qualifications in the state' (Government of Ireland 1999). Three new bodies were established by the Act: the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI), the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) and the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC). The three bodies did not have equal status: the NQAI was given authority over the two awards councils. As well as being expected to 'establish and maintain a framework ...for the development, recognition and award of qualifications ...based on stands of knowledge, skill or competence to be acquired by learners' (Government of Ireland 1999 Section 7) and to 'promote and facilitate access, transfer and progression' (Government of Ireland 1999 Section 7), the NQAI was to 'establish and promote the maintenance and improvement of the standards of further education and training awards and higher education and training awards' not alone of FETAC and HETAC but also of the Dublin Institute of Technology and of any new universities to be established under Section 9 of the 1997 Universities Act.

In establishing HETAC, the 1999 Act was to succeed, where numerous previous attempts before had failed, in dissolving the NCEA which had functioned as the awarding body for the non-university sector for the best part of the thirty years. HETAC was to take on many of the responsibilities which had previously been fulfilled by the NCEA: it was required to 'establish criteria and policies for the making higher education and training awards and the validation of programmes and to review these criteria and policies every five years at least' (Government of Ireland 1999 Section 23), to 'determine standards of knowledge, skill or competence to be acquired by learners who are to receive awards' (Government of Ireland 1999 Section 23), to 'make and recognise higher education and training awards' (Government of Ireland 1999 Section 23) and to 'monitor and evaluate programmes leading to higher education and training awards' (Government of Ireland 1999 Section 23). Its role diverged from that of the NCEA in one important dimension however: under the legislation, HETAC was allowed and indeed obliged to put in place a process for the delegation of awarding authority to the higher education institutions under its control.

While other sections of the Act stood to impact significantly on the Institutes of Technology, it was the section on delegation of authority that was read with the greatest interest by the Institutes of Technology. The clear determination on the part of the Department of Education to maintain the binary divide and prevent what it described as 'mission drift' meant that the colleges' autonomy was more limited than they would have wished and anything that could increase that autonomy was enthusiastically pursued, at least by some of the Institutes. As it happened, the legislation was rather vague and somewhat restrictive in relation to delegation of authority. The Qualifications Act did allow recognised institutions to apply to HETAC for delegated awarding authority, and it did oblige HETAC to 'determine and publish ...criteria for the purposes of this section' and to review 'the operation and management of the recognised institution concerned in relation to programmes of higher education and training

provided, organised or procured by that recognised institution, and those programmes' (Government of Ireland 1999 Section 29.3) but it also stipulated that institutions to which awarding authority was delegated would have to have their operations and programmes reviewed by HETAC at least once every five years and that delegated authority could be withdrawn by the awards council. While this appeared to be a step in the right direction, it was in effect little more than a baby step: the previous experiences of the Institutes of Technology suggested that both the criteria for assessing applications and the five yearly HETAC reviews of any successful applicants were likely to be tough and that delegated authority would do little more than remove the need to involve the awards council in the validation processes for individual programmes.

The duties set out for the NQAI in the Qualifications Act, particularly in relation to the creation of mechanisms for transfer and progression, were motivated by an increasing concern among policy makers in relation to equity in higher education. While overall participation rates had increased dramatically throughout the 1970s and 1980s, low levels of higher education participation among the socially and economically disadvantaged as well as among school leavers in particular regions (including Dublin) were worrying. Mature student participation rates were also quite low. White (2001) points out that 'policy on funding for higher education in Ireland has always been focused on school leavers, [that] third level education was seen as an immediate follow on to secondary schooling and students who did not avail of it then had financial and other barriers put in the way of re-entry at a later date' (p.271). By the mid 1990s however, it was becoming clear that this focus needed to change. A concern with ensuring equality of educational opportunity for all citizens articulated in the 1995 White Paper, coupled with a demographic pattern which would see a reduction in the number of school leavers and a dramatic improvement in the economy which suggested that, after years of high unemployment and emigration, Ireland could suddenly once again be faced skills shortages, 'began to concentrate minds on the provision for lifelong learning and the underdeveloped potential of mature students' (White 2001 p.196).

