

**A Policy Trajectory Analysis of the National Strategy
for Higher Education to 2030 in Ireland -
An Institutes of Technology Perspective**

Ciarán P. Ó hAnnracháin

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Education

School of Education
University of Sheffield



January 2018

Abstract

The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 was commissioned by the Higher Education Authority and was published in 2011 under the chair of Colin Hunt. The National Strategy, along with policy implementation and review documents, makes some radical proposals for the reconfiguration of the HE landscape in Ireland with much of the focus on the restructuring of the non-university sector, particularly the fourteen Institutes of Technology (IoTs), while maintaining a “binary divide”.

The reform agenda has provided many challenges to the Institutes of Technology sector, and a policy trajectory approach to policy analysis is adopted to investigate the proposed changes to the Institutes of Technology sector. The tensions and shift in power dynamics are key elements to the process of reform in what is a contested space. These tensions are explored from the perspective of the Institutes of Technology sector through a process of critical discourse analysis conducted in the policy document and semi-structured interviews with key policy stakeholders.

A historical policy review of the evolution of the non-university sector in Ireland, alternative models in the European Higher Education Area and alternative proposals to the Hunt Report are used as counterpoints to frame the analysis. The analysis revealed that while the Report was initially broadly welcomed, the proposals and their implementation are far more complex and contentious, and there is less cohesion, particularly in the Institutes of Technology, on how the sector can ensure parity of esteem with, and a distinctive mission from, the traditional university sector.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the following people who supported me during this process:-

- My supervisors, Professor Gareth Parry and Dr Vassiliki Papatsiba, for the guidance and encouragement given throughout the process;
- The staff on the University of Sheffield EdD programme who contributed significantly to this wonderful and infuriating educational experience;
- The five interviewees who gave of their time, energy and expertise;
- My EdD cohort who started on this journey with me in Dublin and kept me going throughout;
- To my work colleagues who gave me the time and space needed to complete this mammoth task;
- Finally, to my family and friends without whose forbearance I would have found it impossible to complete this body of work over the past number of years.

Dedication

To the memory of

Patrick Thomas Cain

who was a constant support and guide, but who sadly passed away before the task was complete.

Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Dedication	iii
List of Abbreviations	x
CHAPTER 1	1
1. Rationale and Structure of the Research	1
1.1. Introduction	1
1.2. The Subject of the Study	2
1.3. The HE Reform Agenda	3
1.4. The Current Process HE Policy Formulation in Ireland	5
1.5. HE Policy and Strategy	6
1.6. Institute of Technology: A Sector under Pressure to Reform	8
1.7. Research Question	9
1.8. Structure of the Thesis	11
1.9. Summary	12
CHAPTER 2	13
2. Higher Education in Ireland	13
2.1. Introduction	13
2.2. The Development of Higher Education in Ireland.	13

2.3.	Technical / Vocational Education after the Transition to Independence.....	14
2.4.	Key Policy Documents in Defining the Non-University Sector in Ireland in the 1960s.....	16
2.4.1.	OECD Report 1964.....	16
2.4.2.	Training of Technicians in Ireland.....	19
2.4.3.	Investment in Education	21
2.4.4.	Commission on Higher Education 1960 – 1967.....	25
2.5.	Regional Technical Colleges / Institutes of Technology – the Early Years	26
2.5.1.	Certification of Programmes	28
2.5.2.	Validation and Recognition of Qualifications	30
2.5.3.	A Liberal Education in Technical Colleges	31
2.6.	A Time for Consolidation.....	33
2.7.	The 1980s – Challenges and Opportunities	36
2.7.1.	The National Education Convention.....	39
2.7.2.	The Central Applications Office and the Non- University Sector..	40
2.7.3.	A New Millennium – Increased Autonomy for the IoTs	42
2.8.	The Move to Universal Education in Ireland.....	42
2.9.	The Current Structure of Higher Education in Ireland	43
2.9.1.	The non-University Sector	44
2.9.2.	The University Sector	45

2.9.3.	Colleges of Education	46
2.9.4.	Private Education Providers.....	47
2.9.5.	QQI (Quality Assurance)	47
2.10.	A Contested Landscape of Higher Education	49
2.11.	Challenges Facing Higher Education in Ireland.....	51
2.12.	Summary.....	54
CHAPTER 3		57
3.	Literature Review – The Impact of Globalisation and the Knowledge Economy on Higher Education Systems.....	57
3.1.	Introduction.....	57
3.2.	Is the University the Default Paradigm of Higher Education?	58
3.3.	Globalisation and the Knowledge Economy.....	59
3.4.	Education and globalisation.....	62
3.5.	The Bologna Process.....	64
3.6.	Alternative national structures of Higher Education	69
3.7.	Diversity in Higher Education Provision – What is the purpose of The Binary Divide?	73
3.8.	Non-University Higher Education in Europe.....	79
3.9.	The Entrepreneurial University	85
3.10.	Collaborations, Alliances and Mergers in Higher Education.....	91
3.11.	The Field of Higher Education Research	95
3.12.	Summary.....	96

CHAPTER 4	98
4. Research Methodology	98
4.1. Introduction.....	98
4.2. Education Policy	98
4.3. Conceptual Framework and Research Methodology	100
4.3.1. Policy trajectory analysis	100
4.3.2. Discourse Analysis	103
4.3.3. The Critical Policy Discourse Analysis Frame.....	104
4.4. Documentary Analysis.....	105
4.5. Semi-structured Interviews.....	107
4.5.1. Identification and Selection of Interviewees.....	108
4.5.2. Interview Questions	110
4.6. Data Analysis.....	111
4.7. Reliability.....	113
4.7.1. Triangulation.....	113
4.8. Summary.....	114
CHAPTER 5	115
5. A Critical Discourse of the National Strategy	115
5.1. Introduction.....	115
5.2. Policy in Context	115
5.3. Levers, Drivers and Instruments of the Reform Agenda.....	124
5.4. Higher Education Policy and Strategy.....	130
5.5. The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030.....	131

5.5.1.	Specific issues identified in the strategy.....	135
5.6.	The context for a new national strategy for Higher Education....	135
5.6.1.	Planning for future demand.....	135
5.6.2.	The Mission of Higher Education in Ireland.....	136
5.6.3.	Maintenance of Diversity within the system.....	136
5.7.	Universities and Technological Universities – how diverse are they?	144
5.7.1.	Institutional and Sectoral Profiles.....	144
5.7.2.	Comparison Criteria.....	145
5.7.3.	Sectoral and Institutional identity and local environment – degree of isomorphism in the sector and evidence of activity to meet the criteria for TU designation.....	149
5.8.	Governance Structures and Funding.....	152
5.8.1.	The role of government in policy formulation and implementation	152
5.8.2.	A Coherent Framework - Diversity, Autonomy and Accountability	156
5.9.	Structural Reform.....	158
5.9.1.	The formation of educational clusters	160
5.9.2.	Funding	162
5.9.3.	State Contribution to the Cost of HE.....	163
5.10.	The future of the Hunt Report to 2030	165

5.11.	Key Levers in Strategy Implementation	167
5.11.1.	Strategic Dialogue and Mission- based Performance Compacts	168
5.12.	Summary.....	172
CHAPTER 6		175
6.	Conclusions.....	175
6.1.	Summary of the Research Process	175
6.2.	The Challenges to the National Strategy	179
6.3.	Unique challenges for the non-university sector	181
6.4.	The Strengths and Weaknesses of this thesis' Research Strategy	185
6.5.	Future Research	186
6.6.	Conclusion	187
References		189
Appendices		207

List of Abbreviations

CAS	Central Applications System
CAO	Central Applications Office
CDVEC	City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee
DCU	Dublin City University
DIT	Dublin Institute of Technology
DoES	Department of Education and Skills
EEC	European Economic Community
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EIPP	European Investment and Planning Programme
ESF	European Social Fund
ETB	Education and Training Board
EU	European Union
EUSEC	European Systems Engineering Conference
FDI	Foreign Direct investment
FETAC	Further Education and Training Awards Council
HE	Higher Education
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HETAC	Higher Education and Training Awards Council
IIE	Investment in Education
IoT	Institute of Technology
IOTI	Institutes of Technology Ireland
IVEA	Irish Vocational Education Association
NEC	National Education Convention
NCEA	National Council for Educational Awards
NUI	National University of Ireland
NIHE	National Institute for Higher Education
NIHED	National Institute for Higher Education Dublin
NIHEL	National Institute for Higher Education Limerick

NQAI	National Qualifications Authority of Ireland
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PRTL	Programme for Research in Third-level Institutions
QA	Quality Assurance
REC	Regional Education Council
RTC	Regional Technical College
TCD	Trinity College Dublin
THEA	Technological Higher Education Association
TUI	Teachers' Union of Ireland
UCC	University College Cork
UCG	University College Galway
UK	United Kingdom
UL	University of Limerick
VEC	Vocational Education Committee

CHAPTER 1

1. Rationale and Structure of the Research

1.1. Introduction.

In 2011 the Higher Education Authority (HEA) in Ireland published a report from the Hunt Committee entitled the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (HEA, 2011 (a)). The Irish Government adopted this strategy as the blueprint for Higher Education reform that would have significant impact on the Higher Education landscape. However, the strategy raises questions regarding the maintenance of a binary divide between the University sector and the non-University sector. The non-university sector discussed in this research consists of Dublin Institute of Technology and the other thirteen regional Institutes of Technology. The strategy proposes two options for the non-university, higher education sector. One option suggests that the Institutes of Technology sector focuses on undergraduate teaching, with a particular emphasis on sub-degree level education, while the other option suggests that institutes merge to become Technological Universities. The strategy focuses on a sector-wide set of developments, thus ensuring higher education does not transition from a binary to a stratified system with three tiers, while simultaneously contending that certain Institutes of Technology, even when merged with others will not be in a position to meet the criteria for Technological University. There is a dearth of research in this field, particularly research that gives voice to the non-university sector. The purpose of this research is to critically analyse the impact of the National Strategy on the non-university, higher education sector.

1.2. The Subject of the Study

In Ireland, a small open economy that has moved from a primarily agricultural to a services economy without significant development in manufacturing, the aim of government is to position the country as a significant player in the “Knowledge Economy”. This agenda has significantly influenced the role of Higher Education (Dept of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, 2006; Dept of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, 2015; DoES, 2007).

The Irish state invested approximately two billion euro in the HE system in 2009. Spending in Irish HE was slightly above the EU average in 2008 (EURYDICE, 2012), but between 2008 and 2012, Ireland was one of a number of EU countries that saw a decrease of more than 10% in exchequer funding for tertiary education (Katsarova, 2015). In 2014 the funding had reduced to one and a half billion, a reduction of 25 % (Oireachtas Library and Research Service, 2014). The view of HE in Ireland is generally positive among the population in relation to the contribution it makes to the economy and a fair and just society (Dochas, 2013). Demand for tertiary education at degree level continues to grow, while demand for sub-degree level programmes, particularly in the Institutes of Technology, remains static or falling. Between 2014 and 2015, the total number of applicants through the Central Statistics Office (CAO) for places in HE grew again marginally, with growth in the number of applicants for ab initio, level 8, honours degrees offered in universities and the non-university sector, but with a decline in the numbers applying for level 6 / 7 programmes offered exclusively in the non-university sector (CAO, 2016). Irish HE has been perceived as a public good (Oireachtas Library and Research Service, 2014), and since 1995, fees are not charged to students, although this is constantly under review, particularly at post-graduate levels. Participation in HE was facilitated by a process of grants, initially funded in a large part through the European Social

Fund (ESF), which provided maintenance grants for students for the duration of their studies. In the early years of this process, throughout the 1980s and 1990s, all students on sub-degree level programmes and means-tested students on degree level programmes were eligible for such grants.

This student-funding model was instrumental in the rapid development of the alternative model of sub-degree level HE in Ireland as delivered by the Regional Technical Colleges (RTCs), later renamed as Institutes of Technology (IoTs).

Throughout the past 40+ years, education policy, structures, funding and institutions have ensured a separation of the two types of HEI in a binary system.

1.3. The HE Reform Agenda

Since 2011, education policy discourse on Irish HE has proposed a number of significant changes in the organisation and governance of HEIs. The primary policy document, which has been adopted as government strategy, is the “National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030”, more commonly referred to as the Hunt Report (Hunt, 2011, pp. 96 - 98).

Several other policy and discourse documents recently issued refine the process of change including the “Criteria for Designation to Technological University Status” (Marginson, 2011); “Towards a Future Higher Education Landscape” (HEA, 2012 (a)); “A Proposed Reconfiguration of the Irish System of Higher Education” (HEA, 2012 (b)) “Institutional Responses to the Landscape Document and Achieving the Objectives of the National Strategy for Higher Education: A Gap Analysis” (HEA, 2012 (c)); “A Study of Future Demand for Higher Education in Ireland” (McGuinness, et al., 2012); “Completing the Landscape Process for Irish Higher Education” (HEA, 2013 (a)) “Towards a Performance Evaluation Framework: Profiling Irish Higher Education” (HEA, 2013 (b)); and a letter from the Minister for Education and Skills to the Chair

of the HEA (May 2013) regarding the report on “Report to the Minister for Education and Skills on system reconfiguration, inter-institutional collaboration and system governance in Irish Higher Education” (HEA, 2013 (c)); “Guidelines for Completion of Mission-based Compacts” (HEA, 2013 (d)); “Higher Education System Performance 2014 – 2016” (HEA, 2014); “Higher Education System Performance: Institutional and Sectoral Profiles 2012/13” (HEA, 2015 (a)) “The Role, Value and Scale of Higher Education in Ireland” (Expert Group on Future Funding for Higher Education, 2015 (a)), “Optimising Resources in Irish Higher Education” (Expert Group on Future Funding for Higher Education, 2015 (b)); Financial Review of the Institutes of Technology (HEA, 2016 (c)).

A final document “A proposed Reconfiguration of the Irish System of Higher Education” (International Expert Panel for the Higher Education Authority, 2012, August), was not published initially as it conflicted significantly with the Hunt Report. It has subsequently been made available and is useful as an alternative viewpoint for discussion. The function of all of these documents is to clarify issues arising from the National Strategy or to support implementation of the strategy in a system-wide coherent manner. In undertaking the critical discourse analysis of the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030, all of these documents were reviewed as a mechanism to evaluate the extent of convergence and divergence from the original strategy.

The implementation process of the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 has led to the formation of regional education clusters to include Universities and Institutes of Technology, and Regional Skills Fora that include the Universities, the Institutes of Technology and the Education and Training Boards (who offer vocational training and adult education). This has highlighted a view that the

Institutes are facing increased competition in activities at higher levels of first cycle education and post-graduate education, and at lower levels by the Education and Training Boards (ETBs), offering vocational, adult and hobby-type programmes. To encourage the IoT sector to engage in the process, the possibility of re-designation, if only for some institutions, as Technological Universities has been placed on the agenda. It is difficult to understand exactly from where the drive for university status emanates, and is the source of much debate, public and within education. Therefore, this research is framed within this context. Its purpose is to evaluate the evolution of the non-university sector from inception in the 1960s as a means of fully understanding how the sector has either created a distinct form of HE or whether through a more recent isomorphic process, supported by the broader European Bologna process, and driven by political and economic forces, the sector has become relatively indistinguishable from the University Sector.

1.4. The Current Process HE Policy Formulation in Ireland

Teichler (2004) stresses the recurring issue of restructuring of HE systems, in terms of size and shape, which he identifies geographically as symptomatic to the economically advanced countries and temporally as spanning the last four decades. This would suggest that these specific issues of size and shape are both central to the system as a whole but also difficult to resolve. He remarks this is partly due to the variety of stakeholders that have legitimate interests in HE and whose views on what the most desirable quantitative structural changes should encompass vary greatly:

“They [structural issues of size and shape] are obviously at the crossroads of external expectations and internal dynamics of Higher Education, and are shaped by legitimate influences and interests of society at large, governments in their steering and supervisory role, institutions of Higher Education and their staff, as well as learners”

(Teichler, 2004, p. 2)

Since the publication of the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (HEA, 2011 (a)) in 2011, the level of controversy surrounding this new process of political intervention in HE has subsided, and HE institutional managers are engaging with the processes of reform. While the strategy timeframe stretches to 2030, it seems appropriate to interrogate the document through a process of critical discourse in light of the fundamental changes that it proposes for Irish HE.

The Higher Education Authority (HEA) has had responsibility for managing the relationship between the University Sector and the Government since its formation in 1971, but the Institutes of Technology have only come under the aegis of the HEA since 2007, and the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (HEA, 2011 (a)) is the first significant policy exchange between the HEA and the Institutes of Technology. The role of the HEA has changed from negotiating the interests of the University sector only, to now balancing the needs of two distinct sectors within HE. The changes proposed in the National Strategy are to have a profound impact on the Institutes of Technology, both at institutional and sectoral level, and epitomise a policy trend for “controlled decontrol” (Du Gay, 1996). Ball (2013) refers to the policy shift as “reregulation” and the creation of new models of centralised control, albeit with the Department of Education and Skills delegating a central role to the HEA.

1.5. HE Policy and Strategy

National HE policy objectives, as laid out in great detail in the National Strategy to 2030 (HEA, 2011 (a), p. 4), cover a wide range of themes including teaching and learning, research, engagement with business sector and the wider community, internationalisation, funding, governance and management.

To achieve these objectives, the National Strategy made some proposals for strategic plans that could include the merger of institutes of technology outside Dublin. This would reduce the total number of institutions in the country, produce centres of excellence, and reduce costs by eliminating duplication of activities across the institutions (HEA, 2011 (a); HEA, 2012 (c); HEA, 2013 (b); HEA, 2015 (b)). While there was some discourse on the merger of Trinity College Dublin and University College Dublin to create a University “to compete at the top level of international rankings”, in reality the government agenda, as implemented through the HEA was focussed on three main objectives: -

- Reform of the IoT sector through a series of mergers;
- Consolidation and absorption of smaller institutions into the University sector; and
- The establishment of regional clusters of collaborating institutions within geographical areas. (HEA, 2013 (c)).

The achievement of these objectives is made more challenging due to environmental factors. These include reductions in public funding, increased demand from students, and proposals for alternative models of vocational training to include traineeships and the extension of the apprenticeship programme to new areas of the economy, in an environment that is being reshaped through the internationalisation and, in some instances, the privatisation of HE.

While objective two was primarily concerned with the merger of independent, teacher training colleges into the University sector along geographical lines, the other two objectives proposed would have a profound impact on Institutes of Technology. Institutes of Technology now have to attend to both structural and

institutional reforms, which will fundamentally change the role, identity and culture of those organisations.

An analysis of the National Strategy has to take cognisance of social and economic context in which the strategy was conceived and designed. During the economic crisis, “core funding per student in Ireland fell by 22% in the seven year period to 2015” (Expert Group on Future Funding for Higher Education, 2016, p. 18)

It is therefore an ideal time to reflect on the evolution of the non-university sector and their contribution to the broader strategy to develop a “coherent and sustainable system of HE to meet the economic and social needs of the country, within its broad ambition to create an export-driven knowledge economy” (HEA, 2013 (b)).

1.6. Institute of Technology: A Sector under Pressure to Reform

As a mechanism to encourage the Institutes of Technology in particular to engage in the process of rationalisation, the report also made a proposal that institutions could apply for designation as a Technological University. The fundamental challenge facing Institutes of Technology hoping to apply for this new designation is that one of the conditions for application was that no one institution could apply, but rather a number of merged Institutes of Technology would apply through a two stage process, as laid out in the Technological Universities Bill (DoES, 2015).

There has been a reduction of one hundred and ninety million euro in funding for Institutes of Technology between 2008 and 2015, compounded by a reduction in lecturer numbers of nine and a half per cent and a rise in student numbers of thirty two per cent (HEA, 2016 (d)). The sector is beginning to engage in two income-generating areas that were traditionally the preserve of the University sector: international students paying full-fees and funded research activity. While some argue that these are two distinct issues, they are inextricably linked in one domain.

The term “university” is deemed far more appealing to international students wishing to study abroad, while the designation as university requires Institutes of Technology to achieve certain targets in relation to not only the quality of teaching, but also in relation to research.

The Irish HE system, and the Institutes of Technology in particular, is also facing challenges due to the number of Irish students who are opting to study in other institutions abroad, and in the EU in particular. Traditionally, a significant number of students opted to study in the UK, but that number has decreased with the introduction of fees in UK institutions. Students are now looking further afield when it comes to college options. This has been a tradition for a number of years now for students unable to gain places in high demand programmes such as medicine, dentistry and pharmacy. Today, with over 1000 degree programmes on offer through English, and with lower fees (free in Germany, Sweden and Finland; and less than one thousand euro in Austria, Belgium and Switzerland) and cost of living in many countries, that figure has risen to 25,000 Irish people enrolled in further and higher education in other EU member states in 2012 (Eurostat, 2016). Some of the institutions rank higher than Irish institutions in international ranking / league tables, which can be an added attraction.

1.7. Research Question

The Institutes of Technology have undergone a seismic shift once before in their short history. Having been proposed in the late 1960s as a means to expand HE provision, the Regional Technical Colleges began to open to students in 1970. By the 1980s, the boundaries of the Colleges had changed significantly, and were re-designated as Institutes of Technology in 1998, while the Government were adamant to maintain the binary divide between the University and Non-University sectors.

The national strategy includes provision for the development of Technological Universities to replace some of the Institutes of Technology through a process of mergers, while maintaining the binary divide between these new universities and the remaining Institutes of Technology, and the seven existing universities. In analysing the National Strategy for Higher Education from the perspective of the Institutes of Technology the research question proposed is as follows: -

- ***What role does the Hunt Report envisage for the Institute of Technology sector in Ireland?***

In order to answer this broad ranging question, there are two key components that are posed as sub questions:-

- ***What is the justification for maintaining the binary divide?***
- ***Into what kind of organisations are the IoTs expected to evolve?***

Secondary research includes an examination of the evolution of the Institute of Technology sector from its inception. The process under which the sector was established – the policy documents, the stakeholders, the involvement of key politicians – allows one to learn from the process with hindsight. The research will conduct a comparative analysis of systems evolution in other countries, particularly in the EU, and the impact of Bologna on the nature and extent of isomorphism in European HE. The research process will evaluate the broader contemporary environment which shape the national strategy, particularly focussing on the concept of the knowledge economy.

Primary research comprises of a critical discourse analysis of the primary text – the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 - and subsequent implementation texts, and the interview transcripts of five key policy stakeholders.

1.8. Structure of the Thesis

The focus of Chapter 1 is to provide an introduction to the thesis. The main focus of the thesis – the National Strategy for Higher Education, Education Policy, the non-university sector, and the research question – is summarised in the context of HE in Ireland.

Chapter 2 outlines the current structure of HE in Ireland and introduces the concept of the binary divide. It provides a detailed account of the development of the non-university sector in Ireland, particularly through the Institutes of Technology, but also identifies instances of institutional movement across the binary divide and instances where such movement was prohibited. This chapter also questions the notion of a true binary system of HE in Ireland by identifying various types of institution, both public and private which indicate a more complex system than the generally accepted notion of a binary divide. This chapter also examines past Irish government policy positions as a mechanism to learn from the positive and negative experiences of the past.

The Literature Review in Chapter 3 provides an analysis of the HE context with particular reference to the concepts of globalisation and the knowledge economy. The impact of these external influences on education policy is examined through a comparative study of HE systems, primarily throughout the EU. The Bologna Process and Kyvik's Typology of HE systems are key to this comparative study. The Research Strategy is outlined in Chapter 4, providing a review of critical discourse analysis drawing on the work of Fairclough and Wodak in particular. Hyatt's Critical Discourse Analysis Frame is used as mechanism to structure the process. A mixed methods approach to the critical discourse of the National Strategy for HE to 2030 is outlined, using text analysis on both the physical text and the text of the semi-structured interviews conducted with five key policy informants.

Chapter 5 combines the thematic outcomes from the data from text and interviews to crucially engage with the policy formulation and implementation processes as they impact specifically on the non-university sector.

Chapter 6 draws some key conclusions from the primary and secondary research material and provides a reflection on the policy as it pertains to the non-university sector in Ireland.

1.9. Summary

The Irish HE system is in the process of significant reform that has been led by the Irish government, and co-ordinated through the HEA. This process has been impacted by the global economic crash of 2008. Institutions are being asked to collaborate more closely to become more effective and efficient in the provision of HE, as well as providing pathways to HE through the Further Education sector. The impact on the non-university sector will be significant, and will require changes at sectoral and institutional levels.

CHAPTER 2

2. Higher Education in Ireland

2.1. Introduction

This chapter will examine the historical development of HE in Ireland; provide an overview of the current Irish education system in Ireland and an overview of key interventions and influences on HE structure. The non-university sector in Ireland was firmly recognised with the establishment of the RTCs in the late 1960s. A range of policy documents that facilitated that process provide a comparator to the current policy formulation process. Conversely, the process of upgrading all RTCs to IoTs in the early 2000s illustrates how a lack of coherent and explicit policy can impact a system of HE. These historical processes are reviewed and examined.

The high cost of HE provision is one of the factors used to justify the implementation of the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (HEA, 2011 (a)). Ireland has a system of universal access to HE and a relatively high participation rate of 65% (CAO, 2016), with previous targets being set at 72% (HEA, 2008). This overview outlines the starting point from which the reform process will commence.

2.2. The Development of Higher Education in Ireland.

In the past one hundred years, education has played a central role in the economic and social development of Ireland. Many milestones have been marked where progressive developments at all levels of education have taken place: free primary education for all in the 1890s, the establishment of the County Council Agricultural and Technical Instruction Committees under the Agriculture and Technical Instruction (Ireland) Act, 1899 , the Vocational Education Act, 1930 (Government of Ireland, 1930), free secondary education in the 1950s, the diversification and

regionalisation of HE with the inception of Regional Technical Colleges, and the abolition of fees for HE in the 1990s. In the new millennium, Ireland faces a range of economic, political, social and cultural challenges, and once again, education will play an important role in shaping the nation.

The Irish Government has set its strategic objective of “placing its HE systems in the top ranks of OECD countries in terms of both quality and levels of participation and by the priority 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”, as agreed in Lisbon 2000 (OECD, 2004 (a)).

Examination of this set of strategy objectives illustrates the tensions and conflicting demands placed on the Irish education system, which is fundamentally integral to the development of the national economy. An education system that is open to all, but that is a world leader in research and development is both difficult to structure and finance. Ó Buachalla (1988) identified three dimensions of education policy formulation and implementation relating to access, process and structure, which provides a thematic frame for the research.

2.3. Technical / Vocational Education after the Transition to Independence

Ireland did not experience the rate of industrial development of many other European countries in the 19th century. The Devonshire Commission in 1875 and the Samuel Commission of 1884 set the view that England needed to adopt more serious approaches to promote and develop a system of technical education. In Ireland, the establishment of a system of technical education is a 20th century development. The early government of the newly independent state established a commission, the Technical Education Commission 1926 – 27, to recommend reforms of technical

education. This report recommended that science, drawing, manual instruction and domestic economy should be compulsory subjects in secondary schools. It recommended a system of practical continuation education for young people between 14 and 16. This programme should be distinct from that of technical schools that were seen as providing for the 16+ age cohort. The inclusion of the first two years of apprentice training was also recommended.

The central recommendations of the commission formed the basis of the Vocational Education Act, 1930 (Government of Ireland, 1930). The term “vocational” was used to describe both the continuation education and technical education concepts that went before. Continuation education, intended for 14 – 16 year olds, was not designated as compulsory in the Act. It was framed in a manner, as requested by the Catholic hierarchy, as to not infringe on the type of education provided in national and secondary schools. In 1947, a Group Certificate examination was introduced for vocational schools that was to be taken at the end of a two-year cycle. Under the Act, technical education was defined as “education pertaining to trades, manufactures, commerce and other industrial pursuits and in subjects bearing thereon or relating thereto and includes education in science and art and also includes physical training” (p. Sect 4.1). It was seen as having the dual purpose of training young people for employment and for upskilling those in employment. Higher technical education was confined to the county boroughs – Dublin, Cork, Limerick and Waterford. In the 1930s, five main colleges of specialisation were identified in Dublin in Technology, Commerce, Trades and Crafts, Domestic Science and Music. These institutions served a national as well as a municipal role in the provision of technological courses. Minimum age of entry was 16, and these institutions would develop into what is DIT today.

The Commission on Technical Instruction 1926 – 27 had outlined concerns as to the dearth of proper schemes of apprenticeship training. The Apprenticeship Act, 1931 (Government of Ireland, 1931) achieved little, and it was not until the new Apprenticeship Act 1959 that a National Apprenticeship Board was established requiring all employers to send apprentices to training courses. Various schemes included block release, day release, and part-time release by technical schools.

2.4. Key Policy Documents in Defining the Non-University Sector in Ireland in the 1960s

Prior to the 1960s HE was predominantly status driven, reserved for the elite (White, 2001). The curriculum was predetermined and was seen as the most appropriate way to discipline young minds. Diligence and responsibility were seen to be the hallmarks of an educated young man. Students usually learned through rote memorisation, and usually studied subjects such as Latin, mathematics and ethics. Learning was seen as hard work, requiring personal sacrifice and discipline, and teachers knew what students should learn. It was presumed that an elite, homogenous-thinking, closed group would meet social needs. The first programme for economic expansion in 1958 would fundamentally change the perception of vocational education. During the 1960s a number of reports were written that provided the basis for the development of the non-university sector in Ireland.

2.4.1. OECD Report 1964

The OECD had a significant role in the preparation and acceptance of the Investment in Education Report that was to fundamentally alter the accepted views on education in Ireland. The organisation was specifically influenced by the emerging rivalry between the East and the West at the height of the cold war. The predecessor to the OECD, the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation had influenced government views that the development of education, and of scientific research,

were essential elements for economic growth (Government Committee for Scientific and Technical Personnel, 1961).

The OECD Report (1964) on the training of technicians in Ireland was one of the first policy review documents to structurally frame the discourse on vocational education in Ireland through the 1960s, which ultimately led to the development of the Regional Technical Colleges that made up the majority of the non-university sector in Ireland.

Public policy reviews at this time were concerned with economic growth and social well-being and focused on “the development of human resources and the stimulation of scientific and technological progress” (OECD, 1964, p. 7)

The policy discourse that provided a focus for the OECD Reviews of National Policies for Science and Education for all countries, including non-OECD, held that “The role of science and education in national development, the way in which science and education and education can – or should – be linked to economic policy and social demand, the competing needs of research and teaching and similar questions are matters that concern people everywhere (OECD, 1964, p. 7).

It was hoped that this series of national reviews would contribute significantly to national policies on science and education; two issues that were of specific interest to the Irish government of the time. Unusually for this type of review, the Irish Department of Education undertook a joint survey of the tasks, responsibilities, recruitment and training of technicians in a cross section of Irish firms (OECD, 1964, p. 8), illustrating the focus of the government on improving the economic activities for the country.

While the Irish economy relied heavily on agriculture at this time, there was a significant shift in the labour market toward manufacturing through industrial

expansion, although the most serious obstacle to this development was the perceived lack of suitably educated and trained personnel who could engage productively with the development, management and operation of different types of industry.

While the role of the engineering technician was relatively clearly defined (the EUSEC definition being widely accepted) (EUSEC, 1960), it was difficult to extend these definitions to other industrial fields. This report outlined the principal grades of skill and education required in industry in other countries. These were identified as the operative, the craftsman, the technician and the technologist. The levels and types of training and education for these four grades was one of the main difficulties in the research for this review. It was clear that operatives in general had access to a small number of courses. Craftsmen could only be qualified through an apprenticeship that was a particularly lengthy process in Ireland, usually 5 – 7 years in length, beginning at age 14 – 16 and completed at age 21. Craftsmen were usually released from work to attend courses, on day-release or block-release, and completed assessment for Junior Trade Certificates mid-way through their training and Senior Trade Certificates at the end. However, only about one quarter of all apprentices obtain the Senior Certificate (OECD, 1964, p. 16). Consequent to the Irish Apprentice Act, 1959 (Government of Ireland, 1959), major changes to the apprenticeship training schemes were planned, particularly through the supply of apprentice training through technical schools, either day or residential. These new technical schools were expected to lead to a considerable rise in the levels of skill and productivity among apprentices and newly trained skilled workers. Progress on the significant part of apprentice training, on-the-job, was reliant on the quality and productivity of plants, which at the time was dominated by a large number of small

firms. At the other end of the spectrum, the training of technologists usually involved study at degree level in Science or Engineering at one the Irish Universities.

2.4.2. Training of Technicians in Ireland

In the middle ground, technician training and education was a level above that of craftsmen, and courses were designed around the preparation for the “Technological Certificate”. The fundamental system was based on a combination of industry training based on a craft apprenticeship coupled with a school-based course that became more academic. The inadequate education of many participants led to high failure rates. Alternatively, the most common qualification reported by those in industry was the Irish Schools Leaving Certificate; a significant number of technicians had university degrees; and a number were studying for such degrees – usually by way of evening courses. (OECD, 1964, p. 26)

This was one of the most significant findings of the report. While the majority of candidates for the Technological Certificates were almost exclusively craftsmen or apprentices, an alternative avenue of entry to any proposed technician course was required to attract candidates from the secondary school stream at age 16 – 18. The report proposed that a closer liaison be established between the secondary and technical systems in the Department of Education, and that regulations that are more flexible be introduced with regard to the Secondary School Intermediate and Leaving Certificates whereby these might be awarded in smaller groups of subjects for those students who wished to pursue technician courses. (OECD, 1964, p. 38).