The Steering Committee on the Future Development of Higher Education made a number of recommendations in relation to combating disadvantage and social exclusion. Its proposals included the development of links between second level schools in disadvantaged areas and third level institutions and the reservation of a certain number of third level places for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. In relation to mature students, it recommended that, by 2010, 16 percent of intake into full-time courses should be made up of mature students. Another of its suggestions related to mature student quotas. This was taken up in the 1998 Green Paper *Adult Education in an Era of Learning*, which stated that 'at third level, universities and Institutes of Technology should introduce a system of mature student quotas in as many faculties as feasible and that they should be supported in doing so by funding to support the additional costs of outreach, access, guidance and networking services' (Department of Education 1998 p.8). By the end of the 1990s, considerable support was committed both to the cause of combating disadvantage and to the plans for increasing mature student participation in higher education; the National Development Plan published in 1999 explicitly recognised that 'the development of third level access is necessary to promote the participation of students with disabilities, students from disadvantaged backgrounds and mature 'second chance' students' (Department of Finance 1999 p.99) and committed £95 million to what it described as a Third Level Action Measure, with further funds to be allocated to this area under the broader Social Inclusion Measure. In the same year saw the Minister for Education and Science announce that £194 would be spent over a three year period on measures to tackle disadvantage, £30 million of which was to be dedicated to third level access. Equity in higher education was finally on the agenda at the Department of Finance as well as at the Department of Education.

In his analysis of the Irish higher education sector at the end of the 1990s, White (2001) acknowledges that an emphasis on equity had become a clear feature of higher education policy but contends that 'there is one further, and relatively new, element which is liable to divert the decision makers from a commitment to tackle matters of equality and the related issues of mature and second chance students [and] that is the question of research' (p.272). A growing belief in the importance of science, technology and innovation in an aspiring knowledge economy, which led to the establishment of bodies such as the Irish Council for Science, Technology and Innovation and the publication, in 1996, of the first White Paper on Science and Technology, focused the attention of policy makers outside and within education on the issue of research, and led to a number of reviews of research in third level institutions. Possibly the most significant of these was a review of the organisation, management and funding of university research carried out by the Circa Group for the HEA. The Circa Group report, published in 1996, considered that Irish universities were actually punching above their weight internationally, given the chronic underfunding of third level research when compared to other countries and concluded that 'considering the scientific, social, cultural and economic contributions of university research, it is apparent ...that there is something seriously amiss with public policy towards the support of higher education research in Ireland' (Circa Group 1996 cited in Coolahan 2004 p.54). If Ireland were serious about developing a knowledge economy, this situation would have to be remedied. Coolahan (2004) reports that the Circa Group made a number of recommendations in this regard: it advocated 'increased funding for research and new structures for its distribution...emphasised the need for Irish universities to strengthen the organisation and management of university research ...[and] supported the proposal of setting up two research councils, the further development of a dynamic interface with industry and services and the establishment of inter-university and multi-disciplinary collaboration' (p.55)

Anxious not to found wanting in an area on which future economic prosperity was deemed to depend, the government turned its attention to dealing with the deficiencies highlighted in the Circa Group report and other reviews. In 1997, a £250 million Educational Technology Investment Fund was launched. £30 million of this fund was allocated to third level equipment renewal while a further £15 million was to support research and technology development over a three year period. In 1998, the rechristened Department of Education and Science launched the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions (PRTLI) which was essentially 'an investment programme for scientific and other research in universities and institutes of technology' (White 2001 p.273) which was to part funded by the private sector and which was to focus on 'building institutional capacity (physical and human capital) across a range of disciplines' (Coolahan 2004 p.55) and on funding priority areas, which at that point meant, and indeed still means, research in science and technology. A Technology Foresight exercise conducted by Forfás, the national policy and advisory board for enterprise, trade, science, technology and innovation which operates under the auspices of the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment, resulted in the establishment of a £560 million Technology Foresight fund and the National Development Plan which was published in 1999 committed £1.9 billion to research and development, money which was 'intended to bring Irish research and product development spending to about two percent of GDP, close to the EU average, with about a quarter of the money going to colleges and university research departments' (White 2001 p.274). White (2001) comments that 'in the early 1990s, Irish university academics would have regarded the scale of the financial commitment to research outlined by the state in the two years between November 1997 and November 1999 as residing in the realm of fantasy' (p275). But the fantasy was a reality and at the turn of the millennium, it was clear that research would be a major focus of future higher education policy.

One final issue needs to be highlighted in this section. Institutes of Technology are publicly funded institutions and their employees are considered to be public servants: as such, both institutions and individuals are affected by policies and developments relating to the public sector. In the 1990s, these developments included calls for the modernisation of the public service and for increased efficiency, productivity and accountability that emerged in the various social partnership agreements that were negotiated in the course of the decade. The social partnership process, which had been established in the 1980s and which had led to the publication in 1987 of the first partnership agreement, the Programme for National Recovery, brought together representatives of government and both public and private sector organisations to negotiate agreements around productivity and pay which, it was hoped, would lead to increased economic prosperity.

Each of the partnership agreements signed in the last decade of the twentieth century (the 1991 Programme for Economic and Social Progress (PESP), 1994 Programme for Competitiveness and Work (PCW), and the Partnership 2000 agreement negotiated in 1996) had some implications for the higher education sector, but the impact of the PCW was particularly significant for the Institute of Technology sector. The agreement itself allude to planned discussions 'with management and teacher interest with the a view to agreeing a ceiling on the percentage of part time teaching posts in post-primary schools and third level colleges' (Government of Ireland 1994 p.67). The discussions with the Teachers' Union of Ireland representing the third level colleges were to prove lengthy and arduous, and the first set of proposals presented by the facilitator Seán Healy in 1998 were rejected by TUI members. The Revised PCW Proposals, which were published in June 1998 and ultimately accepted by the TUI membership, included a commitment to reviewing the structure of the academic year, and in particular the previously untouchable Summer holiday period between June 20th and September 1st and to developing and operating appropriate quality assurance mechanisms. They did deliver the desired reduction in part time hours in the Institutes of Technology, but they also fundamentally altered the structure of academic posts within the institutions. A new promotional grade for academic staff (the Senior Lecturer 1 Teaching grade) was a welcome development, but it was accompanied by the introduction of a new lower paid entry level grade (the Assistant Lecturer' grade) which was to have significant implications for the Institutes of Technology in the years that followed.

Beyond 2000: policy milestones of the millennium to date

Like the 1990s, the first seven years of the new century have seen a high level of activity in relation to third level education in Ireland. The widening participation agenda was reinforced by the publication in 2000 *Learning for Life: a White Paper on Adult Education*, in which the government announced plans to introduce a 'targeted higher education mature student fund' (Department of Education 2000 p.18) and to abolish fees for part time students on first time undergraduate programmes who are in receipt of state benefits. Efforts to ensure the proper support and funding of research, including higher education research, also continued, with the establishment of the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences (IRCHSS) in 2002 and of its sister body, the Irish Research Council for Science, Engineering and Technology (IRCSET) in 2002. 2003 saw the enactment of legislation establishing Science Foundation Ireland (SFI), which was given responsibility for supporting 'basic research in economically strategic priority areas' (Coolahan 2004 p.55).

Significant structural change for the higher education sector, and for staff in the sector, was also on the cards post 2000. New social partnership agreements brought with them requirements for increased productivity and accountability in higher education,

including the introduction of performance management for academic and other staff in return for pay increases recommended by the Report of the Public Sector Benchmarking Body in 2002. The new bodies established by the 1999 Qualifications Act finally came into being in 2001. HETAC took over from the NCEA as the awarding body for the technological sector and was plunged almost immediately into reviewing applications from various Institutes of Technology for delegation of awarding authority, while the NQAI engaged in research and consultation processes which culminated in the launch of the National Framework of Qualifications in 2003. The transfer of responsibility for the technological sector from the Department of Education to the HEA or some other such body whose remit would cover both sectors of the higher education system, which had been proposed in the 1995 White Paper, was raised again in the Cromien Report on the operations of the Department of Education in 2000 and in the 2004 OECD Report, and finally came about in 2006 with the passing of the Institutes of Technology Act. Financial backing was committed to the major structural changes that were necessary for what the Minister for Finance described as 'the establishment of a new PhD level of education, a fourth level' in the 2005 budget. This commitment was primarily in the form of a Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF), aptly named since it would appear that strategic innovation is the foundation stone on which Irish higher education policy for the twenty first century will be built.