Particular difficulties were evident at this level in the Irish study, as there were a wide variety of small firms operating in a variety of industries, with little by way of comprehensive set of definitions or systems in place. Three issues became evident as part of the research for the report: -

- What kinds of training, and in what volume, does industry require?
- How might existing courses and examinations be modified to meet the requirements of industry?
- How can training be provided for the more specialised types of technician in view of the small numbers required and the dispersion and small size of firms?

The report highlighted that the education of a technician should be different from that of either the craftsman or the technologist, but it was not entirely clear at this point what the nature of that education should be. In many industries, technicians were promoted from craftsmen levels and with little significant difference in wages.

The report, however did suggest that...

“In the more highly developed industries the technician’s work may demand an education of almost degree standard in a special branch of technology in which he works. To cater for this type of case a specially designed longer course is essential, to be entered in at age 16 – 18 after a good general education”.

(OECD, 1964, p. 17).

This recommendation was to prove prescient in the developments over the coming years that culminated in the opening of the first six Regional Technical Colleges in 1970/71.

Some significant weaknesses were also identified by the report. In many of the firms involved in the research there seemed to be no clear concept of the kinds of manpower that are required for highest efficiency, the educational opportunities that should be offered to employees in order to improve their value to the firm, and the best method of utilising well-trained personnel, especially at technician and technologist level. This makes it difficult for educational authorities to provide courses that will be of value to industry.

A further difficulty in the task of raising the standards of technicians in Ireland is the lack of a nationally recognised technician diploma. The absence of such a diploma

deterred many parents from considering sub-professional technical course for their children.

2.4.3. Investment in Education

The Investment in Education Report was commissioned by the then Minister for Education Dr Patrick Hillery in 1962, and was published in 1965. It was the result of a pilot study carried out by the OECD under the Education Investment and Planning Programme (EIPP), and Ireland was the first country to accept participation in the project. This was a more realistic investigation into the performance of the Irish education system, due to the unprecedented international scrutiny, and an acknowledgement of the sheer volume of progress that was required was prevalent in the report. Seán O'Connor (a former Secretary at the Department of Education) believed it to be “one of the most important policy decisions and one of the most courageous ever made about Irish education” (O'Connor, 1986, p. 63). The Report highlighted the shortcomings of the Irish education system, which left little choice for the government but “to devise policies consistent with the facts produced by the report” (O'Connor, 1986, p. 110).

Clancy (1996) describes Investment in Education as “probably the foundation document” (p. 28) of modern Irish education. The driving force behind the production of the documents was the changing view in political circles of the importance of economic expansion as identified in the First Programme for Economic Expansion of 1958, which proposed a switch from the protectionist policies of the past to free market policies. The Investment in Education (Survey Team, 1962) report identified a “marked association between participation and social group” drawing attention to the low rate of post-primary participation by pupils from semi-skilled and unskilled backgrounds.

Regional Distribution

The report highlighted the lack of technical education outside the major cities of Dublin, Cork, Limerick and Waterford. Regional disparities existed with regard to participation, with rates in some counties, particularly Donegal, far below the national average, as well as the other counties in Ulster (Cavan and Monaghan), and many of the counties in Leinster. The Munster counties had greater participation rates, particularly at secondary schools. The lack of education provision was seen as a possible cause for emigration.

Technical education was also defined broadly by the report as “education in or pertaining to trades, manufactures, commerce or other industrial pursuits, and includes education in science, art and domestic subjects” (Survey Team, 1962, p. 13). The range of course provision proposed but lacking was also broad and diverse “Under this heading full courses for apprentices, whole-time day courses in science, engineering, architecture, surveying, dietetics, etc. which lead to professional qualifications, whole-time or part-time technical training, special training courses in connection with new industrial development , winter farm schools and evening courses whether of a professional, technical, general or leisure type” (Survey Team, 1962, p. 13).

The challenge with the separation of technical training from secondary education was apparent.

“At present then a person who starts in a vocational school is very unlikely to enter another division or indeed, as we shall see, to reach the higher levels of technical education”

(Survey Team, 1962, p. 135).

Individuals from higher social classes were also less likely to enter vocational education due to the lack of avenues for progression to higher levels of education from the junior cycle of the vocational schools. Early entry to apprenticeships at 15 or 16 also precluded individuals from gaining senior cycle education – “in practice one cannot be a skilled tradesman and have a leaving certificate” (Survey Team, 1962, p. 171). The proposed Technical Leaving Certificate and regional colleges were expected to modify some of these positions.

Education Planning

Education has been widely acknowledged, along with a favourable tax regime facilitating Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), as one of the key factors in Ireland’s continued economic development. This has been facilitated to varying degrees by the direct state intervention in economic policy and role of the EU from the 1980s through its cohesion policy. The IIE recognised the importance of including education planning

“as education planning is at once a cause and consequence of economic growth, economic planning is incomplete without educational planning”

(Survey Team, 1962, p. 350).

Thus, the report recommended that an educational development unit be set up in the Department of Education resulting in a

“shift in emphasis from ordinary administration to active development [which] would also accord with the positive and dynamic outlook required for the success of the Second Programme for Economic Expansion and of the later economic programmes that will inevitably follow”

(Survey Team, 1962, p. 350).

Investment and Knowledge Production

While the Report offered a wide range of possibilities for the reform primarily of primary and post-primary education, it also was fundamental in introducing theories of human capital as part of Ireland's economic thinking and encouraging the discourse on education as a cost or investment that persist to this day.

“Education, therefore, is at once a form of private consumption and investment and also a social form of consumption and investment” (p. 381).

Expansion in Irish education was underpinned by significant increases in the funding devoted to education in the years following the publication of the IIE Report. Even though the report was somewhat unhelpful in the debate on investment and consumption, O'Connor (1986) highlights the reconceptualization of expenditure on education as an investment as revolutionary for Ireland in the 1960s.

“Is education consumption (or ‘output’) or investment (or ‘input’)? If it is investment, (if education is a necessary input or raw material for the production of goods and services), then it is important to know how much and what type of input is needed for any given level of output” (Survey Team, 1962, p. 374).

The report also referred to the concept of knowledge production within the context of education.

“The knowledge-producing concept of education also throws light on the relationship between education and economic growth. Education can be both a cause and a consequence of economic growth.” (p. 376)

In commending the team on the IIE Report, the National Industrial Economic Council made some interesting observations in their Comments on “Investment in Education” (1966). Most specifically, they isolated what they saw as the three interlinked major objectives of an education system, and ranked them in order of importance. The first “is the development of the individual person” (p. 3); second, “the educational system can develop a receptiveness to new ideas”; and third, “is to

enable the individual to realise their potential....that he will require to make his work productive” (p. 4). Given the prevalence of the views on human capital theory as a driver of economic reform at this time, these objectives point to a more holistic view of HE that has as much relevance to the discourse of today. Contemporaneous reports were published elsewhere with similar themes, such as the Robbins Report (Robbins, 1963) in the UK.

2.4.4. Commission on Higher Education 1960 – 1967

The Minister for Education, Dr Patrick Hillery had also established a twenty-eight-person commission on Higher Education in 1960 with very broad terms of reference

“having regard to the educational needs and to the financial and other resources of the country to inquire into and to make recommendations in relation to university, professional technological and Higher Education generally, with specific reference to the following:

- a) The general organisation and administration of education at these levels;*
- b) The nature and extent of the provision to be made for such education;*
- c) The machinery for the making of academic and administrative appointments to the staffs of the Universities and University Colleges; and*
- d) The provision of courses of Higher Education through Irish.*

(p. xxviii)

Perhaps it was the freedom given and the vast range of issues which were examined that led to serious problems about the duration of the Commission’s work, as well as some of the solutions it felt necessary to propose (Coolahan, 1990).

After extensive inquiries both in Ireland and abroad, the Commission reported in 1967. The report concluded that there was a lack of planning for HE and that HE outside the universities was underdeveloped. Given that the state was the principal provider of finance for HE, the Commission recommended the government impose

certain limitations to the autonomy of the universities, given that it had only limited control over how the large subvention of public funds to the universities was spent. For the non-university sector, the commission recommended the establishment of a Technological Authority (Commission on Higher Education, 1967 (b), p. 527). The authority's educational functions would be at an organisational rather than teaching level, it would provide scholarships, arrange for academic training and research programmes, and have the power to make academic awards. The commission provided the first recommendation for the development of a binary approach to HE in Ireland, with a University system and a complementary 'technological system'. It might be argued that the concept was copied from the system developed in Britain in the mid-1960s, which was then proposed for use in Ireland with little adjustment to local conditions. It subsequently emerged as a persistent policy at the Department of Education.

The Commission was responsible for the establishment of the HEA on an ad hoc basis in 1968, which was subsequently formally given legislative functions by the Higher Education Authority Act, 1971 (Government of Ireland, 1971).

In the main, however, the commission, which in many ways provided a detailed blueprint for HE in Ireland, was not very influential (Clancy, 2015, p. 15).

2.5. Regional Technical Colleges / Institutes of Technology – the Early Years

When the process of industrialisation accelerated in Ireland during the early 1960s, it became apparent that there was a scarcity of technical, technological, scientific and management expertise in the country.

The government of the day decided to establish eight Regional Technical Colleges (RTCs), thus signalling a policy to develop a separate extra-university sector of HE and in the process the creation of a dual system of HE, which exists to this day.

Dr Patrick Hillary, President of Ireland, announced the establishment of a number of Technical Colleges throughout the country in a major policy statement on 20 May 1963. Following discussions, it was decided to establish colleges in Athlone, Carlow, Cork, Dundalk, Galway, Limerick, Sligo and Waterford. Later it was decided to establish an RTC in Letterkenny due sustained to political influence. A Steering committee on Technical Education, which presented its report to the minister in April 1967, recommended a large expansion in technical education. It pointed out that Irish people generally did not have the opportunity to become technically skilled and highlighted the prevalent academic bias in the education system. Increased technical knowledge and skills were regarded as essential prerequisites for further economic growth as well as the promotion of innovation and enterprise. Investment in Education (1962) was seen as an essential part of industrial development, particularly throughout the regions (outside Dublin).

The committee outlined the role of the RTCs as follows:

“We believe that the main long-term function of the college will be to educate for trade and industry over a broad spectrum of occupations ranging from craft to professional level, notably in engineering and science, but also in commercial, linguistic and other specialties. They will, however, be more independently concerned with providing courses aimed at filling gaps in the industrial manpower structure, particularly in the technician area”.

The most important recommendation with regards to their role was the following: -

“We do not foresee any final fixed pattern of courses in the colleges. If they are to make the most effective contribution to the needs of society and the economy, they must be capable of continuing adaptation to social, economic and technological change. Initiatives at local and national level will largely determine how far this vital characteristic is developed. We are concerned that the progress of these colleges should not be deterred by any artificial limitation of either scope or the level of their educational achievements”.

The RTCs were established under Section 38 of the Vocational Education Committee Act, 1930 (Government of Ireland, 1930), without the requirement of any

new legislation. Each RTC was funded by the Department of Education through its parent VEC, although each RTC also had a Board of Management that operated as a sub-committee of the parent VEC.

The building of the RTCs commenced in early 1968. Five colleges opened in September 1970: Athlone, Carlow, Dundalk, Sligo and Waterford, followed by Letterkenny in 1971; Galway in 1972 and Cork in 1974. A ninth college, Tralee, was raised to Regional status in 1979. The regional technical college Tallaght opened in September 1992, while Limerick College of Art, Commerce and Technology became a regional college in 1993. Dun Laoghaire was approved in 1995 and opened in 1997. Blanchardstown became the final institute in 1999, when all RTCs were designated as Institutes of Technology.

Building Design Associates (BDA) that was formed to design and supervise the construction of the initial seven colleges undertook the initial design for the colleges. The college buildings were identical in design, designed around a two storey concrete frame using a series of grids and sub-grids. Each college could be altered in size depending on the final requirements. The form of construction used lent itself to speedy construction, as well as to significant cost advantages.

The mix of Business, Engineering and Science programmes was common to all the RTCs while some had workshop spaces dedicated to the training of apprentices.

2.5.1. Certification of Programmes

The speed at which the RTCs were completed and the initial recruitment drive for programmes resulted in problems of certification. Initially, colleges were to offer the proposed Technical Leaving Certificate for a period of five years. In some regions, this resulted in some animosity between vocational and comprehensive schools that had just begun offering the Leaving Certificate and the RTCs, particularly when

VECs transferred the Leaving Certificate students to the RTCs. The RTCs did not offer the Technical Leaving Certificate after the first year, as demand for other programmes increased, and the proposal for the Technical Leaving Certificate was subsequently dropped by the Department of Education.

Clancy (2008) explains the national context:

“While, in keeping with the Minister’s original intention, the Committee’s enrolment projections were that the third-level component of these colleges would constitute only 28% of stock enrolments, the colleges quickly shed all second-level teaching and evolved as third-level colleges. The proposal to introduce the Technical Leaving Certificate was quietly dropped, thus removing the rationale for the colleges’ involvement in second level senior cycle work, while the new colleges’ role in apprenticeship training was also curtailed by separate developments within the Industrial Training Authority (AnCO), which reduced the role of the educational system in the training and education of apprentices” (p. 126)

There were significant problems of recognition of courses offered between 1970 and 1972, as there was no certification body set up for this purpose. The NCEA (National Council for Educational Awards) was set up in 1972 on an ad hoc basis to resolve this issue, but did not become a statutory body until 1980 under the National Council for Educational Awards Act, 1979 (Government of Ireland, 1979). Both the Steering Committee on Technical Education and the HEA had recommended its establishment

“to encourage, facilitate, promote, co-ordinate and develop technical, industrial, scientific, technological and commercial education, and education in art and design, provided outside the universities, whether professional, vocational or technical and to encourage and promote liberal education”

(Government of Ireland, 1979, p. Sect 3.1)

The Council granted temporary recognition to all national certificate courses underway, which alleviated the problems, particularly where RTCs had the difficulty in getting their courses accepted by society and employers. Once the system of

external examiners was established to monitor standards, and panels were available to approve proposed courses for validation by the council, the system slowly began to positively affect the applications for courses at the RTCs. Some colleges recognised the problem of gaining recognition for qualifications and sought recognition and / or exemptions from professional bodies and universities. It was also practice in many instances to enter students for examinations through the UK, particularly with City and Guilds London Institute.

2.5.2. Validation and Recognition of Qualifications

More impactful on the non-university sector was the proposal for NCEA to lose its degree awarding powers, to be restructured as the Council for Technological Education, with responsibility for the two new National Institutes of Higher Education (NIHEs) proposed for Limerick and Dublin. The NIHEs were to become constituent colleges of the Dublin or regional universities. The RTCs were to continue being funded through the Vocational Education Committees, in consultation with the Council for Technological Education.

Issues with validation and degree-awarding powers arose in National Institute of Higher Education, Limerick (NIHEL) when an application for designation as a recognised college of NUI was deemed unworkable by the panel from UCC. Some courses were deemed eligible for degrees but no mention was made of honours degrees. After challenges and counter-challenges, and student protests, the supervision and validation of courses was transferred from UCC to UCG, which lessened the tension between NIHEL and NUI.

The issue of interim degree awarding powers of NCEA also reverberated in the RTCs. In Galway RTC in 1976, four students studying for a degree in Hotel and Catering Management were awarded higher diplomas at gradation as neither NCEA

nor University College Galway (UCG) - also known as National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG) - were in a position to award a degree, even though NCEA had granted degree recognition to the course in 1975. Minister for Education, Richard Burke was replaced by Peter Barry in 1976, and the new minister allowed the four students to be awarded NCEA degrees in March 1977.

By attempting to strip the NCEA of degree awarding powers and giving the Universities sole responsibility for the process, the government sent a message that university degrees were somehow superior to an NCEA degree. The NCEA and students in the non-university sector paid the price for this misjudged policy.

From the beginning, the structure of courses was designed to facilitate student progression through the system from certificates, to diplomas and where available onto degrees, while each award continued to be a qualification in itself. This 2 + 1 + 1 structure and ladder of progression forms the basis of programme provision in many IoTs today, and is nationally and internationally recognised through the National Framework of Qualifications introduced as part of the Bologna Process. The Minister for Education, Richard Burke's assertion that he consulted widely prior to announcing his plans for a comprehensive system of HE seems doubtful, given the level of objection from all stakeholders to that announcement. In any case, the development of the legislation to give effect to the new comprehensive system for HE did not materialise as the government lost the general election of 1977.

2.5.3. A Liberal Education in Technical Colleges

During the initial years of the RTCs, the binary divide supported the publicly held, but factually incorrect notion that the universities did not offer technological courses and that the RTCs did not offer courses with liberal studies. The Report of the Working Party on Complementary Studies (NCEA, 1976) proposed that the function

of such a course is “to counter the danger of excessive specialisation and to assist in the all-round development of the student as an individual person and as a member of society so that he [sic] may bring qualities of balance and perception to bear in every field of his activity (p. 19). Complementary studies were not just available to business students, but to science and engineering students also, thus ensuring an education experience that was more than a specialised vocational education and training.

The loss of the Technical Leaving Certificate and the lack of certification were not the only obstacles experienced in the early years. The new colleges provided new challenges to the Fine Gael / Labour coalition government and in particular to the Minister for Education, Richard Burke.

In December 1974, the Minister announced proposals that contained plans to replace the nascent binary system with a comprehensive system. The two universities in Dublin were to remain, with UCC and UCG combining in a reduced NUI. St. Patrick’s College Maynooth had options to join any of the three universities. In a volte face in 1976, it was announced that UCC, UCG and St Patrick’s College Maynooth were to become independent Universities and that the NUI was to be dissolved.

The policy was designed to concentrate HE in the three new university structures, with constituent colleges linked to the universities for degree and post-graduate work, and the remit of the HEA would be expanded to cover all HE. The status of the NCEA was to be reduced through the loss of degree awarding power.

The Universities, the Irish Federation of University Teachers, the Union of Students in Ireland, and the RTCs all voiced their opposition to the proposals. This decision

was reversed by the new Minister for Education, John P Wilson, with the return of a Fianna Fáil government in the 1977 election.

There were other challenges that affected the development of the RTCs during the 1970s.

Prior to the introduction of the RTC, higher technical and commercial education was provided through the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee (CDVEC) as well as smaller provision in Cork and Limerick. The CDVEC provision was spread over a number of locations in Bolton and Kevin Streets (Technology), Rathmines (Commerce), and a proposal was made in 1971 to move the three campuses to a new campus in Ballymun, Dublin. This became known as the Ballymun Project. The project stalled as the CDVEC was unhappy with the governance structure of the new institution, which would see it become independent of the CDVEC. The project languished for four years, before the government set up the NIHED in 1975, along the same structures as the NIHE in Limerick.

The CDVEC colleges continued to challenge existing structures when in 1975, TCD entered into an alliance with CDVEC to validate engineering courses. In 1976 a joint partnership agreement was published and students from two VEC colleges graduated with TCD degrees that year.

2.6. A Time for Consolidation

The election of 1977 saw Fianna Fáil return to power, having made “extravagant commitments, which severely damaged the economy for a period of at least 15 years” (Fitzgerald, 1991, p. 321). During this time, education reform and development was not a priority for the government, as the political and economic climate favoured neither.

In July 1977, the government re-established the degree-awarding powers of the NCEA. The Minister for Education, John Wilson, indicated that the NCEA was responsible for the awarding of certificates, diplomas and degrees to the non-university sector, while insisting that the National College of Art and Design (NCAD) – of which he was a board member – should cease to submit their degrees to TCD, and should instead submit them to NCEA. Unfortunately, he was unable to exert the same influence on the CDVEC who in 1978 decided not to submit any more courses to NCEA for validation.

Successive government ministers were of the opinion that the newly created NIHED would take over all the third level activities of the CDVEC. The CDVEC had an alternative plan – to merge its six colleges offering HE courses into one unified institution called the Dublin Institute of Technology, to take effect in September 1978.

Due in part to the ongoing tensions between the minister and the CDVEC, the NCEA Bill of 1978 made no specific reference to DIT or the six colleges, and therefore the resultant “statute which was meant to copper-fasten the binary system in effect ensured that such a system could never be watertight” (White, 2001, p. 148). During his short time as Minister for Education between 1981 and 1982, John Boland had the distinction of confirming that the six City of Dublin VEC colleges had recognition as the Dublin Institute of Technology. He also allocated funds for the development of an RTC for the greater Dublin area.

A HEA-commissioned report recommended the additional provision of four RTCs in Dublin to meet the growing demand of the population. The report concluded that progression to third level education was lower in Dublin than in other parts of the

country (Clancy & Benson, 1979). These developments were impeded by the economic climate of the time.

Clancy (1982) identified a series of variations in participation rates on the basis of socio-economic status, the type of post-primary school attended and proximity to a college. In total, out of 13000 students entering HE in 1980, 5,500 went to University-type institutions, 1,200 to Colleges of Education, and 6,700 to institutions more usually described as 'technological' (p. 4). It was clear that the non-university sector was playing a significant role in expanding participation in HE.

Between the 1960s and 1980s, HE became more widely accessible, particularly with the introduction of the Regional Technical Colleges (RTCs) in 1970. During this time the focus on education was to prepare students for jobs, and to do this, colleges were to teach practical and more popular subjects. The growth in numbers and the shift in the conception of attendance from privilege to right was accompanied by changes in the principles and processes of selection, as happened earlier in the US (Trow, 1973) Specialisation within a field was an important goal of education at this time. The RTCs were also required to meet the social needs of students as well as their intellectual needs. During this period, there emerged a recognition of the effect of social inequalities on education achievement, resulting in special efforts to reduce the effects of such inequalities. Students' interests began to dictate what they should learn and students became more aware of what they should learn (Clancy, 1989). It was considered essential that students benefit from hands-on learning in laboratories and other real world settings. This form of education provided a strong incentive for large US companies to establish European bases in Ireland, and has until recently been a major influence in Foreign Direct Investment in Ireland. Massification of HE was caught up in the larger post-Fordist modernisation on national and international

levels. This massification was more a product of external social, political and economic influences, rather than a product of the internal dynamics of the system (Scott, 1995 (a)), which resulted in a system that has become an increasingly substantial competitor for public expenditures. Fortunately for Ireland, this coincided with a large net inflow of funds from the European Union, which allowed for a particularly rapid expansion, particularly the European Social Fund that transformed access to sub-degree (certificate and diploma) education. Under these conditions, there was little debate on questions of academic freedom, and institutional autonomy was restricted as government, both national and EU, were the primary source of funding.

2.7. The 1980s – Challenges and Opportunities

During the twenty years of 1980s to 2000, colleges assumed the responsibility to prepare broadly educated citizens to assume civic responsibilities. HE Institutions (HEIs) were to develop students' problem solving and decision-making skills. To achieve this, interdisciplinary coursework was considered essential to student learning, the curriculum was made practical, but relevant, independent learning was fostered and students began to alternate course work with on the job experience related to their course of study. Career preparation was an expected outcome of a college education, while the view of education as a lifelong process began to take shape. Many of these issues were more easily absorbed by the newer RTCs (O'Hara, 1993), which were re-designated as IoTs during this period. In these institutions of mass HE, there was a concern with the preparation of large numbers for life in an advanced industrial society. The system of HE in Ireland is more closely aligned to the EU than is the UK (Scott, 1995 (a)). However, Ireland differs from its European

neighbours where the explosive expansion of HE was facilitated by a swift move toward comprehensive secondary education.

The White Paper on Educational Development (1980) placed particular emphasis on the importance of science, technology and business studies, but dramatically underestimated the growth projections in these areas within the non-university sector. This report envisaged 51000 whole-time students by 1990. In 1981/82, the number had already reached 42000, with approximately one third of Leaving Certificate students entering HE in 1980. The HEA funded universities experienced significant growth in their faculties of engineering, science and commerce in clear signs of mission drift into technological education in the university sector. This was facilitated through negotiations between the Manpower Consultative Committee (MCC) and the HEA, where occupational shortages in these areas were evident. The universities began to mirror the activities in the non-university sector by aligning themselves more closely to the business, scientific and industrial life of the country. While the RTCs made a significant contribution to increasing participation in Irish HE, they only achieved a slight increase in students from the lower socio-economic groups.

As Minister for Education between 1982 and 1986, Gemma Hussey adopted a consultative approach to education policy making. She also published annual progress reports on policy implementation and introduced accountability measures for the department. This was anathema to the past culture at the Department of Education. In the Programme for Action, she acknowledged that the biggest challenge facing the country was the increased demand for third-level college places that would require substantial funding (DoES, 1984, p. 28). While increased funding was made available for HE, some significant proposals – reduction from 4 years to 3

for degrees, the promotion of evening degree programmes, and the calculation of unit costs for students and graduates - were not implemented. (DoES, 1984, p. 40). Due to the significant increase in EEC aid through the ESF in 1984, and a further doubling of funding for 1985, the number of new entrants to the RTCs and the NIHEs surpassed that of the Universities, although the total numbers in the universities was still larger due to the longer course durations.

“On the initiative of Gemma Hussey, Minister for Education, 1982 – 1986, all students on one and two year programmes became eligible for ESF grants from the academic year, 1984/5. National Diploma courses became eligible from 1989/90, but new students from 1992 were subject to a means test. ESF grants were fundamental in facilitating access and participation. For the colleges, ESF records, control and returns generated considerable extra-administrative workloads.”

(O'Hara, 1993, p. 10).

While the funding of the non-university sector increased, the opposite was happening in the university sector, with detrimental effects on research and development. The lack of funding was also the cause of the public sector recruitment embargo, which resulted in a reduction in staff and an increase in student teacher ratios.

While acknowledging the changing profile of programme provision in the RTCs since the 1970, the Green Paper – Partners in Education, Serving Community Needs (DoES, 1985) outlined a proposal for the RTCs to remain within the VEC structure, even with the proposed changes from VECs to Local Education Councils (LEC), rather than be designated under the HE Authority Act, 1971 (Government of Ireland, 1971). The Paper stated “The RTCs as their title indicates, are essentially regional institutions and have been developed as such by the vocational education committees. It may be seen as important that the colleges should retain this regional characteristic for which they were first established and thus remain strongly in connection with whatever regional education structures that emerge in the future”

(DoES, 1985, p. 20). However, the Green Paper's view on Dublin Institute of Technology was quite different, and it proposed dealing with DIT separately from the RTCs in the non-university sector, in evaluating whether DIT should become a designated institution under the HEA. "Because of its size, its wide variety of courses in various disciplines, its national rather than regional character and the relationship it already enjoys with the University of Dublin in regards to the award of degrees, the Institute is quite different in character from the RTCs. These characteristics argue in favour of the designation of the Institute" (DoES, 1985, p. 23). It seemed that another institution would cross the binary divide after the NIHEs, thus further diminishing the non-university sector.

The Programme for National Recovery (Government of Ireland, 1987) was the government plan to deal with the national debt that had become unsustainable, and ran for three years. The austerity measures involved required the support of the opposition parties. The Tallaght Strategy was agreed with "Fianna Fáil implementing Fine Gael economic and fiscal policies" (Quinn, 2006, p. 243).

2.7.1. The National Education Convention

In October 1993, Minister Bhreathnach held a National Education Convention (NEC) in Dublin Castle as a mechanism to evaluate the Green Paper and to ensure extensive discussions on key issues of education policy. The issue of regionalisation was discussed at the NEC, with proposals emerging to increase the power, composition and function of the VECs. Her position paper on Regional Education Councils (RECs) published in March 1994 recommended eight RECs. The IVEA was instrumental in challenging the proposal of rationalisation of the VECs. The Resulting White Paper – Charting Our Education Future (DoES, 1995) was the result of the consultation process including the NEC, and therefore received general

approval. A Further Education Authority was to be established to co-ordinate provision of PLCs and Teastas (the Irish National Certification Authority) was to be set up to regulate national certification of adult education and training programmes. At third level, the RTCs and DIT were to be brought under the remit of the HEA. Also at third level, the two defining policy initiatives centred on ensuring that HE answered the economic and social needs of society.

In responding to the economic needs of the country, increased emphasis was placed on science, technology, engineering and business, and on institutions creating enhanced links with industry and the business community in the private sector. Research policy decisions were made in line with the proposals from the NEC, where research budget allocations would combine a core allocation and a competitive element, and each institution would be required to publish its policy on research. A HEA commissioned study by Circa Group Europe found that while the quality of some areas of research produced by Irish Universities was at or above world levels, public funding of HE research in Ireland was among the worst in the OECD” (CIRCA Group Europe, 1996, p. 3). This lack of funding resulted in a concentration of funding allocations to the universities to the detriment of the non-university sector.

2.7.2. The Central Applications Office and the Non- University Sector

Up until 1991, the Central Applications Office (CAO) managed applications for degree courses in universities and other institutions. In parallel, the non-university sector individually operated separate systems for allocating places on certificate and diploma level programmes, which while basing the allocation on leaving certificate results, also combined this with other application processes including interviews or portfolios. Between 1991 and 1996, the CAO operated a Central Application

System (CAS) for sub-degree level programmes in parallel with its CAO system for degree programmes. In 1997, the CAS was removed and the single system that is in operation today was established. The universities, who own the CAO system, have made subsequent modifications over the years. They reintroduced bonus points for Higher Level Leaving Certificate Maths to encourage more students to take the honours paper, thus making them eligible for university programmes in science and engineering where an honours maths grade is a requirement. A more recent proposal to alter the weighting of grades, as well as offering points for an E-grade on a higher-level paper is to be introduced for the 2016/17 application process.

As numbers increased in HE, levels of inequality of access appeared to reduce, but Clancy and Wall's study of 1998 reported a slowing down of the reduction in inequality (Clancy & Wall, 2000). Individual access programmes were offered by UL (Limerick Community-based Education Initiative), the BITE (Ballymun Initiative for Third-Level Education) project which offered entry to DCU, and the TCD TAP (Trinity Access Programme). The HEAR (Higher Education Access Route) and DARE (Disability Access Route to Education) provided spaces nationally to students to increase access to University education. In the case of the RTCs, DIT and the Teacher Training Colleges, hardship funds were made available directly from the Department (Government of Ireland, 1999, p. 136).

The biggest change to HE policy came in 1995 with the abolition of third level fees, which was seen by some as socially regressive, and would not tackle inequality in the system as it would disproportionately benefit the middle classes. The abolition of fees did not extend to part-time students or to post-graduates - that was seen as running counter to government policy of improving participation rates of mature students.

2.7.3. A New Millennium – Increased Autonomy for the IoTs

In June 1999, Ireland signed up to the Bologna Declaration, with the aim of establishing the EHEA by 2010. The establishment of the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) in 2001 provided a framework to promote international recognition of awards and encourage international mobility.

Commencing in the mid-1990s, following an initial application by Waterford RTC for re-designation as an Institute of Technology, Minister Micheál Martin upgraded all the Regional Technical Colleges to Institutes of Technology. The process was finalised through the Institutes of Technology Act, 2006 (Government of Ireland, 2006).

The Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) was established in June 2001 under the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999 (Government of Ireland, 1999), which took over the role of the NCEA. The council immediately pursued a strategy of delegating authority to recognised institutions to make a wide range of awards at sub-degree, degree and post-graduate levels. The “Criteria and Procedures for the Delegation and Review of Delegation of Authority to make awards” was published in February 2004, and outlined the process that recognised institutions would follow to receive delegated authority. DIT had offered degrees awarded from University of Dublin and sub-degree awards from HETAC, and the Regional Technical Colleges had HETAC awards at all levels. These institutions applied to HETAC for delegated authority to award HETAC qualifications in their own name.

2.8. The Move to Universal Education in Ireland

Much has changed since universities considered themselves as “singular entities with various loose linkages (to knowledge, to academia, to the government, to the nation,

to the globe) without any single [one] of these references viewed as clearly dominant (Teichler, 2008 (a), p. 356).

Trow's (1973) conceptual framework of HE development identifies three phases of development including elite, mass and universal education. He proposed a linear model of evolution from elite HE catering for less than five per cent of the population, to mass (up to fifty per cent) and then to universal access (over fifty per cent) to HE (1973). These phases of development can be clearly identified in the history of HE in Ireland in the latter half of the 20th century. Trow (1973) concludes that the expansion of student numbers seems to precede other institutional changes in almost all cases. Given that the rapid expansion of HE in Ireland is a recent phenomenon, it is therefore reasonable to expect a period of continued change at institutional and sectoral levels, coupled with an emergent set of challenges, in Irish HE. The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (HEA, 2011 (a)) is in effect a response to the increase in student numbers and significant change in the nature and structure of HE at sectoral and institutional levels.

2.9. The Current Structure of Higher Education in Ireland

A "binary model" (Kyvik, 2004) has become the most common structure of HE systems in Europe and has been used to characterise the Irish HE system, distinguishing between a university sector and a "non-university" sector. This classification of the Irish HE is overly simplistic as there have been other types of HE institutions on the landscape. Since the establishment of the non-university technical colleges in 1970, the HE System in Ireland has comprised of the University Sector, the Technological Sector and the Colleges of Education, as well as a number of independent specialist colleges, many of which have been merged with larger institutions over recent years. In recent years, a number of independent private

colleges have been established which offer a ranges of courses complementing the existing provision in the sector. There is significant overlap in the boundaries of provision between the Universities and the IoTs at honours degree and postgraduate study levels, and between the IoTs and the Further Education Colleges at sub-degree certificate levels and apprenticeships. Private colleges also compete strongly with the IoTs for degree level and continuing professional development programmes.

2.9.1. The non-University Sector

Up until 2007, the Department of Education and Skills had overall responsibility for the technological sector of HE. This role included the responsibility for the formulation and review of policy for the budgetary and regulatory framework.

When established in the 1970s, the Regional Technical Colleges (RTCs), established within the Vocational Education (VEC) structure, initially provided programmes of education and training in areas such as business, science, engineering, linguistics and music to certificate, diploma levels with a small number of programmes offered to bachelor's, master's and doctoral levels. The qualifications were awarded by an external body, for the majority of the time it was the National Council for Education Awards (NCEA).

In the 1990s, the RTCs were established on a statutory basis as autonomous institutions. In line with developments in Europe through the Bologna Process, the RTCs engaged in restructuring programmes to conform to the education cycles at degree, masters and doctorate.

In 2007, all the RTCs were re-designated as Institutes of Technology, following an earlier merger of technical colleges in Dublin to form Dublin Institute of Technology. As DIT and the other IoTs were established under different legislation,

they were dealt with separately by the Department of Education and Skills, although they all resided on the non-university side of the binary divide.

All Institutes of Technology were moved from the direct control of the Department of Education and Skills to the control of the HEA.

Institutes of Technology Ireland (IOTI) was the representative body of the 13 IOTs (excluding DIT). In October 2016, DIT joined the newly constituted Technological Higher Education Association (THEA). The academic staff of the IOTs are members of the Teachers Union of Ireland (TUI), which also represents the majority of second level, vocational school teachers.

The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (HEA, 2011 (a)) has proposed some significant reform of the non-university sector, to include alliances, mergers and upgrading of some merged institutions to Technological University. Much of the reform is driven by the competitiveness and accountability agendas.

2.9.2. The University Sector

There are seven universities in the state, which are autonomous, self-governing institutions. The Irish university system offers degree programmes - at Bachelor, Masters and Doctoral level – in humanities, in the sciences (including technological and social) and in medicine. Some universities have introduced semesterisation and modularisation of course, giving greater flexibility to students. Universities award their own degrees using external examiners to ensure consistency of standards. The universities also have continuing and some distance education programmes and engage in substantial amounts of research work.

The University representative group is the Irish Universities Association (IUA). Institutions are also members of the European Universities Association, as is Dublin

Institute of Technology. Academics in the Universities are members of the Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT).

Irish Universities have performed well in Global Rankings, although have consistently fallen slightly over the past number of years. However, Trinity College Dublin has joined the League of European Research Universities in November 2016, widely regarded as a key player in formulating policy and funded research. There are now 23 Universities in the League.

The HEA is a statutory body whose functions include the funding of universities and other designated third level institutions, the development of third level education to meet the needs of the community and an advisory role in relation to all third level education.

The National Strategy for Higher Education proposed a series of reforms within the University sector including alliances and collaborations, but specifically ruled out any prospect of mergers within the sector (HEA, 2013 (c)).

2.9.3. Colleges of Education

There are five colleges of education, which specialise in the training of first level teachers. They offer two courses – a three-year bachelor of education degree and an 18-month post-graduate diploma. The role of the department in relation to the colleges of education is to ensure that the supply of teachers for first level schools is in accordance with identified needs.

For second level teachers, training usually involves completing a primary degree in a university or other third level institution, and a two-year Post-graduate Diploma in Education or Professional Masters in Education (PME).

There are also teacher-training colleges that specialise in the training of second level home economics teachers, teachers of religion and physical education.

The National Strategy for Higher Education has proposed the integration of these colleges into their geographically proximate Universities. Many of these mergers were completed by 2016, in effect moving the Colleges of Education and other independent colleges (for example the Shannon School of Hotel Management's re-designation as a constituent college of NUIG) across the binary divide to the University Sector, effectively eliminating this sub-sector of the non-university sector.

2.9.4. Private Education Providers

There are a small but significant number of private education providers, primarily in Dublin and the larger provincial cities. These institutions have recently completed a move from overseas validation of programmes to within the Irish Quality Assurance and Accreditation system; with grants available for Irish students providing increased competition for extra-university sector. They are also recognised as having a major impact on Ireland's reputation abroad due to their international recruitment focus. The group of colleges providing degree level education have a representative group, the Higher Education Colleges Association (HECA), which facilitates in planning, co-ordinating and government lobbying for this sector.

2.9.5. QQI (Quality Assurance)

During the 1990s, legislation was introduced to formalise a more systematic and more comprehensive form of QA with the passing of the Universities Act (1997) (Government of Ireland, 1997) and the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act (1999) (Clancy, 2015, p. 155). In response to a government initiative to reduce the number of state agencies (McCarthy, 2009), a proposal to amalgamate all quality assurance bodies in Ireland into one body followed the announcement in October 2008 of the merging of Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC)

and Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC), which would be responsible for quality assurance throughout Further and Higher Education in Ireland. The new organisation has taken responsibility for the formal external quality assurance review of the University sector, which was undertaken in the past by National University Quality Board (NUQB), and some of the functions of the National University of Ireland (NUI) which was to be disbanded. The consolidation of the existing functions was to result in the promotion, maintenance and further development and implementation of the national framework of qualifications, which had been a major development over the previous decade, and seen as a benchmark for other countries. The framework is described in a single line in the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999 (Government of Ireland, 1999), and everything has been developed from that through a process of consultation and discussion among stakeholders. Not having an overly prescribed system and a consultative approach has been seen as a successful method of introducing and effecting change in the educational landscape. The remit of Qualifications and Quality Assurance Authority of Ireland (QQI) was established by the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act, 2012 (Government of Ireland, 2012), to consolidate the existing statutory functions of the bodies that are currently in existence and also to make the additional functions that have been taken on by National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) in the past on a statutory footing and to take on additional statutory functions.

The body will also be involved in formulating policy on quality assurance and the enhancement of the process through directed improvements as reflected through good local and national practice. The reviewing, monitoring and validation of programmes will also be undertaken, and the development of standards of

knowledge, skills and competencies to be acquired by learners for specific awards, and delegate authority to make awards. Improvements are required in reviewing and monitoring, which will result in a less intrusive process and a healthy balance between internal and external QA. Policies would be developed to ensure that learners are protected: policies for access, transfer and progression, monitor implementation of those, and co-operate with international qualifications, quality assurance policies, and their implementation.

2.10. A Contested Landscape of Higher Education

The dominant legitimating idea of public HE has been moving away from the idea of HE as a social institution (Birnbaum, 2000), and moving toward the idea of education's role in economic development. "The idea of HE as a social institution has been displaced by HE as an industry" (Birnbaum, 2000, p. 226)

Many issues have influenced the direction of HE in the past few years. HE in Ireland has expanded to meet the diverse needs of an emerging knowledge society, the changing needs brought about by economic development and the demands of a better-educated and wealthier society.

The forces that are driving change in HE across the developed world include: the increasing demand by individuals for higher levels of attainment; the recognition of the economic return on investment in HE; the expanding and shifting frontiers of knowledge, the impact of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), economic globalisation and internationalisation, government policies on social inclusion and equality. More particularly, the decision by European (including Irish) governments to impose tuition fees has resulted in a marked under-funding of HE in which productivity gains are claimed (Trow, 2000).

The 1990s was a decade of intensive policy development: social, economic and educational reform measures and proposals, and legislation. The swift sustained growth of the Irish economy in the 1990s, combined with a range of social, cultural and political changes is resulting in a new dynamic. In an environment of national goal setting and strategic planning, a traditional society and economy has been transformed into a modern knowledge and information-based society.

The impacts of both national and global changes have impacted on and transformed the Irish HE landscape. In endeavouring to establish a pattern for future development, the themes of non-linearity and irregularity as developed by Scott (1995 (a)) and his typology of HE systems elaborated by Kyvik (2004) are pertinent to providing a roadmap for Irish HE.

As with much of Europe, the state is more authoritative where authority is expressed through active political interventions, for example, the high degree of autonomy given to Institutes of Technology or the decision not to grant university status to those institutes of technology, which would have ended the “binary” system as in the UK. However, there is also strong central administrative regulation, through government agencies, which complements, and sometimes contradicts, stated government policy. For example, in the economically challenged times of 2008, the government has combined the two sectors under the control of the HEA, ensuring that both universities and non-university institutions will be treated more similarly than before, even though the stated aim of government as backed by the OECD report of 2004 is to maintain the binary system. The growth of national systems of HE is a by-product of the development of the nation state in Ireland, as in many other states; the difficulty arises where there is conflict between two opposing philosophical positions arising directly due to the rapid expansion of HE.

2.11. Challenges Facing Higher Education in Ireland

According to the recent OECD report on HE in Ireland, the Irish economy is weak on capital investment, especially Research and Development; lacking sophisticated demanders; exhibits poor linkages and clusters in some indigenous industries; lacking indigenous entrepreneurial activity, and overly protects many industries (OECD, 2004 (a)) This reflects directly on the function and focus of Irish Universities in particular and the Institutes of Technology to a lesser extent.

Academia must be allowed to play an important role in the economic development of Ireland by providing a highly qualified, professional workforce, continued professional development for the development and retraining of staff, and research and development programmes supporting innovation and job creation.

Education is still and will remain an area of national responsibility. At the same time, education, training and lifelong learning are increasingly acknowledged as crucial for the future of Europe, as identified in the document on Universities and the National Plan. The education system in Ireland has benefited greatly from the economic boom of the past number of years. The IoTs, in particular, have often been described as the most startling success story of modern Irish education.

The number of people entering third level education will continue to rise, as the demand for highly skilled workers increases through the development of our knowledge-based society. This increase will also be fuelled by the increased expectations of individuals who have experienced a time of improved social and personal conditions. The transfer rate to third level increased from eleven per cent in 1969 to fifty six per cent in 1999, already reaching the universal HE of Trow's (1973) linear model of development and there is room for more improvement in this rate in the twenty-first century, with the Minister for Education and Science, Batt

O’Keeffe, outlining a target rate of seventy two per cent by 2020 in the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education: 2008 – 2013 (HEA, 2008). Coupled with this is the issue of lifelong learning and the increase in numbers attending third level colleges on a part-time basis.

However, the part-time rate has not shown significant improvements and the part-time population now accounts for only twenty one per cent of the total student population in third level courses aided by the Department of Education.

Increased flexible learning options are seen in the IoT sector, but also within the “Other Colleges” sector, where the National College of Ireland accounts for almost all part-time students. This is certainly an area where improvements can be made. According to the OECD report on HE in Ireland, “in 2002 36,500 students entered HE through the Central Application System, ninety per cent of them in the 17 to 19 age group. The proportion of mature students entering HE is extremely low: in 1997, the proportion of new entrants into university-level education aged 26 was only 2.3% as compared to over 19.3% in the OECD as a whole (OECD, 2004 (a)).

The substantial growth in enrolments has been accompanied similarly by a substantial growth in funding of HE. Government expenditure on HE, as a proportion of total government spending on education has increased, reflecting the higher rate of growth in enrolments in third level education. Nevertheless, budgetary constraints are a recurring theme for the system, and criticisms of the government spending on third level education to the detriment of primary and secondary education may be well founded. AONTAS, the National Adult Education Association was disappointed at the delay in implementing the recommendations of the White Paper on Adult Education, which was published in August 2000.

However, the third level sector has enjoyed significant investment in capital and infrastructure, providing a greatly enhanced work environment for both students and faculty. Colleges have also benefited from the technological developments and links with the information technology sector and other key industries that have developed in recent years. Policy debates on HE efficiency and effectiveness frequently focus upon cost per student.

The extent and speed of the growth in student numbers has presented tremendous challenges to the HE institutions. The social and economic situation that Ireland is moving into over the remainder of this decade is one where change will be the norm, and where many demands will be made of our education system.

The Irish education system and economic development are inextricably linked. They are mutually dependent for their success. They contribute greatly to each other's progress and together provide the basis for sound economic, social and cultural development at national level, while taking account of diversity and individual choice.

“The Irish case has demonstrated that a mass Higher Education system should respond both to the diversity of interests, talents and inclinations of young people but also to the demands of the labour market and the economy for a range, rather than a single set, of qualifications”

(OECD, 2004 (a)).

While there has been a dramatic increase in participation rates in HE in Ireland, this expansion has come predominantly from the 18 – 20-year-old sector, moving into full-time education. There has been little marked increase in the number of part-time older students in HE. Lifelong learning, widening participation and the encouragement of mature students to enter tertiary education have not been given such emphasis in the past, but must be reinforced if Ireland is to capitalise on its

success over the past decade. A question posed by Trow (1976 (a)) still resonates in Ireland post-financial crisis- What is the future of “recurrent education”, a question affected not only by the policies of governments and universities, but also by the policies of industry and professions?

2.12. Summary

It is clear that the process of education policy formulation and implementation is complex. From a policy formulation perspective, the process in the 1960s mirrors somewhat the present day process in that both were precipitated by the OECD reports on Ireland in 1964 and 2004. Many of the themes and concepts that were apparent in the 1960s still resonate today. Deviation from the process is in the national production of policy documents. In the 1960s two key documents were produced – Investment in Education and the Commission Report. Investment in Education was a broad ranging philosophical policy text while the Commission Report was a more prosaic description of how changes would be implemented. The Investment in Education document is remembered as being instrumental in education reform, which the Commission Report was deemed “dead on arrival” as other interventions and developments had rendered it obsolete. The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 in many ways aims to be both a modern day “Investment in Education” and a “Commission Report”.

One common misconception about the RTCs and the NCEA in the early days was that they were only engaged in programmes of study at undergraduate level. While they were not initially planned solely for tertiary education, they were soon to cater for a growing demand for third level places. By 2004, the Institutes of Technology had over 53, 000 full-time students enrolled across a variety of business, science, engineering and humanities programmes, compared with over 77, 000 in the

University sector, and over 3,500 in teacher training colleges. The application process for students entering the IoTs was the same as for the Universities. The Institutions were autonomous, with delegated authority to grant awards up to doctoral level – the first PhD being awarded in IT Sligo in 2000. They were actively engaged in European student mobility and research projects. Following DIT's failed attempt to attain university status, WIT formally applied, under Section 9 of the Universities Act, 1997 (Government of Ireland, 1997). It was clear that many of the IoTs were determined to cross the binary divide.

In numerical terms, and according to Trow's (2005 (a)) typology of elite – mass and universal education, Ireland is considered to have reached the level of universal education, or perhaps more appropriately universal access to education. While this may be an achievement in itself, it is important to emphasise that HE still faces many unique challenges, some indeed created by this rapid move to universal education.

The Irish economy will require an education system that will be able to keep the workforce educated, re-educated and updated to a level that will be able to respond quickly and innovatively to the challenges faced in the knowledge economy.

The Irish government will continue to be the key sponsor of HE in Ireland, but Universities and Institutes will increasingly be searching for alternative revenue streams in order to compete and provide quality education.

The findings of the OECD Report of September of 2004 should be a fundamental foundation for any future strategy for HE in Ireland.

Academia faces a number of substantial challenges at the beginning of the 21st century, not all of which are entirely prepared for, and this is arguably the case in HE. Effective and efficient implementation of strategies requires the creation of

operational frameworks to make change possible and the provision of necessary resources to facilitate those changes. HE and the Institutes of Technology in particular have an obligation to create and facilitate their own long-term direction within the context of the established roles of the institutes. Academia will have to take a leadership role in steering HE into the future.

The University and Institute of Technology sectors will need to develop teaching, learning and research strategies that are different in focus and reflect the role each sector has in education. The institutes suffer an inherent weakness in attracting non-traditional students, as the structure of courses has not changed sufficiently to accommodate those in full-time employment. Levels of collaboration between the Institutes and Universities at regional and national level will be required to generate a world-class learning environment.

CHAPTER 3

3. Literature Review – The Impact of Globalisation and the Knowledge Economy on Higher Education Systems

3.1. Introduction

Ireland is a small open economy that has been shaped by influences outside the country, both in the close relationships with the European Union and the Anglo-American world. These distinct interrelationships create tensions between the Anglo-American neo-liberal economic advances through globalisation and the social democratic views of the European Union. These tensions impact the nature, purpose and operation of HE systems and institutions. This chapter explores the concepts of Globalisation and the Knowledge Economy and their impact on the policy agenda for HE reform in Europe and, ultimately, in Ireland.

Ireland is also a member of the EU, and developments in education at EU level have also had a significant impact on Irish education. The impact of the Bologna process and EU funding on the non-university sector in Ireland in particular were transformative.

Finally, while many OECD countries have developed binary systems of HE, other options are in evidence and Kyvik's typology is explored as a means of understanding the relevance of maintaining the binary divide in Ireland. Clancy (2015) argues that "...study of Irish HE needed to be complemented by the comparative study of developments in other countries" (p. v).

3.2. Is the University the Default Paradigm of Higher Education?

While HE research has predominantly focussed on the university as the default paradigm for HE provision, and this may be partly as a result in recent years of the elimination of the binary divide in the UK, a significant section of HE globally, and in particular in the European Union, is provided outside of the traditional university in non-university institutions with a variety of evolutionary patterns.

The movement towards mass, and in some instances universal, HE (Trow, 2000) has created substantial challenges for nation states to the development of their systems of HE. National historical developments, coupled with changing demands of the economy, have resulted in an assortment of systems which have evolved in response to national economic policies. Efforts in Europe, through the Bologna Declaration and the subsequent movement toward a European Knowledge Area, have managed to create a typology of HE in Europe that allows comparison between member states.

There are, however, also many global factors that are influencing the evolution of HE systems across Europe. These include:

- the marketisation and commercialisation on a global scale of Higher Education;
- the massification of Higher Education leading to chronic underfunding;
- the role of alternative providers of education and training,
- internationalisation of Higher Education provision and the drive for income from international students leading to displacement of domestic students on some programmes; and
- the quality agenda with particular reference to accreditation of programmes for students and the governance and accountability of institutional management.

Programme or institution mobility can result in lower costs than studying abroad, although the cultural and linguistic elements are inevitably less successful (OECD, 2004 (a)).

Across Europe, the general themes and concepts for investigating the structure and function of the non-university sector provide a common grouping to include:

- levels of autonomy;
- vocational drift of the universities and the academic drift of non-university sector resulting in a less definitive binary divide;
- the managerialism that has the potential to characterise the governance and management of non-university institutions;
- co-operation between universities and non-university institutions;
- standardisation and rationalisation of programmes in the non-university sector suggesting a moved to a unified system rather than a binary system creating tensions around the binary system.

The concepts of “globalisation” and “knowledge economy” have gained traction in discourse on social and economic policy in Ireland in recent years, as a means to achieving economic prosperity and social inclusion. In adapting to the changes inherent in moving towards a “knowledge economy”, the Irish education system has been influenced and shaped by a worldwide spread of globalised university models for the knowledge society. The contemporary notion of a “knowledge society” is linked with openness, flexibility and fluidity, with the state as facilitator, rather than a central planner.

New models for education, research and governance have spread throughout the world by different mechanisms with the result that policies related to knowledge have become detached from their local context. Nowhere is this more evident than in the impact that the Bologna Process has had on education policy in Europe.

3.3. Globalisation and the Knowledge Economy

Globalisation is an empirical phenomenon affected primarily by advances in technology and communication that has had a dramatic impact on the economic, political, social and cultural landscape of the 21st century. Giddens writes that

“...a few years ago, there was some doubt, particularly on the left, about whether globalisation was a reality. The un-persuaded would

write 'globalisation' in inverted commas, to demonstrate their essential scepticism about the idea. This controversy has moved on. Discussion continues about how best to conceptualise globalisation, but few would any longer deny its influence – as signalled by the role of the global financial markets, new developments in electronic communication and geopolitical transitions [...]. Discussion of globalisation is no longer concentrated in whether or not it exists, but on what its consequences are"

(Giddens, 2001, p. 3).

Papastephanou (2005) posits that advocates of globalisation celebrate its challenging impact in the modernist construction of the nation-state because they associate with this configuration the terror of totality and homogeneity and treat it as a barrier to 'cosmopolitanisation'. Globalisation has the potential to polarise as well as to unify. 'For some the de-realisation and de-territorialisation of place associated with the growth of globalisation and symbolic exchanges results in a loss of social meaning and disruption of established sense of community and identify' (Usher, 2002, p. 48). Globalist theorists allocate globalisation's challenges of the nation-state immediately into the sphere of progressivism with an assumption that national territoriality is intimately bound up with tribal instincts that impede that just and equal treatment of imposing homogeneity. Bauman (1998) argues that there is a complex interrelation between the global and local – glocalisations – that he sees as a process of the 'world-wide distribution of sovereignty, power, and freedom to act (p. 42). This is not a positive development for all as it is essentially '*a redistribution of privileges and deprivations, of wealth and poverty, of resources and impotence*' (p. 43), which widens the scope of choice for some and drastically reducing it for others. Education is seen as a driver of both democratisation and social inclusion.

A consequence of economic globalisation and the competitiveness it has imposed is the transformation and reduction of the welfare state mirrored in the fact that benefits drop, access to social services is more difficult and pressure on the unemployed is

increased (Habermas, 1998, p. 315). While many have been lucky enough to avoid such dire situations in a time of economic expansion, the collapse of world economic order on foot of the banking crisis in 2008 has ruthlessly exposed the widening gap between the living conditions of the employed, the underemployed and the unemployed.

In research, Gibbons et al (1994) have outlined the shift from 'Mode 1' thinking that was pure, disciplinary, homogenous, expert-led, supply-driven, hierarchical, and almost exclusively university-based, to 'Mode 2', which is applied, problem-centred, transdisciplinary, heterogeneous, demand-driven, and entrepreneurial. This mode of thinking is the basis for the creation of new knowledge in what is now known as the knowledge economy. The term "knowledge capitalism" has emerged recently to describe this transition to the so-called knowledge economy. We are expected to consider ourselves members or participants or inhabitants of a globalised world (Masschelein & Simons, 2002).

Often, education seems unsure of its direction regarding globalisation and this is often attributed to the tensions between the global and the local, and unity and difference that mark globalist discourse (Fitzsimons, 2000, p. 250). Watson (2002) argues that "*universities must be globally competitive, at the forefront of wealth creation in the so-called new economy and hence 'excellent'. They must also be accessible and socially progressive*". The difficulty with this is that "democracy asks individuals to act as if social mobility were universally possible" (Clark, 1960). The challenges are different but complementary in a binary system with university and non-university HE institutions.

3.4. Education and globalisation

Various scholars seem to agree that the new impetus for HE integration draws from various socio-political, economic, and cultural notions of globalisations (Doh, 2008).

The dominance of the capitalist mode of production at the world level means that country-level studies must situate their analysis within the context of the global political economy (Sumner, 2008).

A number of different perspectives influence this research. One perspective is concerned with research in the ways by which practices, institutions' discourse and structures of education have been affected by globalisation. Another is how emphasis is placed on ways by which educational policies express and respond to pressures of globalisation. A third is in the ways in which education should try to counter balance the negative effects of globalisation and extend the potentialities of it for all in a democratic fashion. Habermas, for example, is of the opinion that 'pauperised groups are no longer able to change their social situation by their own efforts' (1998, p. 315). The implications of these changes are the increasing demand from the entire workforce for better skills. Economic growth will depend on the skill, inventiveness and creativity of the workforce, who are increasingly mobile, leading to skilled immigration policies in some and brain drain and circulation policies in other countries (Blackstone, 2001; Beerkens, 2008).

The economic, technical and socio-cultural effects of globalisation point to growing devaluation, social isolation and economic vulnerability of both poor domestic ethnic and cultural minorities and new immigrant populations. Particularly, the UK and the US economies - with their bi-polar skill distributions, and their neo-liberal policies including labour market deregulation and reduction of the social safety nets established since World War II - retain important market sectors where it is more

profitable to use low-wage workers in Taylorist production systems (Brown, et al., 2001).

Before mass HE, diploma holders were in short supply and could expect advantageous jobs, but after the rapid expansion of HE, diploma holders are plentiful and the relative advantages they confer are greatly diminished. Social capital has become increasingly relevant where young people without social capital are feeling trapped at the bottom. As credentialism expands, education-based credentials in turn are used to legitimate occupational stratification and social inequality. The nation state's inability to integrate historically subordinated groups and new immigrants from poor countries as full "middle-class" citizens with economic and social rights has prompted these groups to back away from imposition of a hegemonic national culture and national identity in favour of diverse post-modern identities and symbol systems.

However, such neo-liberal diversification is being opposed by countries with strong traditions of central state control or neo-corporatist social and educational planning, particularly in France and Germany, but also central and eastern European states. Educational systems were formed to create and sustain national cohesion, and "there is no reason to think that modern states will cease to expect education to perform that ... function" (Green, 1997, p. 27). With regard to education, the state will increasingly claim legitimacy not on the grounds that it operates a bureaucratic system, but rather on the grounds that it permits, facilitates and (sometimes) funds these alternative post-modern arrangements.

As nations move toward a mass or universal HE provision, some students of low promise will be successful, while for large numbers failure will be both inevitable and structured. It is therefore interesting to note that the neo-liberal, Anglo-

American education system, for all its rhetoric on competitiveness, offers “soft” responses to academic failure – “the counselling process”, “the redirection of aspirations process” or the “alternative-career process” (Clark, 1980). This process is facilitated through a stratified education system in the US or through a diverse range of educational provision in the UK. Conversely, the European model, the embodiment of social inclusion, advocates in most instances the early introduction of critical hurdles for young, streaming of students into academic and vocational streams and managing expectations and aspirations from an early age.

3.5. The Bologna Process

The “Sorbonne Declaration” in 1998, which called for a harmonisation of HE systems in Europe, The Bologna Process and subsequent additional declarations were game-changers in European HE, instigating a series of reforms that made European HE more compatible, comparable, competitive, and attractive for European and International students. Many governments endeavoured to implement national reform policies in HE, many of which resulted in significant changes in the non-university sectors, used the Bologna Process. The emphasis was placed on the levels of programmes of study and Bachelor- Master Degrees as the primary structure of HE, and this provided a significant challenge to the relevance and existence of a two-type or multi-type structure of HE (Teichler, 2008 (b)).

In many countries, the Non-University sector was identified internationally with the term “university” with a qualifier – technical university, university of applied sciences, or University College. This option is not available to Irish institutions as the term “University” is protected in law. This not only prohibits Irish institutions from using the term “University”, but also international institutions. For example,

the American University, Dublin was required to change its name to the American College, Dublin due to the restrictions in the legislation.

Both the social-inclusion and the neo-liberal agendas will continue to be promoted in Ireland, and no more acutely in the wake of the economic downturn of 2008.

Nevertheless, this dichotomy may be supplanted with a new phenomenon of the stakeholder society. Whether politics will accept the framework role at a certain distance of the sector or will want to become again more directly involved in the affairs of the HE institutions remains to be seen (Maasen, 2000). A collaborative approach to HE provision, with a diverse range of services being offered to a more diverse range of consumers, responding to the needs of global and national industry and local community may provide a truly universal HE. Trow (1976 (b)) postulated that “Something like the regionalisation of HE may well emerge to facilitate joint efforts to share capacity”. An impact of improving educational standards in an environment of competing priorities and diminishing resources is that social justice becomes marginalised as a major educational goal as it is reframed to conform to government policy cycles and budgets

The expansion of lower level tertiary programmes in the non-university sector in the 1980s was directly related to social origin of participants. Educational choice is a function of conscious considerations of the merits of different alternatives. Jonsson and Erikson (2007) outline this conscious consideration as establishing the utility of a programme by evaluating the factors of probability of success, benefits and cost. For many students who ended up in these lower tertiary level programmes, the alternative was not university studies, which were fee-based in the 1980s, but no tertiary studies at all. Therefore, if working class students were more prone to choosing vocational tracks, is it more appropriate to consider the social inclusion

policy of successive governments as a diversion strategy that re-enforced rather than reduced social inequality. This is a particular criticism of the use of a “cooling out” process, where “situations of opportunity are also situations of denial and failure” (Clark, 1960).

HE expansion from the late 1990s continued to be supported based on increasing social mobility with a possibility of equalising educational advantage. This resulted in a decrease in entry requirements, particularly in the non-university sector, although such lowering of entry requirements led to equalisation of only a modest magnitude. As the difference in qualification levels of the university and non-university sectors decreased, particularly with the academic drift that took hold in the institute of technology sector, the Irish government has faced an increased cost of educational provision, along with a potential over-qualification of graduates for the jobs on offer.

Due in no small part to the Bologna Declaration and the development of a European Education space, the Irish HE system has moved from a predominantly diversified model to an integrated model. In the diversified model of the 1980s and 1990s there existed a multitude of environments for education commensurate with the presumed diversity of abilities, motives and job prospects of students; distinct educational provisions for different kinds of students at post-16 level. Functional differentiation existed between university and non-university sectors, vocational training and apprenticeships. Throughout the 1990s, particularly with the convergence of secondary education along more academic lines, the option of leaving school at the first opportunity, usually at sixteen, has been actively discouraged, with young people now getting little support from the state or opportunities to enter into vocational training or apprenticeships. In Ireland, the fact that eighty-five per cent of

the age cohort now continue in school to leaving certificate level at age eighteen or nineteen has resulted in vocational training and apprenticeships sharing a space with HE as part of today's normative life course.

Research literature on institutional diversity has focused primarily on theories and historical accounts of diversification across institutional types, while little attention is paid to the complexity and interplay of the factors that drive diversification or convergence at different levels of HE systems. (Reichert, 2009)

The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (HEA, 2011 (a)) has as a foundation that “the recognition of a diverse range of strong, autonomous institutions is essential if the overall system is to respond effectively to evolving and unpredictable societal needs” (p 14). The concept of diversity poses particular challenges in a study of the evolution of HE systems as “diversity refers to the variety of the entities at a specific point in time, whereas differentiation denotes a dynamic process through which “new entities in the system emerge” (Huisman, 1995). Differentiation is generally understood to be the “process of developing different types, profiles and forms of HE institutions” (German Council of Science and Humanities, 2010, p. 12). Diversity is the direct result of the state of differentiation that a HE system achieves, and is often portrayed as a desirable objective of the policy of differentiation. Dedifferentiation is at the opposite end of the spectrum, and refers to dissolution, or erosion of previous differences between HEIs and / or the different HE sectors, as is proposed by the maintenance of the binary divide in Irish HE. Difference of type refers to the legal differentiation between types of HEIs and the ascribed mission and role(s) connected therewith.

This trickles down to very different requirements, depending on the type of institution, in terms of equipment, funding, teaching load, admissions requirements, and other strategic priorities that build up the profile and mission of a HEI.

The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (HEA, 2011 (a)) therefore, while referring to diversity within the system, seems to be less focussed on the dynamic process of differentiation that, during the lifetime of the strategy, will be required to ensure continued diversity within the system. Van Vught (2008) illustrates a distinction between the concepts of diversity and differentiation at the level of HE systems, rather than at the level of institutions. Van Vught (2007) explains that differentiation as a “process in which new entities emerge in a system” (p. 2). This is another aspect of differentiation one must be aware of since it can help understand recent mergers between HEIs. However, differentiation does not necessarily require new entities to be created, since HEIs may simply reshuffle their activities, even their mission, within a system level horizontal strategy imposed from above. Van Vught’s definition is in line with others (Rhoades, 1983), who defined differentiation as a process in which a single social unit will mutate into two or more units, or in other words, whereby “new social units [that] are structurally distinct from each other, but taken together that are functionally equivalent to the original unit”. Differentiation, as a dynamic process, may lead to the creation of new entities (e.g. Aalto University in Finland in 2010) but it may also encourage existing HEIs to maximise their resources and to prioritise their activities accordingly.

Differentiation does not always lead to greater diversity of HEIs. It may polarise a HE system according to different but rigidly defined (horizontally) types of HEIs. It may be synonymous with the emergence (in the case of a unitary system) or reinforcement (in the case of a binary HE system) of a Type A versus Type B set of

institutions. Ultimately, in this context, only two different kinds of HEIs would exist: those that predominantly perform research and some teaching of a more general and less practical nature and those that mainly focus on teaching and offer more vocational education and/or training.