Despite the legislative changes of the early 1990s and the promises made to at least some of the newly designated Institutes of Technology in relation to the delegation of awarding authority in the latter half of the decade, the level of autonomy enjoyed by the technological sector in 2000 was still quite limited. The Vocational Education Committees had been removed from the equation but the degree of control maintained by the Department of Education was substantial. The Cromien review of the Department of Education and Science found that the Colleges Section, which was 'responsible for operational and policy issues concerning third level institutions in the technological sector (mainly Institutes of Technology) and the Colleges of Education', was 'deeply involved in operational matters' (Cromien 2000 p.37) and the subsequent description of its activities underscored just how little room for manoeuvre the institutions actually had: the Colleges Section 'determines and allocates funding for each institution in its remit, advises the Minister on staffing numbers and grades and approves recruitment procedures. Up to recently it would have been involved in recruiting staff for the institutions. The section approves the educational programmes offered by each institution. It also works closely with the External Staff Relations Section in addressing the various industrial relations issues that arise in the sector' (Cromien 2000 p.37). The Report strongly recommended that 'the Department should seek to extricate itself from detailed operational work and encourage the institutions to carry out these functions themselves' (Cromien 2000 p.38). The promise of increased autonomy contained in this recommendation was tempered somewhat by a second recommendation that the Higher Education Authority be given increased power and a role in the technological sector: it was suggested that 'the Authority should take on responsibility for policy advice to the Minister regarding the technological sector, [that] the possibility of designating, under the existing legislation, technological institutions as bodies within the Authority's remit should be examined [and that] in the context of the planned transfer of responsibility for recurrent funding of the Institutes of Technology to the Authority...the position on capital funding for the technological sector should be brought into line with the university sector' (Cromien 2000 p.38). Control was not to be ceded, it appeared. It was simply to be transferred.

Control over course validation and the conferring of awards in the Institutes of Technology was also to be transferred, from the NCEA to HETAC, and this finally occurred in June 2001. The new awards body was immediately faced with a challenge: under the legislation, it was charged with putting in place procedures and making

decisions on the delegation of awarding authority to institutions under its remit, but a number of institutions had already been promised delegated authority for sub degree programmes by the Interim Review Group in the late 1990s and were demanding that this promise be fulfilled so that they could confer awards in their own names in October 2001, leaving HETAC with insufficient time to develop and implement the necessary procedures. A compromise solution was reached with the institutions concerned: the Institutes of Technology in Waterford, Cork, Galway-Mayo and Sligo were allowed to award their own Certificates and Diplomas in October but were to make full submissions for delegated authority and to be reviewed by HETAC as soon as possible and well in advance of the 2002 conferring ceremonies. Work on procedures and criteria took place in early 2002 and, once these were in place, reviews of the submissions of various Institutes for various levels of delegated authority were implemented. Waterford was to prove the national testing ground for the criteria: it was the first institution to undergo review and be granted delegated authority for degrees in 2002, for taught masters programmes in 2003 and for research degrees up to PhD level in Science and up to Masters level in Business, Engineering and the Humanities in 2005. By 2006, three Institutes of Technology had been given power to make awards at PhD level in designated areas, while a further five had authority to award at Masters level and a final two colleges had authority to make honours degree awards. Of course, from 2003 on, all awards in the technological sector (though not in the university sector) had to be redefined using the terms of the ten level National Framework of Qualifications which was launched by the NQAI in October of that year. National Certificates became Higher Certificates or level six qualifications, while National Diplomas were retitled Ordinary Bachelors Degrees or level seven programmes, four year Degrees became Honours Bachelors Degrees or level eight programmes, Masters degrees were placed at level nine and doctoral degrees were defined as level ten qualifications. Institutes of Technology found themselves obliged to engage with a new discourse of levels and learning outcomes and to recast their programmes in terms of the NQAI's benchmarks for knowledge, skills and insight at each of the Framework levels.