Vertical differentiation goes deeper in the academic fabric and puts those activities the HEI has chosen to offer under the magnifying glass. This it does by comparing similar activities undertaken by one institution against another. This may mean comparing the quality of research output from one institution to another, the strength in undergraduate teaching, in lifelong learning and education for adults, in professional and Master's course or distance learning (Bonaccorsi & Daraio, 2007). Vertical differentiation therefore goes deeper into the academic fabric of a HEI than horizontal differentiation, which is more preoccupied with the overall formal structure of the HE system.

This work is pertinent to the Irish system, as the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (HEA, 2011 (a)) focus of "diversity of mission" is at sectoral level, whereas the diversity is explicitly articulated between the University and the extra-University sectors.

3.6. Alternative national structures of Higher Education

In OECD countries, as with many other developing nations, there has been a rising demand for post-secondary education over the past decades and a significant increase of tertiary enrolment rates, resulting in mass education. In the context of mass tertiary education and an ageing society in many developed nations, the best way to structure, fund and deliver the teaching, research and other elements of HE is under debate in those countries to ensure better public policy objectives and better public management. However, the world as envisioned from a hegemonic US

perspective is not the world envisaged by smaller, independent nation states. Much of the debate that shapes the policy discourse is conducted in the advanced nation states such as the US, the UK, Japan, Germany and France, but many other smaller OECD countries are endeavouring to construct and support tertiary education systems best suited to their individual needs.

According to the Samuel Neaman Institute, 2006, as cited in (Bonaccorsi & Daraio, 2007, p. 4), that bases its findings on a sample of four countries (Australia, Israel, the UK and the USA), four types of HEIs are evident within a fully differentiated system:-

1. Research universities (all degrees up to the doctorate);
2. Colleges (mainly teaching and awarding of first professional degrees, sometimes Master's degrees, research more applied than basic);
3. Community colleges or open-door institutions (general education for students wishing to transfer to colleges or universities, or technical, vocational and skill-related teaching leading to a certificate: and
4. Open University (distance learning).

This articulation describes horizontal differentiation; that is a configuration of activities offered to well-defined target audiences (Bonaccorsi & Daraio, 2007), but in Europe, exists only in the UK. In the European experience, this is not at all the rule. This taxonomy therefore, is not transferrable to the European context for a variety of reasons. European countries are reluctant to separate research from teaching, and therefore the distinction between 1 and 2 above is not clearly defined. The integration between teaching and research is a landmark of the European tradition, following the Humboldtian model, and this poses particular challenges to the Irish context where the Hunt Report advocates “research informed teaching”. How can teaching be research-informed if academics are not engaged directly or indirectly in research activities?

According to Thrift (2008), a convergence of HE systems, encouraged by the EU in order to achieve Europe 2020 Strategy is inevitable:

“It is apparent that university systems are going in roughly the same direction in many European countries, although against the background of sometimes radically different national Higher Education systems. The general direction is well put in several European Commission documents that have been published recently, all of which argue for the modernisation of European universities and all of which espouse better “management” as a necessary nostrum to achieve an exalted modernised economic state”

(Thrift, 2008, p. 17)

He is referring to the numerous Communiqués issued by the EC - Berlin 2003, Bergen 2005, London 2007, Leuven / Louvain-La-Neuve 2009, and Bucharest 2012- and Resolutions of the European Council 2006, 2007 (European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2015) . Once again, the necessity of having strong universities (and by extension dynamic HE systems) is portrayed to be one of the quintessential characteristics inherent to a prosperous modern state. Does this mean there are “weak universities”, or are all universities strong and other forms of institutions weak? Indeed, “Europe is going through a kind of HE convulsion at the moment as European governments chase the Lisbon dream of knowledge-led society in which universities have a leading place as key actors in the economic renovation of Europe” (p. 18). Why are universities so prominent in the economic recovery of our continent? This is because universities are considered by governments as not only employers in their own right but also as “suppliers of innovations, as producers of skilled labour, as transnational businesses, and as founts of generalised creativity, in other words as prime pieces of economic real estate as well as hallowed cultural entities (p. 17). Are universities the only institutions fulfilling these roles? Perhaps HEIs in the “non-university” sector do not have the long history of universities they

may not be considered as “hallowed cultural entities”, but do they not also fulfil all the other roles?

Differentiation in the role and mission between HEIs (e.g. research oriented HEIs versus teaching focused institutions) may be a tool enabling to deal with this transition, typical of a system whose priority is to prepare the whole population for rapid technological change (Trow, 2005 (a)). Conceived within the larger globalisation debate, issues of converging or diverging HE systems and the institutions within is of particular concern, following the launch of the European Commission’s modernisation agenda for HE systems and institutions (2003), whose discourse on greater differentiation, diversity, rationalisation, concentration and better governance is constructed as the only way to achieve “an exalted modernised economic state” (Mazza, et al., 2008, p. 17). According to Thomas and Meyer (1987) these concepts are part of globalisation’s meta-myth, which should be conceptualised as a collection of rationalised myths characterising the world polity and whose dissemination is guaranteed by “institutional carriers” (Vaira, 2004) such as the European Commission.

Reforms of national HE systems has been in prolific evidence since the 1980s. These structural changes have both sectoral and institutional dimensions, specifically in the re-organisation of national systems in terms of the binary divide, and the consolidation of institutions through processes of collaborations, alliances and mergers.

Because of increased demand for HE, some countries in Europe opted to expand their universities (Italy, Spain and Sweden), while others created alternative institutions (Machado, et al., 2008).

While both processes can be considered as mutually exclusive, in some instances occurring at different phases of system's evolution, many national processes of educational reform have included elements of both.

3.7. Diversity in Higher Education Provision – What is the purpose of The Binary Divide?

It is often argued that diversity of a HE system is an important strategy to meet student needs (van Vught, 2008). In Europe, this discourse focuses on the diversity of institutional profiles and their capacity to address the diverse needs of society, within the context of the expansion and “massification of HE” (Trow, 1979). As outlined by Teichler (2008 (a)), referring to HE as a system as a relatively recent concept, occurring post-1945, whereby

“The idea of a Higher Education system emerged only after World War II: an understanding according to which universities are embedded into a system; the view, that the various persons and institutions which are considered as belonging to a Higher Education system have much together, are interrelated, are positioned within a larger orbit, and possibly treated as an entity by actors and social entities outside this system”

(Teichler, 2008 (a), p. 356)

Bleiklie pointed out, from the second half of the twentieth century onwards, one can observe a “development whereby HE institutions become part of formally defined HE systems” (Bleiklie, 2005).

Massification of HE has resulted in a college education being viewed as a right rather than a privilege, particularly in developed nations, where unlimited entry to college is based on the ideology of equal opportunity. Equal opportunity does not exist in an idealistic form, and in many western countries has been re-cast as equity of access or equity of participation based on individual ability. Clark's research in the US (see (Clark, 1983 (a); Clark, 1987; Clark, 1998; Clark, 2008) was carried out

at a sensitive time in American history where the concept of equal opportunity was tested both socially and politically. It deals not only with issues of ability, but also with issues of class. It was also based specifically on the open door colleges that were non-selective.

From initial readings, it might appear that there are many similarities between the HE systems in California, which provides the basis for much of Clark's work and the system of tertiary education in Ireland. The four main sectors in California of Community / Junior colleges, four-year colleges, liberal arts colleges and universities might appear to mirror developments in Ireland with Further Education Colleges, Institutes of Technology, Teacher Training Colleges and Universities. However, Clark's research agenda that was proposed in his 1973 article on the "Development of the Sociology of Higher Education", addresses many aspects of HE including the relationship between schools and universities, moral structures in campuses, academic life, and the roles of colleges in society, which resonate with researchers and policy makers today, and lay a foundation for comparative research in HE that explores the differences, as well as the similarities, between national systems.

Nevertheless, can Clark's writings of the last century be applicable to HE systems of the globalised knowledge society? HE in the twenty-first century is not so much different as it is more complex. Systems vary considerably within the OECD in terms of funding and governance and display different mixes of public and private provision.

As nations move toward a mass or universal HE provision, some students of low promise will be successful, while for large numbers failure will be both inevitable and structured. It is therefore interesting to note that the neo-liberal, Anglo-American education system, for all its rhetoric on competitiveness, offers "soft"

responses to academic failure – “the counselling process”, “the redirection of aspirations process” or the “alternative-career process” (Clark, 1980). This process is facilitated through a stratified education system in the US or through a diverse range of educational provision in the UK. Conversely, the European model, the embodiment of social inclusion, advocates in most instances the early introduction of critical hurdles for young, streaming of students into academic and vocational streams and managing expectations and aspirations from an early age.

Since the 1960s or early 1970s, HE systems in Europe were characterised by a diversity of types of HEIs, with some countries setting the agenda for the development of a two-type (binary) or multi-type (diversified) structure of HE systems (OECD, 1973).

Kyvik (2004) proposes a typology, which itself is based on the work of Scott (1995 (b)), which distinguishes between “university dominated systems”, where only university and university level specialised colleges are considered to be the only HE institutions and “dual systems” of HE. The latter catered for both a university sector and non-university sector that were considered separate and accordingly treated differently, with the university sector clearly dominating.

From this emerged the “binary system”, that has been characterised as a more “formalised version of a dual system” (Kyvik, 2004, p. 394) and some HE systems have developed into “unified systems” leading to a situation where both traditional academic studies and vocational programmes are offered within universities, which is currently to situation in the United Kingdom following the upgrade of the polytechnics to university status in 1992.

The British polytechnics were established in the early 1960s, and were followed by the *Fachhochschule* in Germany in the early 1970s, the same time as the Regional Technical Colleges were being developed in Ireland. France established a third type of HE system beside the *Grandes Écoles* and the Universities – the *Instituts Universitaires de Technologie* (IUTs).

Almost immediately, the challenge facing this new type of institution was in defining itself as having an identity that did not involve a comparison to the university sector. Terms such as non-university, short-cycle HE, vocational HE, and confusion between higher and further education all resulted in a definition of such institutes being compared unfavourably, and in many instances in derogatory terms, to the universities. (OECD, 1973). In the UK, clear “institutional” and “academic” drift (Neave, 1979, p. 155) of the polytechnics, combined with stronger vocational focus of the universities led to the destruction of the binary system and the establishment of a unified system with marked status differences between HE institutions.

Within all HE institutions, new roles have developed that expand the remit of such institutions well beyond the traditional functions of teaching and research. Soon after the setting up of binary systems, “academic” and “institutional” drift were identified by scholars (Burgess, 1972; Neave, 1979; van Vught, 2008) and by Irish policy-makers. As institutional resources are being spread across a wider range of missions, the resultant “mission stretch” (Scott, 2007) or “mission overload” threatens institutional coherence, integrity, identity, efficiency and reputation. In Ireland, some “institutional drift” is visible between the larger institutes of technology and some universities, blurring the binary divide between the institutions concerned. Kyvik (2004, p. 406) discusses whether the binary system will become the dominant and final structure of HE in Western Europe or whether instead it

should be more accurately understood as yet another stage in the developmental process of HE systems towards a unified university system.

Within this blurring of institutional boundaries, an explanatory framework draws on a contemporary theoretical perspective from organisation theory: the institutional isomorphism perspective. Isomorphism offers another perspective and has been explained as “a constraining process that forces organisations to resemble other organisations that face the same set of environmental conditions (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 149). The environmental conditions are framed by globalisation, the knowledge economy paradigm and the Europe 2020 Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth (European Commission, 2010). Organisations will need to copy what they perceive to be successful strategies used by their competitors faced with the same external conditions. This in turn will lead to strong institutional homogenization within the sector, with organisations reacting in similar ways to their environment. The consequence is a decrease in system diversity.

There are two forms of institutional isomorphism that may lead to homogenisation of relevance to my research. Coercive isomorphism is particularly relevant since it results from “the pressures applied by other organisations in the environment, in which the organisation is dependent” (Zha, 2009, p. 462). Coercive isomorphism as it applies to organisations can be relevant to both system and institutional levels in the HE arena. Mimetic isomorphism originates from the uncertainty produced by the “symbolic environment” (e.g. the knowledge economy paradigm shift, austerity) which causes organisations to mimic the behaviours of what they perceive to be successful organisations. In both cases, organisations are highlighted as open systems that are shaped by their environment. Interestingly, Zha argues that this may lead organisations to conform to conventional beliefs that result from social and

cultural pressures rather than to rational pressures for increasing efficiency (Zha, 2009, p. 462).

The processes in HE, such as academic or vocational drift, are generally interpreted as a move toward decreasing diversity in the system. “Academic drift” (Neave, 1979) has been described by Berdahl (1985) as “the tendency of institutions, absent of any restraint, to copy the role and mission of the prestigious institutions”. HE institutions, throughout the US and Europe, have exhibited behaviour consisting of “lower status institutions trying to gain status by imitating higher status institutions” (Riesman, 1956). Conversely, vocational drift refers to processes in which universities incorporate characteristics and processes of the non-university sector, particularly evident in the increased focus on job-readiness, technical skills development, and the inclusion of work placements and internships in programme design. Kyvik refers to Neave (1983) who argued that all HE systems “display a dynamic toward integration” (Kyvik, 2004, p. 406) even where national policies are aimed at preserving a binary or dual system. Revealingly, the passage from “binary” to “unified system” in the UK was due to “clear institutional and academic drift of the polytechnics, combined with the stronger vocational orientation of traditional universities” (Kyvik, 2004, p. 403). This led to a situation where the:

“Two sectors developed a strong competitive relationship, ultimately destroying the binary system. This was primarily due to the comprehensive establishment of Master’s and doctoral studies in the polytechnics, and the strong involvement by their staff in research activities”

(Kyvik, 2004, p. 403)

This research will attempt to demonstrate how Kyvik’s theory, supported by Neave, of system convergence toward a unified system is happening despite apparently

being resisted at policy level in Ireland, as evidenced in the National Strategy for higher Education to 2030 (HEA, 2011 (a), pp. 70, 96 - 97).

The democratisation and expansion of HE throughout the late 1980s and 1990s, particularly in the non-university sector resulted in an equalising of educational opportunities. This expansion was a key focus of European social inclusion policy. Along with other Anglo-Saxon countries, European countries generally followed a liberal welfare state regime, which resulted in widespread means-tested assistance funding through the EU. However, the hypothesis that tertiary-level expansion was related to decreasing social differences in attainment receives only weak support in analysis. New educational opportunities were largely used by middle-class students with mediocre grades but increasing educational aspirations. It was always unclear how educational expansion at tertiary level would have an impact on socially structured individual choices. Not participating has also become a highly rational act and it is only when participation will result in better and higher paying work that it is meaningful (Rubenson & Desjardins, 2009).

Contemporary education policy often correlates the production of a flexible, educated and skilled population with improving national economic advantage in a global marketplace. Education policy with apparent social justice intentions is now negotiated within an economic rationale.

3.8. Non-University Higher Education in Europe

In order to understand the concepts of “non-university” and “Higher Education” in the European context, it is essential to illustrate the evolution of HE systems, and the use of alternative terms such as “tertiary education”.

From the late 1960s and early 1970s, a general movement toward mass HE throughout Europe had a significant impact on the evolution of national HE systems.

The OECD (1974) contended that a substantial increase in student numbers could not be accommodated in homogeneous, and costly, university systems. In “university – dominated systems”, university or university-level specialised colleges were the only institutions regarded as HEIs (in contrast to institutions offering short-cycle vocational programmes). They were the norm throughout Western Europe until the early 1960s and from there on, HE systems gradually evolved due to various external factors such as growing student numbers and repeated calls from industry for a supply of well-qualified workers.

A diverse system was required to suit the variety of students’ motives, talents and career prospects. The evolution of such systems was influenced heavily by national contexts, but the resultant structures resulted in two-type or multi-type institutions. These environmental changes affected HE systems and effectively shaped them in a way that would take into account the various demands from students and employers primarily by recognising short-cycle vocational programmes as HE. A more vocational sector needed to be set up and structured, one that would increase graduates’ employability

“Vocationalism emphasises preparing students with the skills they need for work, particularly generic or employability skills. It is based on a notion of the human actor as one who instrumentally invests in education that will develop their human capital and position them in employment markets”

(Wheelahan, 2012, p. 43)

The official recognition of these institutions as HEIs led to the development of “dual systems” that catered for both a university sector and a non-university sector that were considered separate and accordingly treated differently. In the mid-1960s, amidst the planning of its future HE landscape, Ireland had what Clancy (1989)

refers to as an embryonic “binary structure”. However, the system was characterised by a clear domination of the university sector. The non-university sector was only a minor partner in the HE equation, not least because quantitatively the technological colleges in Dublin catered for less than five per cent of full-time registered students attending state-aided institutions in 1965/1966.

From the 1970s, a binary system became the predominant model of national HE systems in Europe. A substantial proportion of HE was provided outside the traditional universities in “non-university” institutions with a multitude of varied characteristics. The “binary system” is notably characterised as being subjected to a common system of regulations that was not the case under the “dual system” where an often-larger number of paraprofessional specialised institutions were governed by various regulations (Kyvik, 2004, p. 394). The number of institutions in the non-university sector also tends to be smaller, since the organisation of the sector is based on multidisciplinary centres located according to geographical criteria and requires many of the small and specialised institutions found in “dual systems” to merge into a more manageable ensemble. “Binary systems” are still the most common model and may be found in ten countries in Western Europe, including Ireland (Kyvik, 2004, p. 396).

Although Kyvik classifies the Swedish HE system as binary (2004, p. 396) more recent literature refers to Sweden as a “unitary system” (Askling, 2001, p. 160; Silander, et al., 2013). A first reform of Swedish HE in 1977 contained elements of a unified system, with the introduction of the *högskolan* (“University College”) as a joint concept designating both universities and colleges (Kyvik, 2004, pp. 400 - 401). However, it was then more appropriate to refer to the Swedish system as a “concealed binary system” (Bauer, 2000, p. 159), because both types of HEIs

continued to use their respective titles and operate different functions in society, with the colleges focusing on teaching and the universities on research activities. Askling nonetheless identified a blurring of the “lines in the former binary structure (between universities and colleges under the common label “Higher Education”) (2001, p. 160) and in particular a collapse of the binary structure with regard to research activities as early as the beginning of the 1990s (p. 159). The distinction between the two types of HEIs has been unstable, and in the late 1990s, three multidisciplinary colleges were upgraded to university status. Sweden currently has forty institutions including fifteen universities, ten university colleges, with the right to award doctorates and twelve university colleges without such rights (Silander, et al., 2013, p. 174)

Since then, diversity according to types of institutions was among one of the key characteristics of these HE systems. Eurich (1981) identified a strong correlation between the level of economic development in a country and the type of education system it adopted. Clark (1983 (a)) identified that government structures also had an impact on HE structures, with centralised government control resulting in a single system of HE, while de-centralised government control resulted, more often, in the development of multiple HE systems.

First came a “university system”, used exclusively to encompass only traditional universities while disregarding any other type of institutions that offered post-secondary education. The term “system” then expanded to include not only universities but also other HE Institutions (HEIs). Policy documents would then refer to “higher” education systems that implied a certain level of commonality between these different institutions with universities nonetheless at the “apex of the system” (apart for France) (Teichler, 2008 (a), p. 356). From the 1980s onwards, the

OECD began to systematically replace the term “higher” with “tertiary”. However, although it might be more appropriate to refer to a “tertiary” HE system from the perspective of an international organisation, the majority of OECD members preferred to continue to define their system as a “higher” education system (Teichler, 2008 (a), p. 356). This may be because by using the term “tertiary education” suggests “learning at this stage has so much in common across institutions, as far as external expectations and internal dynamics are concerned, that the structural borderlines between “higher” and “tertiary” education get blurred and lose their relevance (Teichler, 2004, p. 3).

For some countries, such as Ireland, keen on maintaining a binary or stratified system, this may not be desirable, and maintaining a distinction may seem more important to them than recognising that learning has much in common at the higher level (post-secondary). Kyvik (2004) presents Ireland as a prime example of a “binary system” as a structural evolution from a more “university-dominated system”, via the less formalised and more disparate “dual system”. McCoy and Smyth (2010) went so far as to qualify this Irish “binary system” as comprising a first-tier university sector and a second-tier IoT sector with both having distinct historical contexts as well as different positions within Irish education (p. 243). Concurrently, the OECD distinguished between a “tertiary-type A” and “tertiary-type B” one. The former is more theory-based and designed to provide access to either further advanced research programmes or professions with high skills requirements, principally but not exclusively offered by universities. The tertiary-type B subdivision refers to an education focused on practical, technical or occupational skills directly relevant to the labour market and is generally of a shorter length than “tertiary-type A” programmes (OECD, n.d.).

In the intervening years, there has never been a clear consensus on how these “non-university” institutions should be identified. In general, this second type of institution has usually had to define its position with reference to the university sector. Unfortunately for the sector, positioning itself in relation to the University sector was to define itself in negative, perhaps derogatory terms, e.g. “the non-university sector”. A variety of designations were adopted over time to distinguish this alternative type of HE – “short-cycle”, “vocational HE”, “professional HE”, “colleges” and “polytechnics” (Teichler, 2002), and national systems became more diversified through the expansion phase of economic and education development toward the end of the 20th century. Teichler (2002) identified the dimensions of diversification as types of institutions; types of programmes, levels of programmes and degrees, and variations in reputation and prestige within formally equal institutions and programmes. Other terms gained popularity in recent decades, including “post-secondary” and “third level” adding to the potential confusion as to what was being referred to (Teichler, 2004, p. 3).

Teichler (2008 (b)) deftly summarises the key distinctions and similarities between the non-university sectors across Europe:-

In countries, different routes of secondary education and vocational training are the typical entry requirements for universities and other Higher Education institutions, while in other countries the formal entry requirements between universities and other types of institutions barely differ (p. 7)

At system level, Scott (1995 (b)) and Kyvik (2004) developed a taxonomy of HE systems that includes five categories. These are the “university-dominated systems”, the “dual systems”, the “binary systems”, the “unified systems”, and the “stratified systems”, all of which but the last are found in Western Europe. Remarkably, according to these authors, France remained unclassifiable, although Regini (2011)

would argue that the French HE system has been binary since Napoleon established the prestigious *Grandes Écoles*, the latter being vocationally-oriented institutes of higher technical education (*École Polytechnique, École Centrale, École des Mines*). They offer a more practical curriculum than the general universities and have extremely rigorous selection procedures, thereby guaranteeing them a higher status than the universities (Regini, 2011, p. 14).

Kyvik's typology of HE systems, largely inspired by the one previously developed by Scott (1995 (b)) gives a strong grounding upon which one can anchor the heterogeneous Western European HE systems. For the sake of offering an overview and analysis of structural changes on which to build his argument according to which the various Western European countries are converging towards a common structural model (either towards a "binary system" or a "unified", albeit hierarchical, system as found in the UK) for the organisation of their HE systems he presents and discusses five main organisational models. Kyvik (2004) is aware that this classification of HE systems into five organisational models is a simplification of the "heterogeneous patterns of these systems" (p. 395), but classifications of the this sort do permit us to appreciate more fully the diversity of HE systems found in Western Europe, and across the globe.

3.9. The Entrepreneurial University

The policy of explicit differentiation has traditionally been avoided on the continent (Bonaccorsi & Daraio, 2007, p. 5). Instead, the tradition has been to promote a world-class HE system as a whole. This holistic approach was the one taken in France, very much attached to the egalitarian model of its university sector, although recent policy choices in this country seem to indicate a certain departure from this, for example Campus Operation, launched in 2007 (Laperche & Uzunidis, 2011).

Germany has similar approaches with the Excellence Initiative (Kehm & Pasternak, 2012). The same could be said for Finland, where regional development policies that began in the late 1950s were concerned with providing HE opportunities throughout the territory as opposed to the historically privileged southern area around Helsinki. Recent trends in Finland indicate a desire to merge certain HEIs (both universities and polytechnics) to reduce their number by 2020. In 2009, the Finnish HE system encompassed twenty-six polytechnics and twenty universities but these relatively high numbers are expected to decrease to eighteen and fifteen respectively by 2020 (Aarevaara, et al., 2009). The creation of Aalto University in 2010 is a result of a merger between the Helsinki University of Technology, the Helsinki School of Economics and the University of Art and Design Helsinki. It was motivated by the determination of the Finnish government to create a university highly visible on the international scene and will be accompanied by an initial public investment equivalent to five hundred million euro.

Some have argued that this move presents symptoms of the “Harvard here syndrome” (Aarevaara, et al., 2009, p. 99). However, Sheil (2010) has provided evidence that it is unlikely for a small country to develop a top 20 university since his research demonstrates that to nurture such a high ranking institution is a costly enterprise that can range anywhere from US\$1.5B to US\$2B (p. 73)

In any case Bonaccorsi and Daraio observe a rather “limited amount of differentiation” (Bonaccorsi & Daraio, 2007, p. 7) taking place in Europe, at least until the recent policy changes that occurred in Germany in 2006 – 2007 promoting selective funding for universities, regardless of the increased pressure from the mass or even universal student participation in many countries. They warn us against taking differentiation as a “linear outcome” (2007, p. 7) of the large expansion of any

HE system, constraints that they consider potentially damaging for the competitiveness of European universities internationally, one that is largely determined by research and international attractiveness. In Europe, institutional rigidities may impose what has been compared to a “Durkheimian division of social labour” between those HEIs that deal with teaching and those that perform research (Bonaccorsi & Daraio, 2007, p. 7).

Much of Clark’s work in the latter part of his career developed on an international dimension to his studies through comparative research. During this time, he wrote “Creating Entrepreneurial Universities: Organisational Pathways of Transformation” and “Sustaining Change in Universities”, and the concept of the Entrepreneurial University was positioned squarely in the debate on the function of universities for the modern economy. Are these concepts a suitable mechanism to more clearly understand the setting in which institutions are placed, the changing scope for agency and self-determining action in HE, the drivers and constraints that exist, and the forms of differentiation and inequality that are produced?

His comparative research on five institutional narratives of European Universities identified concepts that characterise the Entrepreneurial University: diversified university income, strengthened steering capacity, extended developmental periphery, stimulated academic heartland and embracing entrepreneurial culture. Throughout the research in this area, Clark (2004) argues “the state-led pathway is clearly not one appropriate for change in complex universities in the fast moving environment of the twenty-first century” (p. 366). He argues against “the dirigiste tendency in an officially integrated system” (p. 366), and shows preference for a system where “institutions are the one that matter” (p. 367) – the different heritages,

their different geographic locations and regional environments, and the differences in firmly established configurations of academic subjects and programmes.

As was seen in the UK in the past, central policies tended not to make a distinction among universities, treating them on the whole as equal institutions. Standardisation was a consequence and instrument of ideological egalitarianism, which was enormously attractive to government and civil service (Trow, 2005 (b)). Where diversity among universities is encouraged, and autonomy is real, entrepreneurial universities will seek to innovate in how they go about their business (Clark, 1998). In doing so, Clark (2000) rightly argues that such transformation can strengthen university collegiality, university autonomy and university educational achievement. New models for education, research and governance have spread throughout the world by different mechanisms with the result that policies related to knowledge have become detached from their local context. Nowhere is this more evident than in the impact that the Bologna Process has had on education policy in Europe. One of the major objectives of the reforms in HE has been to install relations of competition as a way of increasing productivity, accountability and control. Increased competition represents improved quality within neoliberalism. At the national level, most EU governments are seriously considering or in the process of investing large amounts of public funds in a small group of research-intensive universities capable of competing with the best universities worldwide while acting as high profile flagship universities of their respective HE systems. The concentration of funding is an objective that has first appeared in Communications emanating from the European institutions and was particularly visible in policy documents issued by the EC since 2003 (2003). This process of “continuous concentration” in an ever smaller group of universities (Mazza, et al., 2008, p. 5)

could lead to sharper external differentiation between HEIs, both horizontally according to their chosen (or imposed) missions but also, and perhaps in a second phase vertically, by ranking universities on what they do, to what extent, and how well they do it compared to others.

The economic challenges of globalisation have been at the basis of European integration, but globalization also has cultural and political dimensions (Rinne & Koivula, 2005). It should be remembered that the Lisbon agenda is about not only growth and jobs, it is also about social inclusion and sustainable development. Is Europe therefore attempting to develop a “knowledge society”, rather than a more narrowly defined knowledge economy? A knowledge society is a society in which the significance of knowledge is increased. Therefore, “knowledge can be seen as spreading more widely in society than previously and as being accessible to everyone” (Delanty, 2001, p. 5), where knowledge is not only valued as an economic investment, but also being valued for its effect on freedom, justice and democracy (Giroux, 2003, p. 188). Universities are repositories of our cultural and intellectual traditions and are testing grounds for their critical appraisal and evolution.

Bullen et al (2004) have identified that policy conceptualisations of the global knowledge economy have led to the channelling of much HE and research and development funding into the priority areas of science and technology. Insofar as the formation of this knowledge economy policy has been informed by a techno-economic paradigm, it works to preclude many humanities and creative arts disciplines, as well as any skills development outside of these two main areas. ‘Education has been seen as a key factor in honing states’ competitive edge with respect to each other’ (Dale, 2000, p. 441), which means that local diversity is promoted only to the extent that it is conducive to the goals of the market. Via

market imperialism, globalisation is guilty of vocationalisation of HE, privatisation of educational responsibility and benefit, dependence of accountability on educational outcomes and ‘competitive marketisation of educational institutions and their services’ (Bagnall, 2002, p. 78).

This has resulted in the promotion of policies that aim to ‘ensure competitiveness of the national economy in the face of globalisation’ disregarding the democratic deficits they involve (Rizvi & Lingard, 2000, p. 421), with “an overwhelming tendency to treat education as a means to an end” (Coxon, 2002, pp. 69 - 70), turning education into just another commodity in a consumerist society.

The global transformation of HE is now reinforced by a heightened globalism in the broader political economic environment in the wake of the worldwide focus on the financial crisis. Global convergence means that processes conducted in isolation in localities and nations no longer absorb us as they once did. There are implications of global convergence for local practices, national systems and ways of thought. Post-secondary systems have always been different across the world and the directions they take may raise new issues in a more globalised and liberalised world. They have become increasingly large through massification, and encompass a variety of needs that elite HE systems of the past did not deal with. In some countries, demand for post-secondary education coming from other types of students may compensate for the demographic decline of the traditional university-age population.

Functioning on the market differs from a solely state-funded university in that the majority of the activity is planned with a market orientation, significant resources are allocated to marketing, and the university reacts more quickly to external pressures and develops internal entrepreneurship and an individual-based incentive system.

Post-modern theorists have questioned whether educational systems designed for such ‘modern’ purposes as nationalism and unifying ideas and subject identities retain contemporary relevance (Green, 1997, p. 8), or whether diversification of educational arrangements is both good and inevitable. These post-modern forms of diversity and choice in education mean that access to higher tiers requires social connections not acquired in segregated educational establishments and flexible cognitive skills not acquired through standardised instruction.

The concepts of “globalisation” and “knowledge economy” have gained traction in discourse on social and economic policy in Ireland in recent years, as a means to achieving economic prosperity and social inclusion. In adapting to the changes inherent in moving towards a “knowledge economy”, the Irish education system has been influenced and shaped by a worldwide spread of globalised university models for the knowledge society. The contemporary notion of a “knowledge society” is linked with openness, flexibility and fluidity, with the state as facilitator, rather than a central planner.

3.10. Collaborations, Alliances and Mergers in Higher Education

In the pursuit of improving efficiencies, institutional strategies for increased collaboration have become a fundamental element of the strategic planning process in an increasingly market-driven, competitive education environment. Articulation agreements to facilitate student recruitment and progression pathways, joint delivery of programmes or joint / dual degrees, collaborative research projects are becoming the norm in both national and trans-national HE. In learning from business models of mergers, Doz & Hamel (1998) suggested that “in this new world of networks, coalitions, and alliances, strategic partnerships are not an option but a necessity... if the ‘capacity to collaborate’ is not already a core competence in your organisation,

you had better get busy making it so”. Additional levels of complexity occur where institutions are “involved simultaneously in several different forms of alliance, sometimes referred to as having an alliance portfolio” (Patterson, 2001).

There has been a significant research focus on mergers in HE around the world since the 1990s (Rowley (1997(a); Rowley, 1997(b); Pritchard, 1998; Harman, 2000; Harman & Harman, 2003; Locke, 2007). Many researchers draw on comparisons between corporate mergers and academic mergers. With the influence of the neo-liberal agenda affecting many elements of the public service, the comparisons may be appropriate. Cartwright & Cooper (1996) contend that people are the forgotten factor in merger success or failure. Emphasis is more usually focussed on the process, the restructured organisation, and the cost benefits. In HE mergers, however, the institutions staff create the human, intellectual and social capital of the new institution (Pritchard & Williamson, 2008).

Whether the current financial challenges represent the new norm or not, it is clear that the paradigm shift in HE toward increased collaboration, alliances and mergers is permanent and new forms of collaborative teams and collaborative leadership (Kanter, 1994) will be required to deliver results across organisational boundaries. External demands on institutions of HE and shifts in college structures and faculty expectations resulting in collaborative efforts raise a number of issues – how to form partnerships, how to ensure best practice to ensure successful partnerships and how to manage diverse institutional cultures in partnerships (Eddy, 2010).

Mergers and concentration processes are not a recent phenomenon either in the European HE landscape (Estermann & Pruvot, 2015).