In the early years of the new century, Ireland was still enjoying an economic boom, but it was widely held that the country would need to reduce its dependence on manufacturing and multi-national corporations and nurture the so-called knowledge economy if growth was to be maintained. The higher education system in this process was deemed to have a significant role to play in this process and the government's declared strategic objective was to place that system 'in the top rank in the OECD in terms of both quality and levels of participation' (OECD 2004 p.5). Its priority was 'to create a world class research, development and innovation capacity and infrastructure in Ireland as part of the wider EU objective for becoming the world's most competitive and dynamic knowledge based economy and society' (OECD 2004 p.5). In this context, it called in the OECD to undertake a review of higher education in Ireland and to advise on how best these objectives could be realised.

The 2004 OECD Report made recommendations in relation to various aspects of higher education. It found that there was room, and indeed a requirement, for significant improvement in several areas: it claimed for example that 'lifelong learning, widening participation and the encouragement of mature students to enter tertiary education have not been given much emphasis and must be reinforced in the future if Ireland is to capitalise on its success over the last decade' (OECD 2004 p.8) and asserted that Ireland had failed to engage the international student market and needed to take steps 'to promote the recruitment of an increased number of international students' (OECD 2004 p.9). It considered the question of higher education research in detail and concluded that, while recent investment had greatly improved the situation, 'the overall research environment is not yet adequate to support the achievement of research of international quality in the range of fields necessary to promote the economic development that

Ireland is looking for' (OECD 2004 p.8). The panel suggested that there was a need to double the number of doctoral students at the universities by 2010 and to rationalise the higher education research funding mechanism by subsuming the two research councils (IRCHSS and IRCSET) under the authority of SFI and giving that body overall responsibility for publicly funded research and development in higher education.

More significant for the technological sector were the recommendations in relation to the structure of the higher education system. The panel was unambiguous in its support for the maintenance of the distinct sectors within the system: it claimed that 'one of the strengths of Ireland's tertiary education system is the extent to which a diversity of mission has been maintained between the university and the institute sectors ...and we believe it is critical to maintain that diversity' (OECD 2004 p.20). It claimed that 'the success of the institute sector needs to be nurtured and celebrated so that its differentiation from the university sector is not seen as conferring lower status but defining it as an equal partner in a dynamic higher education system which covers a diverse range of functions' (OECD 2004 p.20) and it proposed a new structure for that system which would, it claimed, result in the 'removal of a range of managerial constraints that the Institutes believe disadvantage them in comparison to the universities and hinder them from reacting quickly to pressures and opportunities in their own regions' (OECD 2004 p.21). The new structure would bring both universities and institutes under a single funding authority to be known as the Tertiary Education Authority (TEA) and the Report stipulated that relations between this new body and the institutions under its control 'should be governed by a contract renewable annually on the basis of an institutional strategic plan' (OECD 2004 p.53). On the surface, this mirrored recommendations made in other contexts that responsibility for the Institutes be transferred to the HEA and it might have been assumed that the Institutes would stand to gain if they were to answer to a specialist higher education body with an overview of the entire higher education system and an understanding of the needs of higher education institutions for autonomy rather than to the Department of Education and Science.