Pritchett (1985) created a typology of four merger types, based along a co-operative – adversarial continuum –

- An Organisation rescue, in which one body seeks to rescue another from failure, while extending its own influence;
- A Collaborative merger in which both organisations show goodwill and diplomacy;
- A Contested Combination where the “bride” is reluctant to consent to “marriage”; and
- A Raid, where one organisation brutally takes over another with concomitant asset stripping.

Tensions within the new multi-campus, merged institution may be increased most immediately by the exigencies of programme rationalisation and in the medium term where improved efficiencies and cost saving measures are failing to materialise.

HEFCE (2004) identified the difficulty in delivering financial benefits through mergers. Some researchers highlight the need for good human resource policies and procedures to maintain staff morale and trust (Nikandrou, et al., 2000), while others focus on the differences between corporate and university mergers. (Shattock, 2003) Shattock also notes two points (p.171); first the pressure for university mergers is more from internal than external sources, and the idea of merger tends to enthuse management at the top of the institution more than academics because it has fewer obvious advantages to the latter. Sometimes a merger will lead to a genuine unitary culture with a shared ethos, whereas in other cases it will result in only a pseudo-culture, or in conflicting subcultures. Whether a merger is deep or shallow will depend on two main factors: Cultural compatibility and Management skills.

Cartwright & Cooper (1996) found that senior managers were less accessible to employees than they themselves believed to be the case, and that the managers tended to be more convinced of the success of the merger in which they were involved than the evidence suggested (p. 145).

Locke (2007) illustrated that “organisational cultures are critical to the successful integration of staff, students and other stakeholders within a newly combined Higher Education institution” (p. 83). Cultural transitions are more difficult for those who have been involuntarily subjected to a merger (Buono & Bowditch, 1989, pp. 249 - 250). The length of time required for a new corporate culture to be successfully established is variously estimated at 3 – 5 years (Walter, 1985), 5 – 7 years (Stybel, 1985) and up to 10 years (Buono & Bowditch, 1989). The experience of the merger between the NUU and the UP in Northern Ireland suggest a longer period (Pritchard & Williamson, 2008). The potential for counter-cultures particularly within HE mergers requires an effective management of human resources to mitigate the subversion of values through non-compliant behaviour.

At the core of educational reform are the beliefs that the current systems are ineffective in obtaining desired levels of student outcomes and partnerships provide a means to achieve these goals (Eddy, 2010). Partnerships built on trust, communication and common purpose are more successful, whereas inequality among partners and fewer resources undermine joint ventures (Connolly, et al., 2007).

In many systems of HE the goal of increased effectiveness and efficiency requires the replacement of a competitive model with a collaborative, co-operative and co-ordinated sector, in which duplication of programmes and services will be discouraged and the distinction between the sectors will be clearly delineated. Yet, the purpose of alliances and mergers is frequently defined as facilitating growth, accessing new opportunities and building capacity and capability. This does raise the philosophical dilemma or contradiction apparent in the collaboration / competition strategy of alliance. Doz and Hamel (1998) refer to collaboration and competition as the yin and yang of alliance readiness.

3.11. The Field of Higher Education Research

The field of HE research has moved toward evaluation and evidence-based policy and practice as growing complexity calls for more systematic knowledge. However, Tight (2004) suggests that the study of HE is not a discipline in its own right, but rather a community of practice. It is certainly not a discipline like philosophy or sociology, rather education research draws on any number of various disciplines including political science, economics and business studies, history, sociology and psychology, which can pose problems for the identity of education research. The research is more commonly defined by the area to be analysed (youth, labour market, organisational research) and has problems with thematic borderlines. Therefore, it could be said that education research is a theme-based field of research comprising two distinct areas: teaching and learning, curriculum and knowledge on the one hand, and organisation, policy and governance on the other.

Tight (2012) provides a useful classification of themes of HE research: teaching and learning, course design, student experience, quality, system policy, international management, academic work, knowledge and research.

Gunn (2015) identifies three broad categories of how policy analysis can be harnessed in HE. In the first, policy documents can be used as a backdrop to a study. In the second, the policy is a more central component of the study, which includes the impact and evaluation of the policy, including an analysis of implementation. In the third, the policy analysis is the focus of the research in its entirety, involving policy design and policy process.

He suggests that the relationship between universities and the state is being reconfigured and recast, rather than being severed (Gunn, 2015, p. 29), and therefore it is useful to adopt a political science lens to the research, as HE remains a concern of government. He contends that contemporary HE policy includes audit

mechanisms and policy instruments based on more sophisticated approaches to governance and forms of new public management, which can be seen in the performance evaluations carried out by the “evaluative state” (Neave, 2012). Dodds (2012) suggests the use of comparative studies between two or more territories. The increasing interest in comparative analyses may be credited to the need to identify “*the extent to which social phenomena are shaped by universal system factors and the extent to which they are shaped by unique factors intrinsic to the specific time, place and culture in which they occur*” (De Vaus, 2008, p. 251). Comparatists in HE seek to illustrate how supranational processes such as Europeanisation and globalisation trigger changes in existing systems of HE (Antonucci, 2013).

“There is a clear connection between the emergence of globalisation studies, the scope for finding generalisations and common global trends and the wide use of comparative research” (p. 3).

Teichler identifies tensions between national and international perspectives. HE is both international (universal, international communication, cosmopolitan views) and national (legislation, organisation, supervision, funding, study programmes and awards), but international comparison shows common trends and fashions and national specifics. This is particularly relevant to the European discourse on HE within the broader concept of a globalised world. He suggested that comparative studies be used for exploratory purposes, as they were rarely “*grounded on a specific theoretical basis*” (Teichler, 1996, p. 462).

3.12. Summary

Across Europe and other developed nations, a significant segment of HE is being delivered through non-university institutions of varying structures and characteristics. The tensions created by academic / vocational drift, autonomy /

accountability and isomorphism / diversity of HE institutions in a system that faces a multitude of challenges including underfunding, increasing competition, increased massification toward universal access has resulted in more direct political interventions which impact on the development of HE systems.

Given the early engagement by HEIs in Ireland to the Bologna process, it is apparent that EU developments in the non-university sectors provided little information to the development process of the National Strategy for Higher Education in Ireland.

In responding to the influences of globalisation, the educational requirements of the knowledge economy and the moves toward universal access to HE the Irish government has adopted, as a key component of HE policy, an apparent non-negotiable stance on the maintenance of a binary divide in HE. A binary divide creates a sector apart from the university sector, commonly referred to as a non-university sector. The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (HEA, 2011 (a)) proposes a sector with a “diversity of mission” with “parity of esteem” with the university sector. This, and other aspects of the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (HEA, 2011 (a)), will be examined within the primary research phase of the thesis.

CHAPTER 4

4. Research Methodology

4.1. Introduction

Structural changes to national HE systems are becoming more evident, with direct intervention by governments and their agencies. In an effort to evaluate the real and/or perceived differentiation between the sectors, and by extension to real and/or perceived distinctive mission and identify of the non-university sector, the focus of the study is on the policy document – the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (HEA, 2011 (a)) - that gives effect to maintaining such distinctions, and with them the maintenance of a binary divide in Irish HE.

This chapter outlines a policy trajectory analysis using critical discourse analysis using elements of Hyatt's (2013 (b)) Critical Policy Discourse Analysis Frame to structure the discourse as representing the most appropriate research strategy for the proposed research question. Following a review of the literature on the policy trajectory analysis and critical discourse analysis, an overview of the documentary analysis process and interview design and structure is provided. The challenges associated with ensuring a rigorous approach are also discussed.

4.2. Education Policy

Education Policy is often the subject of academic research. More recently, the focus of such research is on the power dynamics and the rhetoric deployed in policy texts as they seek to influence policy trajectories over time (Wodak, 2001). References to a global knowledge “society”, rather than “economy”, have attempted to redress policy priorities of economic growth and social cohesion, and this is increasingly reflected in HE policy (OECD, 2008). Education Policy design and implementation have been problematised through the growing recognition that “global policy

agendas come up against the existing priorities and practices” (Ozga & Jones, 2006, p. 2), in national and subnational institutions and jurisdictions.

In the case of the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030, the nature and function of education policy has moved away from traditional policy documents – green and white papers – issued by the Government Department responsible for education (currently the Department of Education and Skills), to that of a strategic plan for the reform and reconfiguration of the HE landscape. Whereas policy statements and documents may have been considered as a starting point for policy discourse, the National Strategy appears to mark the end of the policy discourse phase and the beginning of a policy implementation phase.

Government Policy in broader terms has become an increasingly complex process, with inputs at local, national, and global levels, resulting in a complicated, constrained and contested landscape. This has required a re-conceptualisation of policy, in conjunction with a repositioning of the role of HE in a globalised world (Vidovich, 2013).

In the production of the National Strategy for Higher Education, the Irish Government has delegated its role in the development, design, and distribution of “education policy” to the HEA. The consultation process has become less political and more embedded in a process of New Public Management.

In Ireland, as across the globe, policy and governance processes in HE have taken on more complex forms, which influences the research tools used to study these phenomena (Vidovich, 2013). Rizvi & Lingard contend that the growing impact of globalisation must now be included in education policy analysis (2010).

However, the non-university sector is regularly required to exist in both the globalised economy and the local and regional community, therefore education

policy studies must also refer to the localisation of education policy processes (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). However, Hodgson and Spours (2012) argue that “there are different and competing versions of localism”, thus providing added complexity to the understanding of policy processes.

4.3. Conceptual Framework and Research Methodology

Teichler identifies a number of functions of HE research in dialogue with policy and practice, including “future looking”, challenging conventional wisdom, uncovering biases and ideologies, uncovering hidden function and testing controversial issues. (Teichler, 1996; Teichler, 2005). Calls for evidence-based policy and practice point to a need for rigorous research in the globalised world.

4.3.1. Policy trajectory analysis

Vidovich (2013) suggests a policy trajectory approach to policy analysis that requires consideration of “*matters of interest, conflict and power.... a focus on the broader politics of education, knowledge and culture, as well as the politics and power within education*” (Simons, et al., 2009). Rizvi and Lingard (2010) stress that

“critical policy analysis must offer a critique of the assumptions built, either explicitly or implicitly, into any given policy with a view to showing how they may either support or undermine the values of democracy and social justice” (p. 70).

Vidovich (2013) argues for an eclectic approach to theory for guiding HE policy research, blending critical and post-structural theories which facilitate a comprehensive global-to-local approach to policy analysis which she deems appropriate to these globalised times. Torres and Van Heeretum (2009) claim that critical theory can offer an ideological critique for uncovering economic and political interests that underpin cultural production and state activity. Vidovich (2013) contends that educational policy research that adopts a critical theory approach

“deconstructs dominant knowledge claims of the policy elite, with a view to empowering groups disadvantaged in society and education” (p. 26).

Foucault’s work applied a post-structural paradigm with the perspective of power and knowledge, power-knowledge, being so closely inter-connected that they “directly imply one another” (Humes & Brice, 2003). The deconstruction of policy discourses should expose the underlying influence of power-knowledge.

Power is distributed differently according to the critical theorists and post-structuralists. For critical theorists, power is centralised and the elite maintain a hegemonic ideology which is usually perceived as negative and repressive, whereas from a post-structuralist perspective, power is decentralised and can be positive and productive (Vidovich, 2013, p. 26). These opposing theories are useful in examining the tensions created by the top-down, bottom-up approach to policy formulation and implementation through the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (HEA, 2011 (a)), and the power distribution between the main players.

Marginson and Rhoades (2002) ‘glo-na-cal agency’ heuristic has also been recognised as a useful device in the analysis of the processes of globalisation in HE, as it provides a framework for analysis on the two-way interactions between policy actors, through both “structure” and “agency” in policy processes.

Principal-agent theory is another useful framework in examining the relationship between actors. The principal has the power, authority and the resources, and the agent is the expert with informational advantage, which results in an asymmetry that may affect policy formulation and implementation. Principal-agent relationships are based on the delegation of powers, which can result in a range of dilemmas, including goal conflict, agency slack, shirking and slippage (Gunn, 2015, p. 41), which can result in less effective policy implementation. To address these dilemmas,

the principal holds two means of control over the agent to limit-self-serving behaviour: behaviour-based contracts and outcome-based contracts. Kivistö (2008) explains the distinction between the former, which involves monitoring the agent's behaviour and rewarding their actions, and the latter rewarding the agent for achieving certain outcomes. The policy implementation documents that have followed the National Strategy for Higher Education show evidence of use of both means of control. However, Kivistö notes that the theory conceptualises the relationship without questioning the legitimacy of the principal's intentions (p. 347). Ball (1994) articulated five concepts of policy trajectory: the "context of influence; the context of policy text production; the context of practices/effects; the context of outcomes and the context of political strategy". In examining the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (HEA, 2011 (a)) the focus of this research is on the analysis of the bigger picture patterns of power in Ball's context of influence and context of outcomes / effects, and which require emphasis on a critical orientation rather than a post-structural one.

Vidovich (2013) outlined the care taken to contextualise the units of analysis both spatially and historically. This research study adopts this approach by giving a historical context to the Irish non-university sector as articulated in early policy documents and a spatial context through a review of the international models of HE. The concurrent OECD reports of 1964 and 2004 are useful in outlining the global contexts of the periods.

The theoretical and methodological toolbox for policy analysis continues to expand in response to the re-conceptualisation of policy and the contemporaneous repositioning of HE in a knowledge economy / society. The policy trajectory

approach endeavours to provide a comprehensive approach to HE policy analysis through a combination of critical and post-structural orientations.

4.3.2. Discourse Analysis

Teichler (2005) suggested that HE research is interdisciplinary in nature, lacking in reliable information because of fuzzy borderlines of research areas and between researchers and others. It is theme-based, strategic and has a more vulnerable institutional basis. Jaworsky and Coupland (2010) contend that discourse analysis is an interdisciplinary project. Discourse analysis allows us to identify and assess the main legitimising arguments of practices and how they become dominant and naturalised. Discourse allows us to perceive what the process is excluding.

Hyatt (2013 (a)) argues that the value of taking a Critical Discourse Analysis-based orientation to policy analysis is that it offers an approach to the social analysis of discourse, particularly relevant to processes of social transformation and change. Discourse analysis can be seen not only as a method, but also as a theory in the way that Fairclough (1995) defined Critical Discourse Analysis as both “*theory and method*” for studying language in its relation to power and ideology . The theoretical and methodological framework of discourse analysis is framed by social constructionism and post-structuralism (Sousa & Magalhaes, 2013).

A major aim of Critical Discourse Analysis is to ‘denaturalise’ discourses to reveal taken-for-granted assumptions in texts, to surface hidden agendas and to challenge dominant views (Gildersleeve, et al., 2010) In terms of processing analysis, the aim is to interpret how texts are configured through an analysis of how they are produced, consumed and reproduced. Description and interpretation are used to explain the ways social practices are ‘constituted, changed and transformed’ (Rogers, et al., 2005).

Fairclough (1993) proposes that textually oriented discourse analysis can be complemented by more focussed and systematic attention to linguistic features of the textual articulations of policy. This micro-level analysis is beyond the scope of this current research.

Wodak and Fairclough (2010) have evolved thinking away from the notion of policy as a product to one that focuses on policy as a process, involving production, reification and implementation.

Hyatt (2013 (b)) provides a *“pedagogical, analytical and heuristic framework for the critical analysis of HE policy texts, and of the processes and motivations behind their articulations, grounded in considerations of the relationships and flows between language, power and discourse”* (p. 42). The framework consists of two elements: one concerned with contextualising and one concerned with deconstructing. Bowe, Ball and Gold (1992) as cited in Hyatt (2013 (b)) *“argue that this involves the textualisation of ideological positions in the making of policy, and the detextualisation of ideological positions in their implementation and practice”* (p. 44).

4.3.3. The Critical Policy Discourse Analysis Frame

The contextualisation element of the frame comprises three parts: policy levers, drivers, instruments, steering and trajectories; temporal context, and warrant.

Hyatt (2013 (a)) suggests that a useful starting point of engagement with policy analysis is the consideration of levers and drivers of policy. Some analysts seek to go beyond the text in acknowledging policy as a process, requiring a policy trajectory approach, as outlined earlier.

Warrant is understood as “the justification, authority, or reasonable grounds” established for some act, a course of action, statement or belief (Cochran-Smith &

Fries, 2001). Hyatt (2013 (b)) identifies three classifications of warrant: the evidentiary, the accountability and the political warrant.

Hyatt (2013 (b)) draws on Wodak's (2001) discourse-historical approach to elaborate on the temporal context that he proposes, which combines synchronic context with diachronic relevance (see also (Hyatt, 2005).

The second element of the frame is concerned with deconstruction, which requires engaging with text and discourse using a number of analytical lenses and tools from CDA and critical literacy analysis. Hyatt (2013 (b)) subdivides this element into Modes of Legitimation; Interdiscursivity and Intertextuality; Evaluation / Appraisal; Presupposition / Implication and Lexico-Grammatical Construction.

Fairclough (2003) identifies authorisation, rationalisation, moral evaluation and mythopoesis or legitimation through narratives. Indiscursivity refers to the diverse ways which genres and discourses interpenetrate each other, while intertextuality is the borrowing from other texts. Evaluation / Appraisal, Presupposition / Implication and Lexico-Grammatical Construction are of less importance to the analysis of this research due to the collaborative nature of the policy formulation.

4.4. Documentary Analysis

Documentary analysis is used as a research method in the first two elements of Hyatt's Frame. Scott (1990) illustrates that the "*bulk of the historical and comparative work that is undertaken in contemporary sociology involves the use of documentary materials, as does much work on contemporary societies*" (p. 1).

Documentary Analysis is therefore appropriate to this research project where source material is used for data construction through a combination of historical, contemporary and comparative analysis.

While the range and definitions of documents has expanded in this technological age, the definition given by Sidney and Beatrice Webb in 1932 of a document still has resonance today

“...an instrument in language which has, as its origin, and for its deliberate and express purpose, to become the basis of, or to assist, the activities of an individual, an organisation, or a community”

(Webb & Webb, 1975).

In accordance with Scott’s (1990) typology of document classification, this research sets as a boundary the use of documents that are official, state, open archival and open published documents relating to HE Policy.

Otherwise, as McCulloch (2004) suggests, while *“unpublished and relatively inaccessible documents appear to carry greater intrinsic worth to the historical researcher than published documents that are widely available”* (p. 31), the challenge however, facing the researcher is that the amount of documentary resources available *“can be overwhelming, inaccessible, inconvenient and intimidating”* (p. 73).

In limiting the use of documents to the types outlined, the criteria for assessing documentary sources as outlined by Scott (1990) – authenticity, credibility, representativeness – can be accepted, while the research focuses on the fourth – meaning – in the sense of interpretative understanding.

Interpretative Understanding results from a hermeneutic process where the meaning of a text as a whole is a combination of literal meaning and context. The hermeneutic task involves interpretative understanding of individual concepts, appreciation of the social and cultural context through which the various concepts are related in a particular discourse, and a judgement on the meaning and significance of the text as a whole (Scott, 1990, p. 31).

The publication of the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 by the HEA in 2011, on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills, created what was in effect a policy text. The HEA set about to convince the reader that the text...

“...is not merely polemic, opinion or political rhetoric but the careful sifting of evidence which compels the writer to develop one set of policy prescriptions because it is not possible to logically draw other conclusions”

(Scott, 1990, p. 119).

Additional texts published by the HEA are referred to for clarification or more detail, as well as providing timeline of the trajectory of policy implementation and a point of comparison where deviation from the original strategy occurs. These texts are listed on page 4.

4.5. Semi-structured Interviews

The third element of Hyatt’s Frame – Warrant – (Hyatt, 2013 (a)) proved challenging to research through the use of documentary analysis, and is made particularly difficult in this case, where policy texts are mediated through a process of strategy formulation and implementation and written as strategy documents. Atkinson and Coffey (2011) argue that a document analysis alone is not sufficient in order to capture the underlying organisational or social reality. Contemporaneous public discourse on the evolution of the Hunt Report, particularly regular commentary in the Irish Times national newspaper, has been dominated by contributions from the University sector, understandably so as much of the research in this space is conducted in the university setting. In order to research “warrant” from the perspective of the “non-University” sector, key informants / researchers / policy analysts were interviewed, providing a critical discourse on the policy text, focusing on the Hunt Report and its impact on the “non-university” sector.

4.5.1. Identification and Selection of Interviewees

The initial proposal was to interview current presidents of the IoT sector to create a forum for policy discourse from the sectoral perspective. On reflection, this was considered to be of limited value, as the process of implementation and the immediate challenges of institute sustainability were foremost in the sector. Therefore, a concerted effort was made to identify key informants to the discourse, who may have occupied multiple roles in the stakeholder organisations, and who could bring a broader perspective to the discourse.

The stakeholder organisations identified as key to the research include: the Hunt Committee, the Higher Education Authority (HEA), Qualifications and Quality Ireland (QQI) and National Council for Educational Awards (NCEA), Institutes of Technology Ireland / Technological Higher Education Association (IOTI / THEA), Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT), the Institutes of Technology, the University Sector with particular emphasis on the new universities that crossed the binary divide, a member of a strategy group of a proposed Technological University, an international observer.

A shortlist of ten potential key informants was identified, with a view to interviewing five individuals who performed two or more roles within the institutions / bodies above. These initial five potential interviewees were approached and all five agreed to be interviewed.

The interviewees at various times have been: a member of the Hunt Committee, a CEO of the HEA, a CEO of NCEA, an IoT President, a policy advisor / senior manager of IOTI / THEA, a senior policy advisor at QQI, a senior researcher at DIT, a policy advisor to the HEA, a member of the Connaught Ulster Alliance strategy group preparing a submission for the Technological University, a senior academic

manager at Dublin City University (DCU), an international observer and consultant to the TU process, and an international policy advisor / researcher with global experience of national systems of HE.

The principle of voluntary participation was fully respected before and during the interview process. Even though the interviewees were not concerned about being identifiable, the research process was given ethics approval on the basis that participants were not to be identified. In order to protect the anonymity of the participants it is impossible to identify the profile of each of the five interviewees, as they would be immediately identifiable to readers of this research. In the data analysis, the interviewees will therefore only be identified as INT1 – INT5.

Transcripts were anonymised during the transcription process and audio files were saved using generic titles. Participants who engaged in the project participated in choosing both timing and location of the interviews to ensure maximum comfort and security.

The main and sub-research questions outlined in the introduction gave a focus for the questions to be asked at interviews. The questions were to be as broad and open as possible, without being provocative or prejudicing the process. The five questions that formed the basis of the interview may seem innocuous, but facilitated an open and engaging dialogue between interviewer and interviewees.

The interviewees were given the questions in advance on the Information Leaflet, and some interviewees brought prepared notes to the interviews. This type of interview was considered more of a guided conversation rather than structured queries, thereby giving prominence to the interviewees' own perspectives and personal and professional points of view (Yin, 2009).

4.5.2. Interview Questions

The interviews normally lasted approximately one hour, with the longest interview lasting two hours.

1. What role did the Hunt Report envisage for the IoT sector in Ireland?

This question focussed on the non-university sector, how the sector was evolving and the tensions between the two distinct options outlined for the sector.

2. What was the justification for maintaining the binary divide?

The “binary divide” is the cornerstone of HE policy in Ireland since the inception of the non-university sector. The processes of “academic drift”, “vocational drift” and institutional isomorphism call into questions the relevance of the “binary divide” and in particular its potential restriction of development within the “non-university sector”.

3. Into what kind of organisations were the IoTs expected to evolve?

Much of the discourse on the binary divide is based on outmoded conceptions of what exactly the non-university sector institutions do, and what they wish to do in the future. This question also is posed to tease out the distinctions between a landscape with fourteen regional institutions and the potential landscape with four, much larger Technological Universities. It also affords interviewees the opportunity to discuss the concept of the Technological University.

4. How would you explain these developments over the last 10 years?

This question was asked in order to contextualise the Hunt Committee work, to understand the key levers and drivers that existed at the time and to understand how the impact of the economic crash and international developments shaped the thinking of the committee. The purpose of the question was also to allow for a critical

evaluation of the progress made to date and the role of the stakeholders in that progress

5. *What directions would you expect to see over the next ten years?*

The purpose of this question was to allow interviewees to consider how well the National Strategy would survive for the remainder of the timescale to 2030. Policy implementation documents have been published and after the initial work as described and evaluated in the regular HEA reports, particularly at cluster / regional level, there seems to be a loss of appetite for further progress. The General and Technological Universities Bill, 2014 (Government of Ireland, 2014) for the creation of mergers and Technological Universities has not progressed as planned. The past number of years has also seen a significant change in personnel in key positions – in the HEA, the integration of DIT into IOTI to create the THEA, changes in the HEA and the creation of a Junior Government Minister for HE role in government. This is a time for a process of review and refocus.

4.6. Data Analysis

In choosing a method of analysis, options range from discourse analysis to content analysis, both of which can be described as thematic methods of analysis. Thematic analysis, which may be fit somewhere on a continuum between critical discourse and content analyse, is a method of identifying, analysing and reporting on patterns or themes within data. It allows the researcher to not only organise and describe the data, but to interpret various aspects of the research topic (Boyatzis, 1998). One of the benefits of thematic analysis is its flexibility, while potentially providing a rich and detailed account of the data. However, unlike some thematic approaches where themes “emerge” from the data in an inductive process, in this research the researcher plays an active role in identifying patterns and themes from the literature

and uses those to analyse the data available in the form of the policy texts. Bazeley (2009) asserts that “there is no problem with a priori categories or themes as long as they are recognised and declared as such, and they are actually supported in the data; the analyst can still retain flexibility and be open to the presence of finer nuances or different emphasis in the data”.

The themes underpinning the policy rhetoric – the need for efficiencies and cost reduction, competition in a globalised world, value for money, the knowledge economy and the learning society – also exist in the more prosaic format of the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (HEA, 2011 (a)), but the use of these themes in validating the proposals of the strategy needs to be investigated.

Analysis is not a linear process where one moves from one phase to the next. Rather it is a recursive process, with a need to move back and forth between the texts.

Engagement with the literature throughout the process helps enhance the analysis by sensitising the researcher to the more subtle features of the data (Tuckett, 2005).

Thematic Analysis can appear to be a relatively straightforward method, but there is the potential for failure to analyse the data at all (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Themes only attain full significance when linked to form a picture or model. Texts should be studied as socially situated productions.

Textual analysis involves mediation between the frames of reference of the researcher and those who produced the text (Scott, 1990). He asserts that the ultimate interpretation of the meaning of the text will derive from the researcher’s judgement that this interpretation “*makes sense*” (p. 31). The interpretation of a text that is offered by the researcher must pay close attention to the perspectives and interests of its various potential audiences. This is challenging due to the function of

the Hunt Report as a reference point for many stakeholders within and without the HE sector.

4.7. Reliability

The nature of this research, which includes both historical and comparative work, lends itself to the use of documentary materials. However, the foundation of scientific research is the quality of evidence available for analysis. Scott (1990) outlined four criteria in determining the quality of evidence: authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning. Given that the documentary evidence is restricted to government publications, HEA reports, and Institutional documentation, authenticity, credibility and meaning do not pose a problem to the research. Representativeness, however, refers to the general problem of assessing the typicality of evidence. Submissions to the Strategy Group were numerous and varied, as were the responses to the report and the subsequent engagement with stakeholders. While focusing on the perspective of the Institutes of Technology, there is the added complexity in that not all Institutes have a uniform view on the strategy or uniform responses to the strategy. The lack of sectoral cohesion is indeed one of the themes to emerge from the policy dialogue.

4.7.1. Triangulation

Triangulation is not a tool or a strategy of validation, but an alternative to validation (Flick, 2002, p. 227). Usually it is a combination of methods in a mixed methods approach as here, but can also be a combination of empirical materials, perspectives, or observers. Its purpose is to add rigour, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to any inquiry (p. 229).

Triangulation is defined as “a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or

categories in a study” (Cresswell & Miller, 2000, p. 126). While positioning the National Strategy for Higher Education at the core of the study, convergent and divergent themes are identified through temporal comparison with the education policy documents and trajectory which were responsible for the establishment of the non-university sector in Ireland in the 1960s through to the new millennium and by providing spatial comparisons through a contemporaneous review of global, and more importantly European, HE evolution. The use of semi-structured interviews with key informants facilitated a process of ensuring validity and reliability. The combination of both contemporary and historical documentary analysis and the unstructured interviews allowed for the development of converging lines of inquiry. Data triangulation, aimed at corroborating the same fact, enabled the evidence to be collected and supported by more than one source of evidence, making it more accurate and ultimately more convincing (Yin, 2009, pp. 114 - 116).

4.8. Summary

A policy trajectory approach is taken to evaluate the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030. In evaluating the policy text, elements of Hyatt’s Critical Policy Discourse Analysis Frame are used, and extended to include a process of critical discourse using semi-structured, in-depth interviews with key policy stakeholders. Reliability of the research is achieved through triangulation, the analysis of three distinct points of comparison: the historical evolution of the non-university sector in Ireland; the non-university sector in Europe as influenced by European Education Policy, and the focus of the research the impact of the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 on the future role and structure of the non-university sector in Ireland.

CHAPTER 5

5. A Critical Discourse of the National Strategy

5.1. Introduction.

This chapter endeavours to outline a critical discourse of themes and issues presented and raised in both the text of the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 and the text of the semi-structured interviews conducted with the key informants as described in Chapter 4. The discourse draws on the key elements of the National Strategy that pertain specifically to the non-university sector, the views of the interviewees and the theoretical underpinnings that were developed through the literature review process.

5.2. Policy in Context

Over the past two decades, a different paradigm of the purpose of HE has emerged as a driver for economic development. The pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, as in the manner of von Humboldt or Newman, has been replaced by a more complex and diverse role for HE institutions, to include supporting the economic development, regionally, nationally and globally; improving the quality of life of citizens and serving and defining a modern society.

It is difficult to see that the new, economically driven paradigm of HE, and the role of the institution within that framework, is going to be replaced in the near future.

The new economic realities experienced by the world since the economic collapse in 2008 will ensure that the trend towards increased accountability and managerialism, coupled with a drive toward value for money, will not be reversed.

Institutions themselves have not been static throughout the policy formulation phase, or indeed throughout their history, as was outlined in Chapter 2. They now face a

multitude of challenges and opportunities for the duration of the National Strategy and beyond.

“The extent to which there was an understanding of the notion of what might be encompassed by a new institution, whatever we called it, a technological university was I think something that hadn’t been seriously considered in advance by most, and for good reasons”

(INT 1)

It may now be time to engage in the discussion to outline a vision for the sector that can be accepted by the political system in the first instance:

“So to some extent because we haven’t as a system provided and I’m talking about the totality of the system, the kind of open engagement with the political system which would have built confidence in relationships, then I think we have a lot of work to do there”

(INT 1)

In our ever-changing and dynamic environment, this change will not be a big bang, one-off event. Rather it will be a series of adjustments and adaptations to changes in the environment. The Irish National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 indicates that the stakeholders in the process of strategic planning in Ireland recognise the long-term, iterative nature of the process, as this strategy outlines a national view of how to accommodate the new paradigm. National economic development is viewed as a complex phenomenon dependent not least on history and socio-political factors, the range of adaptations, in reflecting the local and national context, is likely to vary across countries and over time.

While it appears that there was general agreement on the need for sectoral reconfiguration, there was less agreement on what that reconfiguration would look like:

“These ranged from ... those who wanted them returned to their original role as level six providers, and nothing else to a view that they become a kind of feeder institutions for the universities through to those who felt that there should be a move towards establishing a

new type of university particularly probably reflecting the thinking of something like UMAP and some of the Australian developments, and so then there was the business about well we definitely don't want fourteen more universities"

(INT 1)

There were challenges in meeting the somewhat conflicting demands of government departments, which were reacting at the time to the changing economic conditions and the challenges they brought, particularly in terms of efficiency:

"... there's nothing in that sense then...conceptualising what they really need... to pick up the other [institutions] but the trouble was it then got confused because apparently departments and there was partly two agendas came together, which were not the same thing at all. I mean one agenda let's have a brand shiny new university from the technological university. The other agenda was how do we mop up the small institutions which is alleged are not efficient, and you know, have got some problems in terms of systems, and each of them was a perfect legitimate thing but... if you don't stick them together and see that somehow... the thing gets resolved."

(INT 4)

Somewhere during the process, the focus of the group shifted, and this may have been in response to the economic crash and the impact of the bailout by the Troika, which resulted in a greater focus of reducing the number of institutions and creating bigger ones that are more efficient:

"As it began to develop it became clear that there were, the issues from I suppose a national point of view whether these were driven by the HEA, and the Department of Education can be contested in terms of rationalisation".

(INT 1)

The economic crash, which was happening at the same time as the meetings of the Hunt Committee as well as other global influences, seems not to have had a profound impact on the working of the group:

"By the time it got established the economic crisis was on top of us so a different set of drivers began to have an influence in it including efficiencies ... unfortunately people then saw it as primarily as an efficiency drive, where the Hunt Report was absolutely right was

trying to focus on the efficiency of the system overall. It hasn't a clue about what engagement is about. It describes it as a third mission, and I'm completely opposed to that kind of view... Again as I say its understanding of higher education as a global market, and operating in a global space they are utterly ignorant offirst and only time they'd ever discussed that."

(INT 3)

The group were, it appears, working within narrow boundaries as outlined by the Department of Education and the HEA:

"...when you come to preparing a document, when what you're told what your instructions are and obviously we're no kind of group if we don't operate to the instructions we have, was to work on the roadmap effectively, the strategy"

(INT 1)

The lack of clarity on the vision for the non-university sector was not solely due to a lack of understanding of the sector by the committee or the HEA. The challenge of creating a shared vision of the non-university sector was not made easier by the inputs and engagement by the senior executives in the sector:

"... I think Hunt was a reflection back of what the sector put in, not exactly in the dimension that they put it in, and that input from the sector is in itself, it's a little bit uneasy, and it certainly doesn't and I doubt whether it can actually encompass... the views of the troops because in some ways I don't think the views of the troops are necessarily coherent."

(INT 3)

It is evident, however, that there was a clear understanding of the regional impact of the non-university sector among key state bodies, including the IDA. The timing of the publication of the report could have had a significant impact on Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) decision, and was scheduled accordingly:

"Let me give you an example. When we were doing the financial review of the institutes of technology... issues around austerity... how serious the situation was. We were talking about the work being processed, but one of our major, the IDA in fact gave me a call and said look when is that report coming out? They named a particular institute of technology ... said we're going to have some people

visiting about potential FDI. We want to present a strong institute of technology. Can we watch the timings... because the institute of technology here is really important, and we don't want to give an impression that there's... we know why this arose. So we actually kind of just made sure that that didn't come out. "

(INT 5)

The fourteen Institutes of Technology are once again the primary focus of the discourse on HE. After a number of failed attempts by individual institutions - Dublin Institute of Technology and Waterford Institute of Technology - to seek re-designation as Universities, there appears to be some solid political support for plans to elevate some institutes to University status in a similar way to the UK's polytechnics policy in the 1990s, which was also predicated on mergers in some cases, e.g. Middlesex. While Dublin, Cork and Waterford IoTs have been to the forefront of any move toward University status, the process has been made more complex by the insistence of the Government, through the HEA, that institutional mergers are a pre-requisite for any applications for upgrade to University status. The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (the Hunt Report) has outlined on the one hand that there is no case for the creation of new universities in Ireland, while at the same time suggesting that "*when over time, the amalgamated institutes...demonstrate significant progress against stated performance criteria, some could potentially be re-designated as technological universities*". This creates an opportunity and a challenge for the non-university sector.

The move toward technological university appears to have intensified the divide between the two sides of the binary divide, particularly the discourse on research and its funding. While Government funding for research has increased considerably over the past fifteen years, the majority of that funding goes to the University sector. Any move to technological university will have to be supported by an increase in research

activity and therefore the new technological universities would be competing for this funding.

It also has the potential to split the non-university sector in two, with some institutes merging to become technological universities and some institutes remaining as institutes of technology. Indeed, there is the potential for a third sub-section with proposals for a “merged institute of technology” in the north-west, which was initially not seen as a candidate for Technological University status.

Some individual institutes of technology have concentrated their efforts on partnerships with universities, while the strategy specifically rules out mergers between Institutes of Technology and Universities.

The interviewees agreed in general that the process of strategy formulation was less successful due to a lack of policy discourse to frame and inform the strategy. There were many reasons that this may not have occurred explicitly, including a lack of appetite for such a discourse among the stakeholders:

“... there isn't a huge appetite to understand higher education. It's almost regarded as something that will, that is an eternal truth that just goes on... that is some sense it will sort itself out... it's extraordinary the lack of public interest, and political... fundamental political interest in the funding issue... we should have had a more in-depth look at it but I just don't see where the appetite is there... and particularly with a Department of Education where higher education is sort of down the... pecking order... I think it would have been advisable to have a real in-depth look, but who was going to do that?”

(INT 2)

Some interviewees were critical of the senior management of the non-university sector particularly, for not being capable of engaging in a robust policy discourse, of there being little appetite for policy discourse in the Department of Education and no role for the HEA in this space. Policy Discourse was not considered a fundamental stage in the process:

“...No, I’m not necessarily sure that happened and lots of White Papers and so on would have helped. Maybe the Hunt group should have been a broader. I wouldn’t have put some of those people on that. It was heavy with government departments, and then some of the other people on it I just would never, never have put on the group...”

(INT 3)

This may in some ways be explained by the prevailing economic conditions when the Hunt committee was established:

“I heard people talking about the need for... we need a commission on higher education to really look at it nuts and bolts and interestingly I don’t know. I think because... when the Celtic Tiger was in full flow... everything seemed to be going along swimmingly. Okay there may be some labour market and mismatches here and there but, you know, on the whole it’s working, and Hunt was in flow before the crash actually happened.”

(INT 2)

and the subsequent change in focus that occurred once the economic conditions changed drastically:

“Now interestingly it might have been a time in that era may be to look at something but then we just went down into lockdown, and now it’s keep the system afloat just about, so yeah I think we did miss an opportunity...”

(INT 2)

Having said that, interviewees also indicated that while not formally explicit in the strategy document, the Hunt committee did spend time initially discussing issues of policy:

“I’d say people may not pay enough attention to it, but the earlier sections of the document reflected a great deal of time on considering the underlying principles and philosophy, which should underpin higher education regardless of where it is provided”

(INT 1)

While acknowledging the importance of policy discourse, some interviewees also outlined some of the challenges to engaging with other stakeholders, particularly the influence of the University sector on the nature and shape of policy discourse:

“...but there is a tradition in Ireland... and I think all of the university presidents would even, well certainly the Irish ones would feel a bit uncomfortable about... being let loose completely from the public mission, some sort of patriotism ... but then you see by their actions...wanting to sort of attract global researchers, big cadres of international students.”

(INT 2)

A significant challenge exists for the non-university sector, where policy discourse is primarily university centric:

“... it was very much kind of we're looking at a higher education system but we're looking across that system, and I'm standing within a university. So it's very much university centric rather than being student centric ... a higher education eco system that is institutional neutral. So it is very much a strong kind of university focus. A strong rhetoric towards the system. As you go through the Hunt report it becomes more fragmented. The recommendations sometimes don't always follow on from the argument that's there but that's not unique to Irish policy documents. That can happen as well.”

(INT 5)

The role of the unions, particularly the Teachers Union of Ireland that represents Lecturers in the non-university sector was also identified as a challenge to a more open policy dialogue:

“That was out there and because of the TUI ...you didn't really have any kind of significant sort of policy discussion. It's also difficult to have discussions, and I found this in the Higher Education Authority as well,...about the nature of the higher education system because inevitably it defaults immediately to my local institution or the one where I am. So nobody looks systemically, and even politically there's no appetite for looking systemically. We don't have any institute of any scale researching into higher education policy in Ireland. We don't have a research base for higher education policy. The data that comes out of the HEA is getting much better than it was but actually there's probably more data than there is interpretation of it.”

(INT 5)

The process of strategy formulation was, therefore, undertaken in the absence of explicit policy discourse, although the Hunt committee did engage in an informal policy discourse in early meetings to attempt to fill that gap:

“The absence of policy led to a great deal of the initial discussion and probably some of the protracted nature of some of the earlier meetings...something like going back and looking at previous OECD review of higher education in Ireland made no large contribution to [the Hunt Committee] understanding policy because it was driven by a very particular agenda on strategy. So policy documents were not very evident, but there was a lot of interest in policy among both members. Remember that strategy is not written for the benefit of academics or institutions, and that an appetite for the implementation of it has to create a compelling case which is both understood and championed by those who are in a position to do so, and I’m really talking about political systems.”

(INT 1)

It is evident from the interviews that the challenge of producing a coherent policy with which to frame the work of the Hunt committee was significant, not least due to a lack of coherence in the non-university sector:

“I mean when you develop policy it’s always a small, relatively small number of people and this goes in any area of policy, develop it in relation to those whom it’s going to affect, ... in terms of Hunt as a piece of policy it in many ways reflected back what certain institutional leadership in the sector wanted...Now, one could argue how deep the reflection went on that ... to come up with collective positions on anything, and Hunt in a way put a gun to their head.....and you see this is the problem ...an awful lot of the discourse around policy in higher education assumes that there’s some sort of known ideal for higher education. They’re always politically driven, ideologically driven, but they manage to duck and dive, .., and they do it both in the individual and the collective, and there’s a tension between the two.”

(INT 2)

The nature and extent of the political influence in this instance also cannot be underestimated:

“the Minister set out at the very beginning that what he was looking for was effectively a roadmap.”

(INT 1)

and interviewees would suggest that Colin Hunt was well aware of the political imperative:

“I think one of the reasons why it didn’t happen is an impression I have that Hunt had terms of reference but also had marching orders...And those marching orders were, you know, we were going to have your institutions. There was a very carefully engineered message that we had too many higher education institutions and there were aspersions cast on the quality of institutes of technology, and that was in the ether going into Hunt.”

(INT 5)

The nature and extent of the potential changes that would be proposed and the complexity of the system were understood from an early stage in the process, but unfortunately, due to the absence of a coherent policy discourse, many of the key changes to the structures and flows of the education system were left unresolved or unchallenged during the process:

“... at the heart of the Hunt process was dodging some very politically unpalatable decisions. So we tend to see that these policy processes where the government sets up a review group, or any kind of group, and they set it at arm’s length independent of the policy process. We never look at it, it would look entirely different and Hunt would look entirely different if the prospective had been actually let’s start at level six. Let’s make that our perspective and say okay at the heart of the system is the step that you take immediately after you leave school.”

(INT 5)

5.3. Levers, Drivers and Instruments of the Reform Agenda

Following the disastrous consequences of the global recession on Ireland, the government commissioned a report, prepared by the Special Group on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure Programmes, colloquially known as An Bord Snip Nua, to establish how extensive savings could be made in the public finances. The resulting McCarthy Report, published in July 2009, made some recommendations in relation

to HE, along with the abolition of government quangos and the mergers of semi-state bodies, and one such recommendation proposed the dissolution of IT Tallaght and IT Blanchardstown and their incorporation into DIT, eliminating duplicated programmes of study and research projects throughout the greater Dublin region in the process.

At the national level, the challenges facing HE are emerging through changes in the funding model for HE, the proliferation of programme choice and the more recent call for programme rationalisation (reductions in provision, elimination of duplication, un-denominated entry, introduction of policy levers to encourage students to take particular programmes in the STEM sectors), and most importantly an increase in demand for programmes from traditional school leavers as well as mature and returning entrants to the system.

Between 2008 and 2012, recurrent grant allocations to the universities and colleges fell by 25%. The 2013 budget brought a further 7.4% reduction in general recurrent funding levels for the HE sector (HEA, 2013 (b)). At the same time, the target reductions in staffing levels were achieved and surpassed as set out in the Employment Control Framework (ECF) that was in place from 2010 (HEA, 2011 (b)). The European Commission had expressed its concern that the Croke Park II deal on public sector efficiencies would not produce the required savings. Early retirement schemes for the public sector were put in place without taking account of the impact on HE provision, particularly in relation to cut-off dates which fell in the middle of the academic year, or as is more recently becoming apparent, without any process being put in place to calculate early retirement provisions to facilitate decision-making by individuals wishing to avail of this. The continued extensions to the early retirement scheme underline the problems with the system, and continue to

impact negatively on planning and decision-making at institutional and academic programme level.

The HEA has been tasked with co-ordinating the process of review and reform of HE since the publication of the National Strategy for Higher Education in 2011. The fundamental structural change proposed by the report and subsequent strategy for HE is that a more collaborative approach to HE provision is proposed in a regional structure, with all institutions in the proposed cluster collaborating through rationalisation of programmes, resource allocation, improving quality and providing options for access, transfer and progression for students in an international marketplace.

All of the interviews considered the process undertaken by the Hunt Committee as a timely and positive development for the HE Landscape:

“When I think about it now looking at the Hunt report it was probably the first time that any review group or policy document that came out of it that actually attempted to articulate a systemic look at higher education”.

(INT 5)

This was the first time that the totality of HE was to come under a coherent and systematic review:

“The initial trust was very much in the direction of trying to understand what the sector itself was doing, the totality of it”

(INT 1)

in addition, the initial work undertaken by the group was far-reaching and comprehensive:

“So it was much more from my point of view comprehensive in its initial stages than perhaps people have given it credit for”

(INT 1)

It is also evident that an area where policy requires input from a broad range of stakeholders is the juncture where upper secondary and vocational education and

training co-exist. Where vocational education and training were traditionally defined as further education programmes and apprenticeships at FETAC Level 4, 5 and 6 on the NQF, the support for these programmes from government has had an adverse impact on the HETAC Level 6 programmes traditionally offered at the Institutes of Technology. Many Institutes of Technology, in an effort to meet the criteria for Technological University, have jettisoned their Level 6 programme offerings in favour of Level 8 (Honours degree) and post-graduate students. The funding model has not helped this, where funding for Level 8 students has been higher than funding for Level 6 and 7 students in the IoT sector. This funding model has been redesigned in 2014 to give equal funding to all undergraduate students, but the loss of Level 6 programmes in many instances may remain.

A significant shift in policy has occurred as a result of two internationally visible drivers of change – quality and participation, which exacerbated the tension between these two objectives particularly in the decisions to be taken in respect of the competing challenges of distributing provision to facilitate regional access, which was a major influence on the non-university sector for the first forty years of their existence, and the creation of centres of excellence which appears to be the current priority in the face of increased competition on an international landscape, where the perception of Irish HE has deteriorated, particularly with the negative changes in staff-student ratios.

Because of this change in policy, the pressure is mounting to reduce the number of institutions and to create larger, more efficient centres of excellence. Smaller colleges will lose out, as they will be merged or amalgamated into larger, multi-campus institutions, some with the ultimate goal of becoming Technological Universities. The policy of regional distribution will lose out in this move, and larger

towns which have relied heavily on the economic value of a higher institution, will potentially suffer economic loss should measures not be put in place to ensure that pull factors do not result in multi-campus provision be concentrated in the centre. The changes affect not only the teacher training colleges (distributed in the main throughout Dublin), and the smaller Institutes of Technology in Letterkenny, Tralee, Dundalk, Carlow, in the regions, and Tallaght and Blanchardstown in the suburbs of Dublin, but also the myriad of smaller, second and other specialist campuses distributed for historical economic and political reasons throughout the country. Letterkenny IT has a campus for Tourism in Killybegs; Galway-Mayo IT has a second campus in Mayo, a smaller furniture college in Letterfrack, and an agriculture college in Mountbellew. Limerick IT has a number of campuses in Tipperary – Clonmel and Thurles. Cork IT has access to an agriculture college in Clonakilty, and Carlow IT has a campus in Wexford. There is nothing explicit in any policy document outlining how these facilities would be maintained, re-integrated into main campuses or closed in the elimination of duplication of programmes.

The changes in research funding allocation through Government agencies has attempted to redefine the levels of activity and the discipline domains in research through funding allocations. The largest public research funding mechanism in Ireland is through Science Foundation Ireland – the state organisation that has changed the shape of science in Ireland. It has recently announced the establishment of seven research centres of excellence to consolidate the research activities in Ireland. These seven centres are centred exclusively in the University sector, and will focus on individual areas of cutting-edge science, linking up researchers across different HE institutions. These links do not readily align with the regional cluster

model of collaboration outlined in the Irish HE Strategy document, and therefore adds an additional layer of complexity to the structures proposed by the HEA.

Innovation as a concept has become prevalent in policy discourse in HE in the past few years, and third level campuses have become determined to show that innovation is a central component of the strategic planning process. Innovation has also impacted on the research agenda as government has stated that commercialisation of research and innovation is required for economic development in products, services, and companies, and about all else employment creation. Interestingly, the metrics for evaluating innovation within the sector has been outlined in the HEAs “Towards a Performance Evaluation Framework: Profiling Irish Higher Education” (2013 (b)). Unlike ranking systems at national and international levels, this process is designed to evaluate whether institutional strategic missions are being achieved as stated through Key Performance Indicators set out by the individual institutions and agreed, in line with national policy objectives, by the HEA. The resultant “Mission-based Compact” is to evaluate institutions on individual performance, with the lever for compliance being a 10% performance related budget allocation for subsequent years.

In terms of innovation, the system is designed to measure spin-out companies formed, licences for technology transfer, research income from EU funding programmes and SFI, but many argue that it will not be an accurate measure of innovation in institutions, particularly in relation to the student experience, employability, delivery of programmes and other factors that set HEIs apart as learning institutions.

5.4. Higher Education Policy and Strategy

National HE policy objectives, as laid out in great detail in the National Strategy to 2030, cover a wide range of themes including teaching and learning, research, engagement with business sector and the wider community, internationalisation, funding, governance and management.

To achieve these objectives, the National Strategy made some proposals for strategic plans that could include the merger of institutes of technology outside Dublin, both to reduce the total number of institutions in the country, producing centres of excellence, and to reduce costs by eliminating duplication of activities across the institutions. While there was some discourse on the merger of Trinity College Dublin and University College Dublin to create a University to compete at the top level of international rankings, the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (HEA, 2011 (a)), as implemented through the HEA was focussed on three main objectives: -

- Reform of the IoT sector through a series of mergers;
- Consolidation and absorption of smaller institutions into the University sector; and
- The Establishment of regional clusters of collaborating institutions within geographical areas

The achievement of these objectives is made more challenging due to environmental factors which include the deliberate policy of reductions in public funding, increased demand from students, and proposals for alternative models of vocational training to include traineeships and the extension of the apprenticeship programme to new areas of the economy, in an environment that is being reshaped through the internationalisation and in some instances the privatisation of HE.

Tom Boland, in a speech to the Royal Irish Academy in September 2015 outlined the main environmental challenges facing HE:

“Over the period 2007 / 2008 to 2014 / 2015-

- *There has been a fall in state grants for Higher Education of 38%*
- *Overall funding for Higher Education has fallen by at least 13.5%*
- *The overall number of full-time students has increased by 25%*
- *This has resulted in an overall decrease in total funding per student of 22% - €11,000 to €9,000.*

(Boland, 2015)

While objective two was primarily concerned with the merger of independent, teacher training, colleges into the University sector along geographical lines, the other two objectives proposed would have a profound impact on institutes of technology. Institutes of technology now have to attend to both structural and institutional reforms, which will fundamentally change the role, identity and culture of those organisations.

It is therefore an ideal time to reflect on the evolution of the non-university sector and their contribution a broader strategy to develop a “coherent and sustainable system of HE to meet the economic and social needs of the country, within its broad ambition to create an export-driven knowledge economy” (HEA, 2013 (b)).

5.5. The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030

The output of the Hunt Report is the result of wide ranging analysis and interpretation by an international group of experts tasked with producing a blueprint for the HE system for the future. The Government has adopted the report as The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 and responsibility for its implementation has been delegated to the HEA. Discussion on the main points of the strategy follow.

For the Institutes of Technology, the move to the HEA, the reform of the funding process and the development of postgraduate programmes and research clearly indicated that these institutions were firmly considered institutes of HE:

“So the first think I’d say about what view it took of the institutes of technology is that it saw them as part of a higher education system”

(INT 5)

However, there is evidence, supported by the views of the interviewees that the members of the Hunt Committee had little or no understanding of the actual functions of the Non-university sector:

“In fact almost all of [the members of the committee], I don’t think, if may be one or two of them had ever set foot inside the doors of [an institute of technology].”

(INT 1)

There were a number of factors identified by the interviewees of some of the issues that contributed to the lack of understanding. On the one hand, the non-university sector had been somewhat successful in extending their involvement with research, particularly through the PRTLI:

“Well... the issue is really said if you were going to define what exactly the thought, the non-university sector was those roads had been muddied for quite a while in terms of having access and availability participation and research, PRTLI, or these other mechanisms which have, so you’ve got competing and contrasting, and conflicting policy direct, so if you want it to be very clear then you would have said right there’s no research”.

(INT 3)

At the same time, there was a blurring of the lines between the non-university sector, the further education sector, and the adult education sector:

“There was a blurring of the lines between the FE sector and the institutes of technology. There is this issue on the qualifications framework that certain level six, it can be an FE or a HE. That’s just again a complete confusion in my view, so there’s a lack of any certainty around what the shape and landscape of this system is.”

(INT 3)

This issue was also evident in the HEA, although some chairs were key to ensuring that the HEA became more familiar with the working of the Non-university sector

“where Tom Collins had been [the] Chair, so he made a point of making sure [the CEO of the HEA] knew what institutes of technology were achieving but it seemed ... that there was just a lack of awareness more

broadly in the system of who was being served, how well they were being served, and just how invisible that work was, and just how important it was to regions.”

(INT 5)

Throughout what can only be considered a process of education, many of the interviewees suggest that the final report, the National Strategy does display an understanding of the nature of work in the non-university sector, which may have been a difficult thing on which to reach agreement:

“... I think the Hunt report did recognise the value of the institutes... as a key concept, and that wasn't a bad thing because... there have always been views. I would have picked them up in the Department... sort of in the early 2000s that the institutes they're not quite the fully shilling Now those attitudes were changing gradually at different paces in different areas of officialdom but ... there was progress”

(INT 2)

However, even though there was an increased understanding of the work of the non-university sector, there were challenges in how to classify that work in a reconfigured system:

“I'm not sure it was clear about the future of institute of technology sector was going to be about. I'm not clear that it had the room for it, and aside from the fact that it wasn't a university. You asked me whether it was thought well through, not really.”

(INT 3)

Apart from the evidence of a fundamental lack of understanding of the nature of the non-university sector in Ireland by not only the Hunt Committee (apart from the IoT representative), but also the executive of the HEA, there were two additional sectoral issues that complicated the work of the Hunt Committee – the Brief given to the Chair of the Committee by the Department of Education and Skills and the HEA, and the role of the senior managers and representative body of the non-university sector in providing clarity of thought and coherence of vision for the sector.

While the National Strategy was to review the entire HE landscape:

“Well the first thing is that their intention wasn’t to focus on the non-university sector.”

(INT 1)

The University sector became less of a focus throughout the discussions of the committee:

“This was a contested space. There was ...little discussion on the need for rationalisation of the traditional universities. It was raised occasionally and then it disappeared off the radar immediately, ... and the history of attempting to do anything that involved changing legislation involving the traditional universities was fraught with difficulties.”

(INT 1)

Most of the interviewees contended that the briefing received by the Colin Hunt, the Chair of the Committee may have been less broad and more focussed, which limited the scope for a more fundamental review and subsequent Strategy Document:

“...well it’s an interesting thing ... of brief which he got... I mean he was getting sort of perceptions and sort of clues... from all sorts of different people. I think this was part of the difficulty which he had, ... the general drift of it was to create a sector in Irish education which was going to be different from the “traditional university”, and there seemed to be a sort of feeling really in the HEA and the Department that the traditional universities were not as engaged with their regions, and the communities, and all the rest of it.”

(INT 4)

There were also challenges in meeting the somewhat conflicting demands of government departments, which were reacting at the time to the changing economic conditions and the challenges they brought, particularly in terms of efficiency:

“... there’s nothing in that sense then...conceptualising what they really need... to pick up the other [institutions] but the trouble was it then got confused because apparently departments and there was partly two agendas came together, which were not the same thing at all. I mean one agenda let’s have a brand shiny new university from the technological university. The other agenda was how do we mop up the small institutions which is alleged are not

efficient, and you know, have got some problems in terms of systems, and each of them was a perfect legitimate thing but... if you don't stick them together and see that somehow... the thing gets resolved."

(INT 4)

5.5.1. Specific issues identified in the strategy

The national Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 is divided into three distinct sections covering: -

- The context for a new national strategy for Higher Education
- The mission of Higher Education in Ireland
- Governance, Structures and Funding

5.6. The context for a new national strategy for Higher Education

5.6.1. Planning for future demand

While nobody can be precise about the nature and extent of the challenges that will manifest during the lifespan of the strategy, they will be considerable. There will most certainly be a significant growth in the demand for HE, with estimates given in the strategy of 72% growth in the twenty years covered by the strategy.

Traditionally, projections by the DES have underestimated the growth in demand for HE, so 72% may be on the conservative side. The nature of learning and learners will change considerably, with the Irish economy relying on the capacity of the system to produce highly skilled, innovative graduates.

The strategy is demanding new levels of responsiveness and connectedness between HE and the wider society, and new levels of performance and quality within the system. Responsiveness and quality are two themes that dominate the strategy, which are essentially the bywords of what the strategy wishes to achieve in advancing performance within the Irish system, in supporting government and the wider society to achieve the broader development objectives that the government has set for the Irish economy and Irish society in the context of a global economy.

The vision set out by the strategy is therefore fundamentally about quality: the quality of the graduates produced by the system, the quality of the responsiveness to those changing demands.

To support the decision-making with regard to future demand, the HEA commissioned a report “A Study of the Future Demand for Higher Education” in Ireland (McGuinness, et al., 2012). This report estimates that the number of potential undergraduates will grow from 44,000 in 2010/11 to over 51,000 in 2029/30 (p. 7), which is broadly in line with ESRI estimates. However, the report also stresses that neither expansion of the system nor the removal of tuition fees has brought about any significant reduction in social inequality in HE access (p. 7).

5.6.2. The Mission of Higher Education in Ireland.

The National Strategy outlines four key dimensions of the mission of HE in Ireland: teaching and learning, research, engagement with the wider community and internationalising HE. The discourse on these elements has often centred on the diverse missions of the universities and the IoTs, and the National Strategy expresses a preference for the maintenance of the diverse missions

5.6.3. Maintenance of Diversity within the system

What is striking is that the issues and problems that we are facing in Ireland are similar to those being faced by countries throughout out the European Union. Ireland does have a high quality system, and is well placed to deal with the challenges faced by HE in an international context as acknowledged in the Strategy document

“The Irish Higher Education system has served Irish society well in recent decades, as it responded to changes in the social, economic and cultural environment”

(HEA, 2011 (a), p. 29)

The strategy has also clearly articulated the role that Irish HE has played in the economic development of the country.

The high-calibre graduates produced by the Higher Education system have been critical to the development of high-technology indigenous industry and to the attraction of very substantial foreign direct investment

(HEA, 2011 (a), p. 29)

The main issue facing the Irish HE system is how the diversity of the system can be protected and enhanced as an important means of strengthening and maintaining its responsiveness to the full range of demands on HE systems in the modern economic era. The Irish system does have a number of strengths in terms of the type of diversity that exists within the system, and the overall quality of the system that should reassure those face the challenge of the nature and extent of the changes that are proposed and recommended in the Hunt Report. Leaving aside the international ranking schemes such as the Shanghai and Times, it is difficult to find objective systems that compare international systems of HE effectively. This is an issue internationally, although there are some measures that give an indication of the success of systems, such as the employability of graduates or the efficiency of systems, where Ireland has performed well by comparison, for example in the ECOFIN study, published in 2010. Feedback from the major employers in the economy have also indicated the problems that they face in the recruitment of graduates with the appropriate skillsets required, issues and questions are raised about the system which exists in Ireland. What is at the centre of the discourse on HE is the evidence of standards across the system, quality assurance and systems of quality which ensure a system that produces graduates who can reach their full potential. The Strategy (HEA, 2011 (a)) lays down a direct challenge to the organisations within the Irish system, where the advancement of system performance

across every element of the system is required and where a robust system for performance accountability will give a wider confidence in our system, while at the same time future proofing the capacity and the capability of the system to respond to what will be fast changing demands and challenges that will face the system over the next twenty years.

While the binary divide has been the cornerstone of HE Policy in Ireland for the past 40 years, almost all of the interviewees now see this concept as unhelpful in shaping the non-university for the future:

“There was then and there still are those who characterise the system now as a binary divide. I’m not at all sure that that’s accurate anymore. I think what we were looking at then, and looking at now is the evolution of a much broader...I am trying to think of a term for it but effectively, you know, on a kind of...Almost like a bridge we span from right to left, a range of institutions and I think that’s better. Binary thinking is not a good idea.”

(INT 1)

This has been a preoccupation with Department of Education officials and the HEA for some time. They have resisted challenges to the status quo, including the report from the international group, led by Frans Van Vught (HEA, 2012 (b)). This suggested cross-binary mergers, and although there were also some practical considerations in not accepting the findings of the report, it has become clear that the Hunt report was limited in its vision:

“...they were very fixated on the binary, and that has been the Department of Education view, and it’s been a university led view for quite a long-time. The difficulty with the international report, ... Well reports are always a function of who’s on the panel, but having said that by the time that report that group met, Hunt had already been approved and the landscape was already down the road. It’s a wrong time to be throwing in a completely new idea, and having said that I think it was a reasonable idea not just because it was about... I mean the problem was the philosophy underpinning a lot of it was size matters. I’m not quite sure that was really it. I would have thought coherence, and critical mass, ... but actual the idea of trying to get alliances between institutions, jumping over others to be

across disciplines is kind nonsensical. It fails to take advantage of universities ... and role of global cities, and a global landscape, and that's part of the problem with Hunt. It has no global vision."

(INT 4)

The strict adherence to the concept of the binary divide also corroborates the view that the HEA did not fully understand the non-university sector, particularly in relation to research activity:

"So I mean in that sense ...to create a sector which was different from a traditional university I think a bit of a stretch in some ways, and it must have been eight or nine years ago now, the HEA asked me to do a study on what the role of research ought to be in the IOT, and you know, as if there was something peculiar about research, you know."

(INT 4)

The concept of the binary divide will, along with Hunt, be challenged, particularly after the scale of mergers envisaged for the non-university sector:

"I would say that I think the traditional binary divide is frayed as we stand. I think it will divide, and then who knows then what the policy makers will think, you know, in say ten years after TUs are up and running. They'll look at the new Hunt. They'll look at oh, you know, these institutions are... So why don't we just have a higher education system with eleven institutions, but then there are all sorts of policy issues."

(INT 2)

What has always been a challenge, and will continue to be a challenge in maintaining the binary divide is the level of convergence, both academic and vocational drift, which is happening in Irish HE:

"Well I mean I think if you look at... what the basis of it is, is that you've got two quite different sectors, ...I think there's been a sort of movement towards each other anyway, ... we are doing in the IOT some of the sort of things that universities do and visa versa. So ... if you like in the UK we had a binary system, and so did Australia, and both countries decided... this wasn't really taking us anywhere, and I think it was partly because of not only the system deciding or not deciding but beginning to feel... that this as a concept had its limitations, but also of course the people leading the institutions were taking it in all sorts of different directions anyway."

So I mean the thing which you then conclude and this has been certainly the case in the UK...I mean we've now got a unitary system,. They're all equally free to determine their own salary structures, and conditions of service and all the rest of it."

(INT 4)

It is evident that not only is the non-university sector drifting toward a model of HE which is similar to the University sector, but that the Universities are moving away from a Newman concept of University education to one which responds to the needs of the economy:

"So NUI Galway is a technological educational hub... and [the President is] an engineer... NUI Galway in the history department. They've a different view... and see I think sometimes we overlook the battles that are going on in the universities. You see there are bigger ideological forces at work. ... what is higher education about generally... and is it neoliberal enterprise simply to educate a workforce for and that follows the labour market...it is absolutely going to be technologically orientated now. There's probably an irony in the time when...we were or at least some of our institutions were trying to become more like the universities..... They are breaking down, you know, they're breaking down those lines. They're very blurred, and it is, it's very conceivable that the binary system will be meaningless, and that we might just have eleven higher education, say eleven universities. They can be all called universities at that stage... a few other smaller standalone institutions. What that will mean"

(INT 2)

INT 5 did outline a concept of differentiation in relation to the sub-degree offerings that exist in the non-university sector, which (s)he feels could have been more exploited in a positive way by the non-university sector, while also acknowledging the lack of industrial base in Ireland as a factor in the provision and promotion of sub-degree level education in Ireland:

"Yeah, I think as a concept the very strong sense ... the strong need to serve the level six and seven community that's part of it. A strong need for those old HND qualifications. That higher diploma, that group of the old technician kind of jobs still being significant. I think that was part of the binary, and a feeling that they should not be, that that should not be what universities do ... it becomes a problem in Ireland because I mean if you look in Northern Ireland it's easy

to see why the big colleges in Northern Ireland thrive because they come off a heavy industry heartland, and where there was the old traditional heavy industries whether its car, coal, aircraft, those big ones that had strong apprenticeship, strong technical workforces. It was very easy to have binary systems in the UK. that point about European systems that were strongly industrialised find it much easier to understand and move comfortably in a binary system because there is parity of esteem.”

(INT 5)

INT 4 suggests that the HEA is beginning to understand the role of the non-university sector, and this is evidenced in the changes to funding, as well as the requirements for parity of esteem across the binary divide, which have occurred in the recent past:

“So rather than it being simply a way of ensuring diversity of educational approach it has tended to be sort of hierarchical and you know, a way of in some ways it reflects some in this peculiarly Irish way of social stratification.... We’re not sure how this is exactly going to turnout but the initial signs sort of RGAM (Recurrent Grant Allocation Model) reform certainly are showing that there’s a real appreciation of what we do now, and that that might be recognised in the funding,”

(INT 4)

and that a significant challenge is that some senior managers in the non-university sector wish for their institutions to become traditional universities:

“but we then have a problem because there’s no doubt in my mind that there are elements within our sector that actually just want to be traditional universities, so in some senses you can see at times why the policy people are trying to dampen that down.”