The devil, however, was lurking in the detail. The OECD may have seemed to be recommending parity of esteem for diverse institutions under a single authority, but it advocated that the structure of that authority should 'comprise a small board concerned with strategy and resource allocation and two committees, one for the university and one for the institute sector' (OECD 2004 p.52) and it also clearly stipulated that a new funding model to be designed by the TEA 'although containing many common elements should be differentiated between the university and the institute of technology sectors so as to preserve the distinctive roles of the two sectors' (OECD 2004 p.53). The recommendations related to the TEA also came 'with the caveat that the new Authority must contain machinery to prevent mission drift in either direction' (OECD 2004 p.21). While there was little to suggest that universities would be prevented from appropriating the mission of the technological sector institutions, many of the suggestions made by the report were clearly designed to prevent the more ambitious Institutes of Technology from encroaching on the universities' territory: alongside an explicit recommendation that 'for the foreseeable future there be no further institutional transfers into the university sector' (OECD 2004 p.22), the panel also advocated that their research function should be limited to applied research and that 'underpinning research resources should be the subject of specific investment by Enterprise Ireland, and not by the new Tertiary Education Authority, in targeted areas against clear national or regional economic priorities' (OECD 2004 p.40). The final nail in the coffin of the Institutes' dream of increased autonomy and parity of esteem within the higher education system came in the form of a recommendation that 'degree awarding powers for doctoral awards be concentrated in the universities and that, except in the case of DIT, where such powers have been granted to Institutes of Technology by HETAC, they should be rescinded' (OECD 2004 p.40). Fourth level was to be the territory of the university

sector alone, and the Institutes of Technology were once again to be left to dine on the unwanted crumbs from the rich man's table.

The government broadly welcomed the OECD's report but to date has implemented only some of its recommendations. A proposal that fees for undergraduate courses be reintroduced was decidedly unpopular with the public and was soon discarded. Recommendations on the need for internal capacity building within higher education institutions on the other hand were taken on board and in February 2005 the Minister for Education and Science announced that the government had decided to establish a Strategic Innovation Fund to assist in this process. Minister Hanafin provided a detailed list of uses to which the government envisaged and desired that this competitive funding should be put: it was intended to 'enable higher education institutions to: incentivise and reward internal structuring and rationalisation efforts; provide for improved performance management systems; meet staff training and support requirements associated with the reform of structures and the implementation of new processes; implement improved management information systems; introduce teaching and learning reforms including enhanced teaching methods, programme restructuring, modularisation and e-learning; support quality improvement initiatives aimed at excellence; promote access, transfer and progression; and incentivise stronger inter-institutional collaboration in the development and delivery of programmes' (Hanafin 2005). €300 million over three years was allocated to the Strategic Development Fund in the 2005 budget, along with exchequer capital funding of €630 million. Whatever the government's stance on the individual recommendations made by the OECD, it clearly intends to continue its policy of investment in higher education over the coming years, and it intends to make higher education institutions compete for their funding. It remains to be seen however whether the playing field will be a level one for all institutions or whether the universities will continue to enjoy the advantageous position they have traditionally held in the Irish system.

The most recent legislation to have been enacted in relation to Irish higher education is also likely to have a significant impact on the technological sector. The Institutes of Technology Act of 2006 has finally brought the institutes under the remit of the Higher Education Authority. Under the Act, the colleges will no longer be funded by the Department of Education and Science but will in future be allocated a budget by the HEA based on a 'statement of the proposed expenditure and expected income of the college for the financial year' (Government of Ireland 2006 Section 15) to be presented annually by the institutions to the Authority. As well as this budget statements, all Institutions will have to prepare a strategic development plan setting out 'the aims of the Governing Body for the operation and development of the college and its strategy for achieving those aims' (Government of Ireland 2006 Section 22) as well as writing and implementing policies on relating to 'access to education in the college by economically or socially disadvantaged persons, by persons who have a disability and by persons from sections of society significantly underrepresented in the student body' (Government of Ireland 2006 Section 8) and to 'equality including gender equality in all activities of the college' (Government of Ireland 2006 Section 22). The Act does include a section guaranteeing academic freedom for both institutions and individual staff members and it does give more power to an Institute's Governing Body than previous legislation, allowing it for example to develop the selection procedures for and carry out the selection of the Institute director and to 'appoint such other staff as it thinks necessary for the purposes of the college' (Government of Ireland 2006 Section 8), though staff appointments are still 'subject to approval of an tÚdarás [i.e. the HEA] given with the concurrence of the Minister [for Education and Science] and the Minister for Finance (Government of Ireland 2006 Section 13). Whether the Institutes of Technology and their staff and students will thrive or wilt as they operate in this new framework over the coming years remains to be seen.