(INT 4)

While cross-binary mergers have been ruled out by the HEA, interviewees have a more considered view of the possibility of such mergers taking place, mergers that were also suggested in the Van Vught Report:

“Like they could become constituent colleges, and then as a first step but again the landscape document did allow them, it was very difficult to get a more flexible approach to look at different models that could operate for you as opposed to this grouping. There was

not that flexibility which would have allowed, and said right these are four, you know, we're going to link with you in this way, and we're going to do this. So there was no kind of game plan in that which allowed that to happen."

(INT 3)

International experience was also alluded to in providing some positive outcomes for cross-binary mergers:

I think there's a lot to be said for that, and I mean it wouldn't necessarily be the case that... the older university would necessarily in some things be the dominant partner anyway....in some places what was the ostensibly lower status institution was actually much more dynamic than the older ones, and that showed, and of course the other classic example is Ulster.

(INT 4)

Unfortunately, it appears the process of international comparison was given only a cursory glance, resulting in an inaccurate and incomplete picture of other national and regional structures:

"Then there were others who felt that it would be useful to look at more internationally at what models were that we might learn from, but there was a strong... both overt, and covert move on the part of the universities as a group to try and ensure that they were left independent, that they were left to make their own decisions. [The membership of the committee] would never have been exposed to it.I think if you're involved in a committee to find some degree of comfort in opting for something that's familiar."

(INT 1)

Indeed, criticism of the process of international comparison also resulted in some criticism of the membership of the committee, who had powerful influence on the process:-

"Well I think the problem is that a lot of the people who they often rely ... who are always informing this conversation, are absolutely wrong in assigning the institutes to the community colleges, and that has been a real problem. ... and it wasn't always clear about what was happening, the nature. ...there is a view that that the role of the institutes should have been basically as feeders into the universities, and that might have been an acceptable strategy when you had twenty or thirty per cent participation rates, but not when you're

going up towards seventy, ... you'll be up towards eighty. ... we really need to think in those terms going forward, so no, that's not a strategy.

(INT 3)

It is clear however, that the interviewees did see benefit in comparisons with other models of HE and looking at innovative ways of providing access, transfer and progression:

"...you look at a California like system, or ... a whole system that has multiple components but is that stratified, or even cross-binary within the same institutions, then you begin to get real progression opportunities, and excitements and in fact just as there are institutes there are universities establishing their own colleges. Some of those colleges are further education colleges, and from a [named university] perspective that's another thing that is people in [named university] have begun to ask should we be putting in place... We have connections with FE colleges. Should we not think about doing our own, you know, for example.

(INT 5)

However, limitations to alternative systems were also identified as well as our capacity to interpret that information, particularly within the non-university sector:

"So the difficulty with the California model is that it's also, it's got plusses and minuses of being rigid. It doesn't accept that institutions can change"

(INT 3)

One has to acknowledge that there are major problems in California with affordability, and rigidity where institutions cannot move between clearly defined sectors.

There is, however, clear evidence that alternative views were not sufficiently investigated by the committee:

"Well if you wanted a... a static system yeah. I mean that is very good, and so is New York and several cities but I mean institution has got a very clearly defined sort of status, mission and position, and it really can't move.....I mean before Hunt came out ... I had a long chat with the HEA and the Department saying... you really ought to look at this Finland report. You really ought to, but I mean

they didn't. What happened subsequently didn't give any indication that they read it."

(INT 4)

5.7. Universities and Technological Universities – how diverse are they?

Tom Boland (HEA, 2013 (b)) has outlined his vision for the evolution of HE

"the end of a period of laissez faire in Higher Education, and its replacement by 'directed diversity'[of mission]"

(Boland, cited in (Hazelkorn & Harkin, 2014))

in terms of the future relationship that will operate between the HEA, the HE sector and Higher Education institutions. The implication is a shift from a policy of laissez-faire to steering-from-the-centre (Hazelkorn & Harkin, 2014).

"our objective is to transform Irish Higher Education from a set of institutions operating in isolation into a coherent, well-co-ordinated system (his emphasis) of Higher Education and research, where each institution defines its mission and decides how it can best contribute to achieving national goals, as determined by the government. In defining mission institutions should avoid playing catch-all – this is a formula for blandness and dissipation of energy and resources – and ultimately will not be funded."

(Boland, cited in (HEA, 2013 (b)).

5.7.1. Institutional and Sectoral Profiles.

The HEA published the first Higher Education System Performance – Institutional and Sectoral Profiles Report in 2015, which outlined the profiles of individual institutions in the University, Colleges, and Institutes of Technology sectors of HE in Ireland. The institutional profiles provided for the 2012 – 13 Academic Year provide a comparator of activity to be used "in supporting strategic planning at institutional and system level in the strategic dialogue process", (HEA, 2015 (b), p. 2). This report has included some refinements from the first submissions made by institutions in the sector for the 2011 / 12 academic year, particularly under the headings of Internationalisation, Student numbers, Research and Knowledge Transfer and Staff.

The development of this template for reporting on institutional profiles, would allow institutes to compare performance and activities over time, an “*facilitate the monitoring of trends in Higher Education provision in terms of participation metrics, fields of study, research, knowledge transfer and the financial and human resource base underpinning the sector*” (HEA, 2015 (b))

5.7.2. Comparison Criteria

The Institutional and Sectoral profiles are created using a set of criteria established through a process of consultation between the HEIs and the HEA. These include - Flexible Learners; Labour Market Activation; Level 6/7 Enrolment; FT Mature Students; Entrants from Target Socio Economic Groups; FTE Research enrolment; Doctorate Graduates per 10 Academic Staff; EU Contract Research Income per Academic Staff; FT International Enrolment; Level 8 Progression 1st to 2nd year; Non-Academic / Academic Staff Ratio; Student FTE / Academic Staff Ratio; and Pay / Non-Pay Ratio (excluding research).

A key distinction between the sectors has been the enrolment of student on sub-degree level programme in the IoT sector. However, the cumulative award pattern of the National Framework of Qualifications facilitates students progressing from sub-degree to first degree and higher level programmes, and in first destination studies for graduates, the most common “destination” of sub-degree level students is “further studies” (Clancy, 2015, p. 203).

Research activity has often been used as the key element in defining the distinction between the university and non-university sector. However, the failure to prioritise research in universities was well illustrated in the voluminous reports of the Commission on Higher Education 1967 (Clancy, 2015, p. 162), indicating that comprehensive research activity in the university sector is a relatively recent

phenomenon. Currently, there appears to be less agreement on the exact nature, structure and purpose of research activity:

“any dealings that I had in previous years with major industrialists in Ireland suggested an absolute yawning gap between what they required in terms of research, and what they felt were the alliances that were available to them in the traditional university sector”

(INT 1)

It is clear that research activity in the traditional university sense doesn't always measure up to expectations, particularly from a global economic perspective:

“... the other thing is where this lot fit in in the universities because one of the things which is fairly evident, and I mean if you look at a lot of traditional universities, you've got the mainstream academic faculties and departments which are largely self-contained, and doing their own thing. They're not really remotely interested in knowledge transfer, or anything like that, and therefore, the university concerned say well we've got to do this, but we don't want to necessarily polluteon the academic departments. So you have an alternative set of organisations, you know, like innovation centres, and incubators, and heaven knows what, which to a certain extent are if you like removed from the core, from the heart.”

(INT 4)

Interviewees agree that a different approach to research is required to encourage regional and national economic and social development:

“It was the development of translational research, and that kind of northern European model of an institution which acted as a lighthouse for economic, and social development in its region.”

(INT 1)

To do this, a different model is required based on Mode 2, multidisciplinary research and this was referenced in the Hunt Report, but perhaps not in a clear and articulate manner:

“...because you could say well you could create a, you know, a type of research which was based on a Mode 2, which was you know, probably the same thing. The theme was defined by the user, the assessment of how good it was, done by the user, as well as the academics, and it's exploitation by the user as well....therefore,

multidisciplinary and all that, and I think that in a sense of course is what Colin [Hunt] was sort of getting to. I mean he didn't use things like Mode 2...

(INT 4)

This lack of clarity on the nature and role of research requires further discussion as well as the provision of doctoral level qualifications:

"I think the regional focus was in the document. I'm not sure it was fully understood... I think yeah level ten, and you know, research degrees, and contributing particularly to niche research areas, ... that was seen as part of what institutes of technology were doing. There was a real sense of not undermining that.....whereas there's absolutely certainty about what kind of organisations universities are supposed to be."

(INT 5)

although some interviewees give some indication of how research activity should be integrated into the core activities of the non-university sector:

"So in a sense you could say the universities were doing that but in a sort of rather sort of separatist way on a far distant part of the campus which didn't impact on the academic... .. well one of the differences which therefore they ought to be, if you setup a technological university sector is that sort of thing permeated all of it including the PhD programme, including the way degrees are structured and postgraduate degrees."

(INT 4)

There also seems to be a view that the Institutes of Technology were not really engaged in research activity, but were, rather, teaching institutions:

"...I mean the other factor which Tom [Boland, ex-CEO of the HEA] hasn't really recognised at all is that you probably remember PRTL which I think was a really brilliant system...It was very imaginative... that had the effect, of course, of saying well here's a pot of money. IOTs and universities can bang in submissions, and we'll judge them on merit... constitute that as a research centre, even if you've got many areas of research but that is good. It's small and it's beautiful. Let's call it. I mean they couldn't possibly do it themselves. I mean, you know, with something big."

(INT 4)

There are other views of the research activity undertaken where deficiencies were identified in the focus of the research:

“I think ... how would I have characteristic it, ... that when the institutes looked at R&D which became their favourite tagline of the nineties, they were too intent in getting into ‘R’ areas where they were unable to compete, and they were insufficiently looking at the ‘D’ which mattered so much for economic development, and continues to do so, and I would say that I heard in the past the President of Stanford University speaking in Ireland on what should happen, refer to the fact that there was insufficient attention being paid to the ‘D’. There was our space, but in order to... maximise the opportunities available to us both nationally, and internationally, you needed to be able to operate at doctoral and postdoctoral level as well”

(INT 1)

The challenges, as they pertain to research, in the non-university sector are not only with intellectual capacity. There are many more mundane functional and other organisational issues that inhibit research activity:

“I think some of the innovation stuff is fine, and but it isn’t liberated and scaled up enough to really convince people in power that we’re really the business of it, ...but I do believe though that we have the capability, genuinely, ... but I do think there are certain internal reforms needs to enable that to happen. ”

(INT 2)

It clear that institutes that wish to become Technological Universities will need to redefine their role in research activity, and create structures and systems to support that research activity much better than they have done in the past:

“if you go back to the very early documentation on the establishment of the institutes of technology, one of the seminal pieces there refers to no artificial barriers being placed to the development of the institutes and the service of the social, cultural, economic needs of the state.”

(INT 1)

Notwithstanding, the challenges associated with embedding research in institutional activity, there is evidence of positive outcomes in both sectors.

The Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions (PRTLTI) brought radical changes in the internal functioning of institutions, including embedding a culture of strategic planning for research (Clancy, 2015, p. 167).

5.7.3. Sectoral and Institutional identity and local environment – degree of isomorphism in the sector and evidence of activity to meet the criteria for TU designation.

The dual policy levers for change – the funding of the clusters and the TU designation for merged institutions – have created tensions not only between the university and non-university sectors but also within the non-university sector.

There is little evidence to date of a unified approach to the national strategy, and the representative body – Institutes of Technology Ireland – is unable to promote the best interests of the sector because of the variety of approaches taken by the IoTs, resulting in an unstable, evolving structure in the sector.

Initial discussions identified that nearly all IoTs would be involved in merger talks. The four IoTs in Dublin, including DIT would create a Technology University for Dublin. Waterford, who have aggressively pursued a university for the southeast since 1977 would merge with Carlow IT to create a TU for the Southeast. Cork IT, IT Tralee and Limerick IT had initial plans to create Munster Technological University, while the sparsely populated and geographically dispersed Border-Midlands-West area would include the IoTs from Dundalk, Athlone, Letterkenny, Sligo and Galway – Mayo, which had the potential to create the largest institution in the state.

The history of policy implementation in Ireland, as with many other democratic countries, does not give much hope that things might be different this time:

“Then there was also I think consideration of what had happened to previous recommendations in Ireland, and we have a fine history of

writing reports, and putting them on the shelf, and then doing things completely differently.”

(INT 1)

The challenges to implementing Hunt are increased due to the current political climate, and the lack of clear majority in government:

“Where are we now post austerity? Post a change of government with a much more unstable government heavily dependent on independents many of whom are regionally spread. It’s actually more complex than it was with Hunt I think because of that, because the power basis around whatever about being able to manage party political pressures around regional issues, now that there are individuals it’s quite a different ballgame.”

(INT 5)

The timing of the implementation process and the lack of legislation to move things forward to date have had a negative impact on the progress:

“... we’re in a very unfortunate time politically because I think the prospects of...the pace of legislation is so terribly slow now, and also the business of appeasing local interests is now so strong, that I’m not convinced that we can expect wonderful things on the policy front, however, it would be a mistake to think.... we are not entities sitting there waiting to be operated upon.”

(INT 1)

It is clear that in order to revive the implementation process, the institutions within the non-university sector will need to be more proactive in articulating their vision for the sector and those new institutions, be they Technological Universities or Institutes of Technology:

“...we are in danger of... potentially being squeezed middle”

(INT 2)

Unfortunately, since the legislation was not successfully enacted at the end of 2015, rather than driving an agenda to suit their vision, there appears to be a lack of movement on many of the issues that need to be put in place:

“... we’re in a real trap at the minute because there’s a great danger... that paralysis will lead to a kind of... a shrug of the shoulder, and say the status quo is good enough”

(INT 1)

The government also has a key role in setting the agenda to move the process forward:

“So I think as far as government is concerned the question is can it see through this lot, and construct enabling devices which can get us going here quickly. The second group of factors ... the university, the institution themselves, and it’s really a question of saying let’s grab all of this vision and the advantages, and mergers and whatever.”

(INT 4)

Unfortunately, the government focus has shifted decisively toward the Further Education sector and is still unclear what role the non-university sector should have in this space:

“And I’m not sure in the current scenario where the Department feels they’re now going somewhere else but they were going somewhere else. These skills, and regional skills forum and all that stuff, and now they’re moving into this other tertiary space. Whether there’s any appetite to relook at these issues. That’s become a regular view.”

(INT 3)

In general, the interviewees agree that a review of the National Strategy will occur in the near future, and that a revised strategy may be developed; not necessarily a new strategy, but certainly a revision of the current strategy given the significant changes that are imminent with Brexit:

“If I was to put my money on it ... what are we 2017, by 2020 we’ll have an updated version or we issued a Hunt, I’m not saying it will be Hunt Two. It will be Hunt one point nought, one-and-a-half. I think we have to. I think Brexit will be a factor. ... I mean Ireland is fantastic at strategy. Like we’re really bad at structure following strategy. You know, we’re great on strategy. We’re really good at getting everybody in the room and working out the strategy. We’re absolutely terrible at making it happen. It’s not one of our strengths but so structure never follows strategy. We don’t do it well, and I

think in terms of Hunt government will use the opportunity to say global things have changed.”

(INT 5)

5.8. Governance Structures and Funding

The strategy defines a clear role for government in articulating national objectives and in doing so is trying to mediate the varied priorities and many voices of demands that makes calls on the HE system.

5.8.1. The role of government in policy formulation and implementation

A holistic system perspective is required in trying to align demand and provision and in overseeing the performance of the system in collectively responding to shared societal objectives. What is missing through the discourse is an overt policy document, through either a green paper or white paper, from government to give direction to the developments in HE. As the university and non-university sectors of HE now both come under the remit of the HEA it appears that the Department of Education and Skills and the Minister for Education and Skills have taken a step back from active engagement with the HE reform agenda.

While the Hunt report advocated a top-down, bottom-up approach to the process of implementation, this appears to be heavily skewed toward the former:

“So then it became an issue of how would you configure the system, and there was a huge appetite ... driven primarily from the officialdom for want of a better term about the need for mergers. I would say I wasn’t opposed to mergers, but I didn’t favour the model we eventually came with”

(INT 1)

This lack of agreement, which continues in the background, has affected the speed, effectiveness and efficiency of policy implementation:

“...the discussions on the reconfigured higher education landscape had started, and there was a lot of jockeying going on at the HEA

board about how this was going to actually work. ... we were getting drafts of papers back and forth, and then I realised then for the first time that this wasn't straightforward and in my own naivety I set up a project involving the fourteen institutes of technology and DIT were part of it but weren't in IOTI at the time to develop a quality framework for technological universities"

(INT 2)

The implementation of policy appears to be as hampered by a lack of policy discourse across HE as the policy formulation, which resulted in the Hunt Report:

"I don't think there's any intellectual appetite for understanding it. I don't think there's an intellectual, and this is where the universities as a whole regardless of whether in Ireland, there is across the university sector, by and large, has a research culture, and has people who will research in areas whether it's directly in education but in general, and certainly in education it informs plus and minus, and one could argue that the universities leadership is poor at using its own intellectual capacity to inform itself, but because there's none of that within the institutes it has no capacity to understand the institutes."

(INT 3)

The lack of understanding cannot be blamed on the quality of inputs from other sources, where examples of best practice in other countries were outlined to the stakeholders at various points during the processes of policy formulation and implementation:

"...the Finnish government saying ... but if you could address the question of the institutional configuration and distribution... So we spent a fair bit of time on that, and we released a report saying well the case for larger entities is inescapable, but instead of using the word merger, use the word larger entity, which is a much more expansive sort of term. So if you've got a larger entity you could have...a strong merger, or a sort of slightly weaker merger. You can have a federation...A looser arrangement. You can have consortia, ... which is sort of project by project type stuff, ...The second thing we said was it would probably make sense to ask each institution who they would like to become a larger entity with. ..., you know the implication of Hunt on the landscape and all the rest of it but what we're talking is strategy, and if you're talking strategy you have to have strategic partners to take you forward"

(INT 4)

Rather than concentrating on the concept of system reconfiguration, the focus shifted quickly and decisively to the concept of Technological University, and this certainly became a driving force in policy implementation:

“So the technological university concept is what the Hunt report came up with, and in a sense post Hunt, I mean that’s really dominated the sector.”

(INT 2)

This created different dynamic between institutions, which may have traditionally competed with each other, as well as a “me too” approach to development, as well as numerous changes in institutional partners making up proposed new institutions:

“So in a sense I think Hunt has given us the TU concept, and really what’s happened since then in my view is that the sector has really entered into a process, and each individual institution ...Assuming all of that happens and one can’t assume that but we really do need then to actually move ahead on this... and then we’re in a different world then. Then we, you know, say we do have four TU for Dublin, south-east, Munster, CUA plus, and leaving aside the Limerick who are not going to be in any of them for the time being. Who knows about Athlone, and Dunlaoghaire is its own little niche. We will have four then. Then we’re in a brave new world then, ... it’s just gone round and round circles for a good number of years now in a recession... people are a bit punch drunk but once they get out of that I think how the binary system will evolve then will depend on those institutions.”

(INT 2)

Other interviewees, also identified these and other internal impediments to progress in the sector, and the very process for creating a Technological University, as opposed to the process in Section 9 of the Universities Act was called in to question:

“I think the sector hasn’t moved very far. It’s been largely fixated on the TU criteria which is inevitable probably more so in retrospect. ... I think that’s partially because of the roadworks that that group put in place that made it so awkward, and a lot of that had to do with insistence on the binary, insistence on the criteria, and on particular criteria I mean there was always a section nine, and there was nothing wrong with the section nine which left...Come up with the criteria, setup a panel and have the panel assess.”

(INT 4)

However, there were also positive views on the structural reforms required at sectoral level, particularly in relation to Institutes of Technology Ireland (IOTI) and which has recently included Dublin Institute of Technology to become the Technological Higher Education Association (THEA):

“I do think it’s better...I was working a little bit with the original IOTI grouping because we were looking at transitions into higher education. So I knew when that organisation was setup initially I thought it was a really good idea that there was kind of going to be an umbrella body. I’m not at all sure government was as convinced about it... Like what do they need an umbrella body for? But I thought it was a really good idea to counter balance the policy influence of the IUA which has a strong voice. Now they’ve a strong voice as an entity when all the presidents go in together to meet the minister. It’s never great really. Institutes of technology are getting better at managing the messages.”

(INT 5)

Notwithstanding that, the Minister has been engaged in supporting the HEA in the development and implementation of the national strategy. For example, at the Ministerial Meeting with IOTI Council (the representative body of the Institutes of Technology apart from DIT) and DIT in June 2013, it is clear from the Minister’s speech how the relationship between the Department and the HEA operates in practice

“We last formally met approximately a year ago and as you are aware, the Higher Education reform process has moved on considerably since then, culminating in the significant structural changes I announced a few weeks ago in response to the advice from the Higher Education Authority”

(Minister for Education, June 2013)

The strategy is setting a clear performance challenge and individual institutions need to see their own performance challenge not simply in exclusive institutional terms but in terms of how they relate to and work with partner institutions as part of a

broader collaborative network. Engagement by the Institutes of Technology in working with the HEA on the reform agenda has been widely recognised.

“I would like to acknowledge the enormous contribution that the institute of technology sector has made in meeting the challenges that this country has faced in the last number of years”

(Minister for Education, June 2013)

Accountability for performance at system, institution and individual levels is a constant thread that runs through the strategy. The government is charged with articulating national priorities, to set the national agenda, and to form the basis for an outcomes-based approach to system accountability. The strategy redefines the relationship between autonomous institutions and the state, through the introduction of a strategic dialogue process, and through stronger links between performance and funding for publicly funded HE institutions

“The new system governance arrangements will ensure that future funding will be aligned to achieving those outcomes that are best for our students, wider stakeholders and our country’s social and economic renewal and development”

(Minister for Education, June 2013)

The development of that strategic dialogue model based on the principles set out in the strategy and drawing on good international practice where this process is already in place in a number of systems will be an immediate implementation priority

“Three groups of institutes of technology who had expressed an interest to become technological universities have now been given the green light to move to the detailed planning stage of the four stage process and criteria published by the HEA last year”

(Minister for Education, June 2013).

5.8.2. A Coherent Framework - Diversity, Autonomy and Accountability

System diversity can also be viewed through a variety of lenses. In particular, it is becoming increasingly obvious that the future demand for HE must be met on

sustainable system growth and the sustainability of the system is going to be a significant challenge moving forward, as reducing and constrained resources are matched with growing demand. It is therefore clear that the future development of the system will not be entirely in the remit of the publicly funded institutions, and the capacity to meet that growing demand will not be met with an exclusively public system. Flexible delivery and capacity of the scale envisaged is going to be met through a variety of sources, and the strategy in particular looks at the role of the independent sector of other HE institutions in Ireland and in terms of how their strengths can be encompassed in the broader vibrant and dynamic HE landscape. Strengthening diversity and supporting autonomy, linked to performance accountability are seen as vital dimensions to the challenge of enhancing responsiveness, and the quality of that responsiveness is seen as central to the strategy, which is identified as the major challenge for the HE system. Creating and maintaining diversity within HE across Europe has an impact on the governance at system and institutional levels. Diversity can be defined for this strategy as differing profiles of institutions, differing functions and roles, differing funding and governance structures, differing programmes and differing modes of delivery to different types of students. In line with international views on this, the strategy explicitly emphasises the need for Ireland to maintain, enhance and strengthen mission diversity in HE. If HE is to serve the increasing demand and growing complexity of demands that are placed on it, it will not be possible to have homogenous institutions, all seeking to perform a similar range of functions and seeking to build strength in all aspects of the organisation. Individual institutions will be required to identify those elements of the variety of expectations on HE that they believe they can build capacity to serve to a high standard, and the framework

for change including organisational reconfiguration as set out in the strategy aims to support institutions in achieving that goal, in identifying those strengths and working to developing those strengths, identifying institutional strategies that relate to that. Institutions will be required to focus on the internal mechanisms of the HE institution, in terms of developing its quality processes - assessment and measurement - but will also be required to focus outward on the wider communities and the society in which they operate to fully engage with the needs of wider communities, and to use that engagement in developing strategic mission. This third pillar of a broader engagement dimension is given prominence in the strategy. The Glion Declaration II (Glion Colloquium, 2009), discusses the great web of learning represented by schools, colleges, HE Institutions, families, and social groups, and HE institutions need to locate themselves not just within these educational networks, but in the broader ecology of the society which they serve. It is when those dynamics and interfaces are fully exposed that an institution can begin to match its internal strengths with the requirements of a diverse range of stakeholders in the region, as defined in local, national and international contexts as appropriate.

5.9. Structural Reform

A diverse network of high quality, public and private institutions can offer wider choice in meeting the full range of public demand. As part of a regional cluster approach, in meeting the range of learning needs within regions, the strategy identifies the potential for more effective use of targeted funding for provision from the independent sector to complement the role of the publicly funded HE institutions in meeting identified priorities. This is an essential element of the vision for the development of system collaboration and partnership between institutions on a

system basis. Institutions will be challenged to identify institutional strategies which relate individual strengths to those of other providers in the region and the extent to which collectively within regions institutions are meeting the full range of learning needs of the community that they serve, meeting the full range of enterprise development needs of the regional economy and ensuring that the unnecessary duplication of offerings does not result in the wastage of scarce resources. The strategy encourages a more challenging interaction on the part of all HE providers in the broader strategic dialogue process. There is a clear role for independent providers to contribute to meeting the learning needs of the region within that context. The potential of this targeted funding approach is already being utilised in the current Springboard initiative that is open to all HE institutions wishing to provide flexible solutions to meet the needs of the unemployed. In providing for this particular aspect of diversity it is imperative to draw together the accountability and regulatory frameworks, to underpin the broader aims for consistently high quality delivery. There needs to be a system in place to reconcile the public need for strong accountability for quality with the aim to entrust appropriate functions to institutions, both public and private, and there is also a need to ensure that Ireland's HE institutions can compete internationally and are viewed with respect around the globe.

Hunt was very prescriptive on the maintenance of the binary divide, but gave little thought to the prospect of an alternative sectoral structure emerging. From early stages in the implementation process, it became evident that some Institutes of Technology would pursue Technological University designation, others may become as merged Institute of Technology, as was proposed for the institutes in the north-west of the country, and others remain as independent Institutes of Technology, a

structure that some would define as stratified, with three sectors of HE focusing on their strengths:

“That’s the thing and if you let things evolve like that’s what happens. ... the binary thing is an artificial concept. Once you let people be creative which is really what universities ought to be anyway, they move in all sorts of different directions. ...within the British system as a case in point. I mean it was sort intergalactic plagiarism, you know, like Oxford, Cambridge, UCL and all that. ...And then you’ve got another group which isn’t the Russell group, who’d like to be in the Russell group, and that would mean it would lose its ...what’s the word?, singularity...but equally very fine institutions. I mean you’ve got places ... like Lancaster. Very fine places. Then of course you’ve got the new universities in the form of polytechnics, and within that there’s a spectrum as well. I mean some are very valuable, you know, like London Metropolitan, and I mean London Metropolitan is often castigated but it’s actually a cracking job with minorities. A marvellous job with minorities, and the value-added element”

(INT 4)

For some, the challenge of creating a distinctive identity for a non-university sector stems from a singular approach to second-level education in Ireland:-

“We’re now the only European system that is fully comprehensive to the end up upper secondary. We’re the only one. Everyone else gets binary earlier because we’re comprehensive to the end of upper second level. Then the binary, any sort of bifurcation happens at that point, and it inevitably because it happens there it’s inevitably associated with well universities are where I go unless I can’t and then I go somewhere else. If you become, and these debates are starting now at senior cycle because there is an argument saying, you know, the nature of the workforce is changing. The nature of our young people is changing. Is it reasonable to assume that sixteen to eighteen year olds should all be doing the same thing, and yes we’ve got the token tweaks of the LCDP and the LCA, but they are token? They are token.”

(INT 5)

5.9.1. The formation of educational clusters

The initial HEA definition of clusters included the Universities, the Institutes of Technology, the Teacher Training Colleges and specialist institutions (all under the remit of the HEA). More recent political discourse has expanded the definition of

the cluster to include ETBs (Education and Training Boards), SOLAS and industry representatives, which provide further education and apprenticeship training. It is envisaged that the clusters will respond to the needs of local employers and broader society.

While all stakeholders are positively predisposed to the proposal on regional clusters, an issue of contention is the proposal to create a new type of institution – the Technological University – by merging Institutes of Technology and repositioning these new entities as TUs. It is clear that the traditional university sector is somewhat ambivalent to this idea, and indeed some presidents of universities, such as Dr Jim Browne of NUIG are not in favour of such a development. The Institute of Technology sector are also not united in their view of such a development. DIT, along with Blanchardstown and Tallaght plan to merge, and quickly thereafter become Dublin Technological University. Waterford and Carlow Institutes of Technology in the Southeast and Cork and Tralee in the South West plan similar moves. DIT and Waterford IT have recently had applications for University status denied by the Government, but this puts them at an advantage in having fulfilled many of the requirements of the process already, albeit in another format. The West, North West and Northeast regions are less clear on their plans for TU, working predominantly to develop working clusters with the Universities and other stakeholders in the region.

There is a consensus evolving on the HEAs approach for the sector, particularly as Government Policy is being interpreted and implemented in a combination of top-down and bottom-up dialogue and initiatives. The resulting process should result in collaboration between the diverse institutions within clusters that meet the expanding

demands of students, while maintaining and improving on international standards with the development of TUs where appropriate.

5.9.2. Funding

HE will continue to face “*substantial challenges to increase and widen participation and to maintain a higher quality student experience over the coming decades*”, according to the Strategy Review Group. (Hunt, 2011, p. 110). However, the report does concede that the Irish HE system is delivering above average outcomes with below average funding levels. The overall funding for the IoT sector declined from €554.5M in 2008 to €334.9M in 2015 (HEA, 2016 (b), p. 13). The Expert Group on Funding for HE reported a more nuanced review in 2015 (Expert Group on Future Funding for Higher Education, 2015 (b)). In its expenditure overview, the report indicated that Ireland’s expenditure of 1.5% GDP in 2011 was the average across the OECD. The OECD reported that Ireland’s spending on HE is relatively efficient. A 2009 study for ECOFIN concluded that Ireland has one of the most efficient and effective HE systems in the EU (St Aubyn, et al., 2009) In 2011, The National Strategy also reported that 85.1% of funding for HE comes from public sources, which compares unfavourably with an EU-19 average of 81.1% and an OECD average of 72.6%. By 2015, the Cassells Report indicated that 68% of funding comes from the exchequer, while contract research for institutions is 78% funded by state agencies.

The National Strategy also posits that increased enrolment will place additional pressure on the funding for HE. However, this increase is due to demographic trends rather than an increase in participation rates. The Strategy assumes a continuation of a 56% participation rate in HE, significantly underperforming the target set in 2008 – 2010 by the then Minister for Education Batt O’Keeffe, who envisaged a 72%

participation rate by 2020 in the National Plan for Equity of Access to HE 2008 - 2013 (2008).

5.9.3. State Contribution to the Cost of HE

In 2011, the HEA proposed to introduce a Recurrent Grant Allocation Model to the Institutes of Technology, a model already in use with the University sector. The funding model would change from a system of block grants to a model based on student numbers. This had the potential to have an adverse effect on the sector, particularly the smaller institutes and the multi-campus institutes. Since the beginning of the process, the National Strategy was published, and the RGAM Student Audit Report inferred that “The Strategy has given a strong endorsement to the implementation of a student numbers driven funding model for the IoT sector (Goggin & Kelleher, 2011, p. 5). In order to minimise the immediate impact of the new system, it was phased in over a three-year cycle. There were some positive outcomes for the IoT sector particularly in the weighting of some disciplines for funding based on the additional costs for laboratory-intensive programmes, but less positive were the outcomes concerning the provision of music programmes, the provision of e-learning programmes, and the multi-campus institutes, none of which were deemed to require additional funding. In the case of the weighting for disciplines, this advantage has been reduced by the increase in student contributions which are standard, and a reduction in the exchequer contributions which was weighted (HEA, 2016 (b)).

Two other oversights of the report at this time had a significant adverse effect on the strategic choices made by the IoT sector. The RGAM model excluded nursing students, apprentices and those students pursuing programmes at lower than HETAC / FETAC Level 6. The RGAM Audit Report also did not refer to the fact that

students on Level 6 and Level 7 programmes were funded at a lower level than those students on a Level 8 programme. This placed the University sector at an advantage, but also resulted in many IoTs moving away from apprenticeship and Level 6 programmes in favour of better-funded Level 8 programmes. This anomaly existed until 2014 when the level of funding for levels 6, 7 and 8 were equalised, but many of the changes in the IoTs were implemented, with significant losses at those lower levels.

“The funding model for the IoT sector also includes an adjustment to remove the financial disincentive in relation to the provision of level 6 and 7 programmes (due to a lower fee for these levels compared to Level 8 provision”

(HEA, 2016 (b), p. 13).

The funding of the IoT sector was the subject of a recent HEA Report – Financial Review of the Institutes of Technology (2016 (b)). The extent of the crisis facing the IoT sector due to the reduction in funding was clearly outlined. It is clear that six of the institutes face immediate sustainability challenges, with a further four potentially at risk due to limited reserves and current or projected deficit positions. The challenges to the sector include a major deficit in ongoing capital investment coupled with an expected continuation of student demand and growth. Suggestions for alleviating the crisis will require significant investment to bring the changes about, including a national cross-sectoral redundancy programme, redeployment and retraining of staff, developing new programmes, particularly online delivery, targeting international markets, developing commercial activity or generating philanthropic investment (HEA, 2016 (b)). The HEA have developed a policy framework for intervention in relation to vulnerable IoTs.

5.10. The future of the Hunt Report to 2030

Since the publication of the National Strategy in 2011, there have been some positive developments – particularly in the area of mergers between the Universities and the Colleges of Education, outlining student pathways, strategic dialogue, and improving accountability and effective use of resources, while other key elements of the strategy are still under review – most notably the mergers within the non-university sector and the legislation to allow for the designation of Technological Universities. There are differing views among the interviewees as to the trajectory of the National Strategy to its proposed end in 2030. Some interviewees suggest that policy implementation deficit is a general problem in political circles that will also affect the implementation of the national strategy:

“In some senses I think the business of developing policy for higher education is something that a government should, all governments should pay more attention to... ...if you go back through I suppose the history of the development of policy in Ireland, you will find fairly large deficits in particular areas, and education being one of them, and that’s not a comment on any party in power.”

(INT 1)

It is evident that the National Strategy is being scrutinised, questioned and challenged:

“...Too many fundamentals have changed. Too many holes have been picked. There have been too many U-turns on the road, and too many uncertainties and holes, ...it’s not in shreds because there are really important principles about the system that we want to say like. I mean arising out of it the access plan ... that says everyone should have an opportunity to go to higher education, and when you get there the population that you meet should be representative of the broader Irish population. That still stands.”

(INT 5)

For some, indeed, the prospect of a replacement for the Hunt Report, the National Strategy is not an impossibility:

“Well I suspect that if they get TUs over the line then Hunt will go. Then we’ll start again. That would be a new thing. Now I’m not saying that on the days the TU are setup then they announce...”

(INT 2)

For some interviewees, it is clear that the non-university sector should stick to what it does best:

“Oh again I’d go back to the roots. I’d say what is it within your regions that are serious? Dig yourself in. Stop trying to be mini universities. Take on the field that others are doing, and try and develop niche areas that are appropriate to your region and areas of specialisation. Then go ... differentiation would be increasingly yes there would be a very large comprehensive but for a smaller and newer institutions it’s what areas of specialisation.”

(INT 4)

This also requires institutions to maximise the use of resources in an efficient and effective manner so as not to damage the institution’s reputation. One such challenge is in the recruitment of international students:

“Well I remember meeting some institutional leaders in the institute of technology sector, and in particular a management team from one institute of technology, and they said we are not pursuing international students. We did. We’re stopping. One they absorb all our resources when they come. We don’t have the resources to absorb them. Two, we’re not sure we’re offering anything they couldn’t get better at home, or that they want to come to us, and we’ve gone down that road, and it just... If they come we’re delighted but we don’t have an agent in China. We’re not out there, and then I met others that said look it’s out life blood. Like when I was in the HEA you won’t let us borrow. We have to get income somewhere. So I know why but it’s very much an income generating game... and there’s some reputational damage in that context. On the other hand, you know, all the universities are having to make a big push for international students, and there are opportunities coming out of Brexit that may be institutes of technology together might work on something but it’s very difficult I think for the institutes as a sector to work on an international strategy because everyone is going to take their own approach, and they will compete.”

(INT 5)

There are also developments at second level schools that will support and channel students to the non-university institutions;

“I do think that things like technology now, and technical type subjects are beginning to embed themselves more in the traditional school curriculum. I think we’ll see more and more of that so that’s a longer term reform.”

(INT 2)

However, there are also challenges in other sectors of third level education, which have not been considered in the discourse on Hunt, which focused primarily on third-level, HE.

“things have not developed at all as they should have since in this space is the development of further education, and its alignment with where, and indeed with continuing education particularly for adults in Ireland. We are still locked into this kind of education in batches by ages, and when you look at the totality of the population, and the requirements then further education and continuing education continued to be hugely neglected.”

(INT 1)

In recent years, the Department of Education and Skills has focused much of its energy on the Further Education sector, which will be in direct competition at sub-degree level with the non-university sector:

“That’s an interesting question as to what happens if the FE sector starts to develop and define themselves more clearly because it has been completely undefined, and haphazard, and strictly speaking knowing the way ... can’t be resolved is a bit, is some co-ordination across them, so that’s why I think an integrated tertiary education authority would be far better than having an individual HEA and SOLAS who don’t speak to each other. Well they do but not...”

(INT 4)

5.11. Key Levers in Strategy Implementation

The HEA Report – Institutional Responses to the Landscape Document and Achieving Objectives of the National Strategy for Higher Education: A Gap Analysis (2012 (c)) provided a base from which to engage individual institutions in a

strategic dialogue. This report again re-iterated the views outlined in the National Strategy and the Towards a Future Higher Education Landscape (the Landscape Document).

5.11.1. Strategic Dialogue and Mission-based Performance Compacts

This process required institutions to provide responses to the HEA under the headings: Mission, Student Profile, Consolidation, Collaboration and Technological University. The Gap Analysis sought “ (2012 (c), p. 6) . The report identified (without a hint of irony) that “*the submissions propose a marked shift in student load from undergraduate to postgraduate, and there is evidence of a reduction in Levels 6 and 7*” and later “the provision of apprenticeships (FETAC, Advanced Cert.) will decline substantially. Yet this report, along with others, did not refer to the different funding allocations under RGAM that had adversely affected this provision.

The Gap Analysis also acknowledged the establishment of HE clusters, but expressed concern at the lack of commitment to the clusters, given that Strategic Innovation Fund and PRTLTI funding had been available over a number of cycles to promote collaboration. “*The capacity of such voluntary collaborations to deliver the inter-institutional change envisaged in the National Strategy is therefore open to question*” (p. 13). The report recognised that governance, management and funding would be required to bring about the requisite change, but “*suggested that public funding for such institutions was at risk if they did not incorporate or merge with larger institutions is a significant omission, suggesting that these consolidations will need to be imposed from outside*” (p. 15).

The Gap Analysis also identified weaknesses in the IoTs’ plans for Research and Internationalisation. IoTs indicated in their responses that they wished to increase

their research activities, which was contrary to the National Strategy and Landscape Document which both outlined proposals to consolidate research activity (in the Universities) to ensure the most effective outcomes. The growth in international students was considered aspirational, due to the lack of evidence of past success or market research.

There is little evidence yet that management structures and appointments are being made based on the requirements of new institutions, if they are to be Technological Universities, rather than the current structure and role of the Institutes of Technology:

“...because one of the things ... is probably a bit lacking at the moment... in the four consortia at the minute, I mean is really a sense of vision and drive, and stuff like that, and I find it quite sad in a way, disappointing in a way because one of the things which I think is really quite exciting I mean is what this type of institution could be. I find it exciting.”

(INT 4)

Interviewees agree in general that it is the role of the senior management teams within the sector to articulate a vision and purpose for the sector:

“It should be a great challenge for very bright people in higher education to come up with a compelling model which they should be able to win support for elsewhere. We should stop allowing ourselves being people to whom things are done...”

(INT 1)

and in some cases questioned the intellectual capacity of senior management within the sector:

“I don't think the sector had any intellectual capacity to underpin that [policy discourse]. I'm going to be straightforward here. The Presidents have zilch understanding intellectually. ... there is a large epidemic and policy literature that is absent from the senior levels across the institutes. They've never read anything. They've never read anything on engagement. They've never read anything in general, so the intellectual depth is not there, and it certainly

doesn't exist in the Department, and the HEA has largely been told that policy is not its space."

(INT 4)

To date, there is little evidence of this in the sector, particularly at sectoral level:

"Also just to add I can't think of any national champion for institutes of technology. I can't think of a voice. I think if there's an issue to do with universities they'll call ... or they'll call someone from the IUA while now they can call [THEA] but if you were to ask people in Dublin to name presidents of institutes of technology they'd be hard pushed. Presidents of universities, yeah they'd have a go, you know."

(INT 5)

It is clear that there needs to be a different type of thinking at senior management level within the non-university sector:

"And I think ... if they got rid of this representative sort of norm in terms of the TU governing body particularly in funding international people, and then I think the other thing which I found in ... the original bill was that it did not seem to understand fully what the behavioural characteristics of a technological university were, and the thing is they never used this word. If a technological university can be described as entrepreneurial they've got to be because ... I think you can get totally sort of confused in the search for definitions. I mean this is part of the thing... this is a broad set of characteristics which the technological universities ought to doing, getting on with and going and saying right this is how we're going to facilitate it. Get themselves sorted out and off you go, and if this means that there's an overlap with UCD or Galway, so what....it's a sort of....hasn't really quite figured out I think whether they're talking about a planned system, or an organic system"

(INT 4)

There are already examples of mergers between the Universities and the Colleges of education, and therefore there exists a body of knowledge and expertise on how to move forward. However, institutions need to want to merge, and be clear on the partnerships. Unfortunately, the proposals for re-configuration of HE have not been consistent, and senior managers do not have the time or the capacity to undertake this work along with the day-to-day workload:

“We’ve just come through in [named university] a huge merger with institutions that wanted to merge, that wanted to be together led by a person who believed in it, and with a fair amount of stakeholder engagement....There are people in the university who believed that for two years it took the presidents eye off the university ball just to get that merger through. The cost is in tens of millions, and that’s not just in bricks and mortar. It’s in terms of time. It absorbed an enormous amount of the leadership capacity of all of the institutions to do it, and on reflection were you to ask other colleagues on the senior management team was it worth it, they still, we still have to prove ourselves. Now if you take that model to the kind of mergers that are proposed for the institutes of technology, I cannot envisage a situation where the leadership capacity is there to do it effectively, or the resources are there to enable the leadership capacity to be put in place to do it effectively, and that’s not about hiring a bunch of consultants to come in and write the roadmap. ... I mean we had... There were a team of people here, about twenty people across [named University] who worked full-time on nothing else, nothing else for the guts of three years to make it happen... we still have no furniture outside. So I think there’s an underestimation of it...”

(INT 5)

While the mission-based compacts were seen by the IoTs as their opportunity to plan strategically for their future, the view expressed in the Gap Analysis was that *“there will be a need to curtail the ambitions of institutions through compacts that are achievable and capable of being funded”* (p. 29).

Meanwhile, the development of the clusters has continued, and the HEA have specifically funded this activity to ensure engagement from all the HEIs. The HEA has set out a number of principles to guide the re-configuration process. A reconfiguration of the clusters was presented by the HEA (HEA, 2013 (c)), identifying five regional clusters.

However, a note was included in the report that consideration would be given to merge the Mid-west and West regions into one, creating a larger, more diverse and geographically dispersed cluster which could prove difficult to coordinate.

It is evident that the formation of clusters and of merged institutions to form Technological Universities is creating unique and diverse challenges for all HEIs,

and the re-alignment of institutional boundaries through a variety of formal and informal collaborations diffuses rather than consolidate institutional and sectoral identities. This is particularly true of the Institute of Technology sector, where boundaries are in a state of constant flux, and where elements of the HE landscape become contested.

5.12. Summary

The interviews with the five key informants yielded a wealth of knowledge and a range of views on the strategy formulation process, the Hunt Committee, the role of the institutes in the process, and the likelihood of the strategy surviving to its proposed end in 2030.

The interviewees agreed that the process was a welcome one, and that a fundamental review of HE was required. However, as there was little appetite among the stakeholders for such a review, the Hunt Report was produced by way of a truncated process, which suffered from a lack of policy discourse that would have not only shaped the report, but also ensured greater acceptance from the stakeholders.

There are external challenges ahead for the non-university sector, but there are also internal challenges that require sectoral leadership to ensure positive outcomes for the sector. It is clear that neither the Department of Education and Skills, nor the HEA are enthusiastic about progressing the agenda. It is the institutes in the non-university sector that have the most to gain, or lose, from proposals in the Hunt Report and subsequent implementation documents.

As far as the National Strategy itself is concerned, the interviewees envisage that it will be revisited and revised, perhaps not replaced, and that it is incumbent on senior

managers within the sector to shape the future of that sector for the benefit of all stakeholders.

Apart from the evidence of a fundamental lack of understanding of the nature of the non-university sector in Ireland by not only the Hunt Committee (apart from the IoT representative), but also the executive of the HEA, there were two additional sectoral issues that complicated the work of the Hunt Committee – the Brief given to the Chair of the Committee by the Department of Education and Skills and the HEA, and the role of the senior managers and representative body of the non-university sector in providing clarity of thought and coherence of vision for the sector.

While the National Strategy was to review the entire HE landscape:

“Well the first thing is that their intention wasn’t to focus on the non-university sector.”

(INT 1)

The University sector became less of a focus throughout the discussions of the committee:

“This was a contested space. There was ...little discussion on the need for rationalisation of the traditional universities. It was raised occasionally and then it disappeared off the radar immediately, almost for kind of pragmatic reasons on the grounds of the legislation in relation to the establishment of both the national universities and the other two that interfering in anyway with them was likely to be so protracted, and the history of attempting to do anything that involved changing legislation involving the traditional universities was fraught with difficulties.”

(INT 1)

Most of the interviewees contended that the briefing received by the Colin Hunt, the Chair of the Committee may have been less broad and more focussed, which limited the scope for a more fundamental review and subsequent Strategy Document:

“...well it’s an interesting thing ... of brief which he got... I mean he was getting sort of perceptions and sort of clues... from all sorts of

different people. I think this was part of the difficulty which he had, ... the general drift of it was to create a sector in Irish education which was going to be different from the “traditional university”, and there seemed to be a sort of feeling really in the HEA and the Department that the traditional universities were not as engaged with their regions, and the communities, and all the rest of it.”

(INT 4)

The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 prepared a series of radical reforms across the HE landscape at an economically challenging time. While acknowledging the challenges of reduced funding and staff and increased student numbers facing HE institutions, the strategy set out to ensure a more efficient and effective HE system, with particular emphasis on reforming the non-university sector. Unlike the University sector, the non-university sector made up of the Institutes of Technology have less capacity for developing alternative funds through research, international students or commercial loans. While a top-down, bottom-up approach was proposed, it is clear from the subsequent HEA reports, that the IoTs have limited room to manoeuvre, and will be required to participate fully in the system reconfiguration as outlined in the National Strategy and other “policy” documents. IoTs have engaged in clusters with neighbouring Universities. The process requires funding for a successful outcome, with the HEA allocating €4M to institutions demonstrating performance in the goals of academic planning and student pathways. The IoT sector now requires strong leadership at all levels to move forward on a strong financial footing to continue to deliver on the twin government policies of equity of access and driving the knowledge economy, while preserving a unique sectoral mission in programme provision, stakeholder engagement, excellence in teaching and learning, applied research and internationalisation.

CHAPTER 6

6. Conclusions

6.1. Summary of the Research Process

This research set out to examine the role of the non-university sector in the Irish “knowledge economy”, by evaluating the economic social and political drivers of change to policy formulation and implementation, as exemplified by the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (HEA, 2011 (a)). Current relations between the state and HEIs are defined with reference to the impact of the National Strategy and both the government and the HEA have adopted this document as the definitive mechanism to set the direction of HE policy in Ireland. There are indications throughout the interviews with the key policy stakeholders, as well as in practice, of a need to challenge the adequacy of the strategic planning process.

The explicit role of the HEA as regulator of the HE system is not enshrined in legislation, but emerges from the National Strategy and from subsequent agreements between the Department of Education and Skills and the HEA, and the HEA has taken a leading role in the implementation of policy objectives. The dynamics of power have shifted in HE, away from both government and institutions, to be concentrated in the HEA. This has taken the non-university away from the aegis of the Department on Education and Skills, which has resulted in a lack of political focus on the sector. Evidence of this can be seen in the delay on getting the Technological Universities Bill back on the political agenda, as well as the focussed and well-financed review of the vocational sector, which will strengthen its position as a competitor to the non-university sector.

The non-university sector of the Irish HE system has some unique features in terms of structure and governance, which have evolved over the past forty-five years, through a process of innovative steering through government policy and a “laissez-faire” approach to institutional autonomy (OECD, 2014). Over the years, the system has responded to government interventions, economic demands and social needs in a complex web of interactions, collaborations and evolutions.

The changes experienced by the sector have not occurred in a vacuum. Globalisation and the neo-liberal agenda have had a significant impact on the sector, and as a result, institutions are evolving into key drivers of economic development and regeneration on both a regional and national level.

Notwithstanding the new managerialism of the HE sector, institutions have responded equally effectively to the social agenda of the EU (OECD, 2004 (a)).

Increased participation in the 1980s and 1990s was facilitated primarily through the European Social Fund, but student mobility and collaborative partnerships have been forged between the Irish institutions and European counterparts, working through the differences in institutional typologies and governance structures.

The dominant narrative of direct state control in a two-dimensional relationship between state and HE institution has been in decline, coupled with an increased focus on self-regulation and an altered vision of the state supervising role (van Vught, 1989).

In many ways, the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 is a significant departure from the organic, policy-steered, development of HE in the previous 50 years. It is acknowledged that national finances are stretched due to the economic implosion which commenced in 2008, but in re-aligning education provision, and other public services, to fit the reduced public finances is to constrict and restrain the

development and evolution of the system when it is most required. Demands for greater accountability and efficiencies through regionally devised clusters, reductions in programmes offerings through the eradication of duplicated programmes will change the educational landscape irreparably, but it is unclear whether the results will be for the better.

The language of the National Strategy is less consultative and more directed than previous policy documents. The notion that it is the “strategy” alone speaks of a fundamental power shift in the relationship that the non-university sector had with the Department of Education and Skills, but now has with the HEA. Despite continued promises of “parity of esteem”, the HEA, as legitimised through the National Strategy and subsequent documents – all commissioned by the HEA, with attendant frames of reference – has focussed its efforts entirely on the non-university sector – colleges of education and the institutes of technology, while appearing, to some, to protect the dominant and privileged position of the university sector.

In my view, the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 is not a strategy at all as it focuses almost entirely on the structure of the system, and it underestimates the diversity in the non-university sector, with correspondingly little debate on mission. It presupposes the continuation of the binary divide and the mission diversity of either side of that divide without fully understanding the role, function played by the IoTs, particularly in the higher levels of education, applied research, and commercialisation activities, internationalisation and other activities engaged in by entrepreneurial “universities” throughout the world. A “strategy” that implies that the non-university sector concentrates on sub-degree level activity and that proposes that research be concentrated in, or supervised by, the university in a sector, underestimates the diversity of mission within the sector.

That is not to say that sub-degree level education is not an important element of non-university sector activity. Nevertheless, as can be seen from the research, successive policy decisions, particularly on funding have resulted in a reduction in this type of activity, hard choices were to be made for the financial viability of the institutions in the sector.

The successive documents produced by the HEA to legitimise and drive the agenda, have resulted in increased uncertainty and challenges to the process. Institutions that were part of TU applications have stepped back from the process and the need for mergers as a prerequisite to TU will continue to be challenged by larger institutions. The binary divide between the Universities and the proposed Technological Universities will come under increased pressure, as TUs improve rankings, or where individual institutions will seek closer ties with universities as a mechanism for development. The criteria for achieving TU status are considered similar to those required for traditional universities, and on achieving the criteria, TUs may argue that the distinction is irrelevant.

The challenge for the non-university sector is a lack of coherence. The 14 institutions have different views on how to proceed, and some are looking at alternatives to the proposed alliances and mergers or clusters to best seek competitive advantage. This has restricted progress in collaboration, as institutions adopt a wait-and-see approach. The representative body, Institutes of Technology Ireland, was unable to express a coherent vision for the future, but with the change in membership to include DIT, the Technological Higher Education Association may be more focussed on the move to TU status for the four group applicants.

6.2. The Challenges to the National Strategy

The legitimacy of the Hunt Report and the process of developing the National Strategy will continue to be questioned. It is clear from the research that the committee failed to undertake sufficient contextual analysis of the characteristics of the non-university sector in Ireland, failed to conduct significant research and placed too much emphasis on existing reports, i.e. OECD (2004 (a)).

The emphasis on the maintenance of a binary system is challenged in implementation documents (HEA, 2013 (a)), where the HEA acknowledges a need to move beyond the simplistic binary notion of a HE system towards “a system of coherent, diverse and well-co-ordinated HEIs, capable of meeting the social and economic needs of the country” (HEA, 2012 (c)). If a “diversified” or “stratified” system is required, then why has the strategy not been able to articulate that vision? The most radical structural reform is in the recommendation to create amalgamated IoTs with “the ultimate objective to create a smaller number of strengthened Institutes of Technology” (HEA, 2013 (a)), but the rationale for such consolidation is not immediately apparent or explicit, with a lack of empirical analysis of the scope for rationalisation. Consolidation proposals between Institutions have changed over the years, and in some cases, IoTs have chosen not to merge, but may still seek some mechanism to upgrade to Technology University status without meeting the requirement of a merger with another institution. The prospect of attaining the enhanced status of Technological University has now become the primary motivation for consolidation, refocusing the activities of IoTs away from the processes of providing enhanced pathways and the reduction in duplication of programme provision toward meeting the criteria for TU status.

While regional clusters were not specifically outlined in the National Strategy for Higher Education they have become a prominent structural component in the

advancement of regional development. Collaborative arrangements of a more voluntary nature between the IoTs and the Universities are expected to enhance the quality and effectiveness of their activities, but clusters, like the proposed mergers, are based on geographical proximity rather than cultural fit. It appears that the proposal on mergers is a “sorting out the system” approach, as described by Goedgebuure (2012), whereby governments stimulated system-wide or sector-wide mergers to deal with perceived deficiencies (Clancy, 2015, p. 289), without engaging on a rigorous research process to understand the distinct features and history of the Irish HE System.

While multi-campus institutions, albeit on a smaller scale, currently exist in Ireland – most notably in DIT and GMIT, and mergers between HEIs have been completed – Letterkenny Institute of Technology and the Tourism College Killybegs in 2007, and Limerick Institute of Technology and the Tipperary Institute in 2012, there is little evidence of learning drawn from these past experiences. Hinfelaar (2012), as the then President of Limerick IoT has provided a particular insight into the politics of decision-making and trade-offs that exist in any proposed major restructuring project. Since 2011, the HE sector has been the subject of many plans, recommendations and reports. Some have gained more traction than others have. A report (van Vught, et al., 2012) proposed the merger of Trinity College and University College Dublin, a “controversial” proposal that was also made in the late 1960s and dismissed at the time by the Archbishop of Dublin, but again was considered to be “neither feasible nor desirable” and were” not in accord with stated Government policies”. Other key elements of the report, such as the consolidation of more than 20 HEIs into six, were also considered unacceptable by the government, and the report was not initially published. This report was far more radical than the nationally produced Hunt

Report, and the process of completing the reports was very different. Hunt was prepared by an international group but included stakeholders and representatives from the HEIs, whereas the Van Vught proposal (van Vught, et al., 2012) was prepared without consultation with the HEIs, where the HEA charged the group to challenge current thinking and to present radical alternatives. It is surprising, therefore, that a report commissioned by the HEA (van Vught, et al., 2012), and produced by experts in international HE, was not seriously considered as part of the process of reform in Ireland. One has to question whether the focus of reform on the Universities was what was at issue with the final document, where it appears that the stated reform agenda is to focus on the small, independent teacher training colleges and, more significantly on the IoT sector.

6.3. Unique challenges for the non-university sector

The Institutes of Technology will face a unique set of challenges for the duration of this strategy implementation process: -

Structural changes in education, as implemented through the cluster process, will result in the redefinition of relationship not only with the Universities in the region, but also with the recently consolidated further education sector, which compete with the IoTs in traineeships, apprenticeships, adult education and occasional education.

“The combination of increased demand and contracting resources give urgency to the requirement to resolve the structural issues in Irish Higher Education”

(HEA, 2011 (a), p. 87)

Sectoral changes, as implemented through the merger process may see the emergence of different types of institution, where some merge to become TUs, some merge into large institutes of technology and some may remain as independent institutes.

“Alliances or mergers within the institute of technology sector on the one hand and within the university sector on the other will be supported where they can deliver greater institutional quality”

(HEA, 2011 (a), p. 99)

The maintenance of a binary model is an essential component of the strategy may become more problematic in an increasingly stratified system.

“However, formal mergers between institutes of technology and universities should not in general be considered”

(HEA, 2011 (a), p. 99)

Mission diversity among institutions is considered a key element of the HE reform agenda, but in reality, this diversity is between sectors across the binary divide rather than between individual institutions.

“Diversity is one of the major factors associated with the positive performance of Higher Education systems”

(HEA, 2011 (a), p. 98)

The key distinctive feature of the Institutes of Technology provision is in the area of sub-degree, two-year and ordinary degree, three-year level programmes at Levels 6 & 7 on the National Framework of Qualifications. The continued provision of these entry points to HE which has broadened access to HE substantially and in a manner not available through the University sector, and the internal provision of pathways to higher level, three or four-year honours degrees, and internal or external provision of post-graduate opportunities is supported throughout the range of policy documents.

“... Institutes of technology currently provide the overwhelming majority of Level 6 and 7 courses, they have an important role in key disciplines such as science and technology; and they enrol a very diverse student base. Any loss of this mission would be detrimental to the breadth of Irish Higher Education provision and would not serve our long-term societal needs”

(HEA, 2011 (a), p. 102)

This proposition is however in need of constant review as changes in further education and apprenticeship provision will continue to compete with the Institutes of Technology in this space.

The relationship between institutions across the binary divide however, is encouraged only through the formation of regional clusters, which are to include the Universities, the Institutes of Technology

“The regional cluster model should be more generally applied, as it brings particular benefits...”

(HEA, 2011 (a), p. 98)

and other training bodies within that region.

“The institutions will also engage with other statutory providers of education and training, such as FÁS [now Solas] and the VECs [now the ETBs], to develop integrated regional learning strategies”

(HEA, 2011 (a), p. 98)

This is a challenge to the Institutes of Technology in particular, as by collaborating in the development of student pathways, and facilitating progression through the National Framework of Qualifications, they are collaborating with colleges of further education with whom they are in direct competition for sub-degree education and vocational training, and with the Universities who wish to concentrate the upper levels of education L9 (Masters) and L10 (Doctoral) within the University sector. There is a possibility that through this process of collaboration the Institutes of Technology will become the “squeezed middle” between FE and the Universities.

“The HEA should promote such regional clusters by providing incentives and by requiring institutions to build regional collaboration into their strategic plans”

(HEA, 2011 (a), p. 98)

Discourse on institutional changes has been lacking in policy documents to date, which is a concern as changes at institutional level, particularly to culture and academic professional identity, will have a profound impact on the success or failure of sectoral reforms. Proposed changes to the structure of the Institutes of Technology through a process of consolidation is primarily seen through the perspective of efficiency and cost-saving, and takes little account of historical

institutional sagas, that is their organic development; their unique culture as influenced by locale; and their hard won reputation at local, regional, national and indeed international levels.

However, institutional issues such as teaching and learning; engagement with wider society, internationalisation of HE and research are all key factors that will influence all institutions in the future, as well as governance and funding. The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 deals with all of these themes in detail, and it is imperative to evaluate how these will re-shape the Institutes of Technology specifically for the duration of the strategy. All HEIs are in a difficult situation in articulating the challenges they face. They are unable to acknowledge that reductions in funding have had an adverse effect on quality without risking reputational damage. However, their view of the HEA is that "...universities and institutes are complicit in their own crisis" (Boland Speech to RIA September 2015).

The process of rationalisation in a multi-campus IoT runs counter to the original objectives that drove the establishment of the Regional Technical Colleges in the 1970s, which was to provide opportunities for study in the local region that are distant from the major urban centres. If merged institutes wish to create centres of excellence which require a critical mass, with the merged institutions facilitate a flow of students from the regions to the larger urban centres? The scale of consolidation represents a major challenge to all stakeholders in HE.

A principal message of the National Strategy is that of the unintended mission drift that has occurred as a consequence of institutional and sectoral autonomy in the non-university sector, and the need for a binary divide to ensure continued provision of sub-degree and first degree level programmes at Levels 6 and 7 on the National Framework of Qualifications. However, in offering the prospect of re-designation as

a Technological University, there is a requirement for IoTs to increase their level of provision at Levels 9 and 10. There are mixed messages here on where the sector should be positioned, and where institutions within that sector should position themselves, while maintaining sectoral parity of esteem with the University sector. If there is a lack of consensus about the role of the university, the problems are all the greater at system level where different sectors of HE need to be accommodated (Clancy, 2015, p. 309).

6.4. The Strengths and Weaknesses of this thesis' Research Strategy

In deciding to undertake a research project on the non-university sector, there were times when it appeared to be too broad a subject to investigate, particularly when the subject of the research was a moving target. However, given the importance of the National Strategy, particularly in terms of its impact on the working lives of academic professionals in the non-university sector, it was deemed important to take stock of the progress and the impact of the strategy five years on from its publication.

A policy trajectory approach, using Hyatt's Framework (Hyatt, 2013 (b)) provided structure to the policy analysis, where policy was deemed less of a product and more of a process.

Primary data, collected through interviews with key stakeholders in the Institute of Technology sector was considered in the research design phase. This was deemed not an option at this juncture for a number of reasons.

- The policy document was contested, which created a sense of unease at how subsequent implementation would affect individual institutions. It was felt that IoT Presidents might be less than forthcoming in their views and plans, which were in a state of flux.

- IoT presidents were also changing, with many moving to new institutions or retiring. Therefore, it would have been challenging to evaluate the views of presidents in relation to their institutional plans, as these were changing
- Interviews with other stakeholders were also challenging. Marion Coy, IoT Representative on the Hunt Committee which produced the National Strategy and Tom Boland, of the HEA, both retired, but I was fortunate to attend presentations by both over the years and to engage in debate with both on those occasions
- Staff views have been curtailed through the actions of the Teachers Union of Ireland, who have objected to the mergers in Munster, and have successfully lobbied politicians to hold up the Technological Universities Bill in the Dáil.

It became clear, however, that the research would benefit from interviews focussed on eliciting broader stakeholder views for both policy review and implementation.

6.5. Future Research

Given that the National Strategy has been in effect for five of its planned 20-year existence, it is impossible to evaluate the effects and outcomes of this intervention as one would a historical “policy” document. The National Strategy and the succession of document will provide a rich environment for research on Irish HE far into the future.

The National Strategy makes little reference to the potential of disruptive forces that could change the nature of HE that create new models and institutions. In particular, there is little reference to the digitalisation agenda that affects significantly on all education provision.

As the policy process or strategy moves more fully to its implementation phase, it will require more field research at meso- and micro- levels. The resulting structures of institutions, the impact on stakeholders: particularly students and staff, on the functions of HE: teaching and learning, student mobility, research, and on governance and financial viability will be areas of interest to not only academics but also a wider audience.

6.6. Conclusion

The reconfiguration of education policy as strategy was in itself a worthy focus of the research, as it incorporated a shift in the power relations between academia and the state as mediated through a third party, the HEA.

The research has illustrated that the process of policy formulation and implementation to date is contested and contentious, with little agreement, between sectors or within the non-university sector, on the way forward.

This research on the role of the non-university sector is considered less of an end-point, but more as a point of departure to facilitate education professionals to engage productively and proactively in the strategy review and implementation processes, which will significantly affect their working environment. It is clear from the research that the sector is less in control of its own future, and lacks the coherence or the capacity to influence policy formulation and implementation. One clear recommendation emanating from the research is that the non-university sector of the Institutes of Technology should show greater leadership and vision in negotiations with the HEA.

Education research in Ireland has been limited in the past, and confined to communities of practice in the University sector, with significant contributions from Clancy, Hyland et al (Clancy, 2015). This research contributes to the extension of

that community of practice to the other sector of HE in Ireland, as well as providing a basis for comparative studies of non-university sector development in the EU and globally. This research also contributes to the discourse on policy implementation at a critical juncture in the evolution of the non-university sector in Ireland.

References

- Aarevaara, T., Dobson, I. & Elander, C., 2009. Brave New World: Higher Education Reform in Finland. *Higher Education Management and Policy*, 21(2), pp. 89 - 106.
- Amaral, A. & Aagalhaes, A., 2003. The Triple Crisis of the University and Its Reinvention. *Higher Education Policy*, 16(2), pp. 239 - 253.
- Antonucci, L., 2013. Comparative Research in Higher Education Studies: Considering The Different Levels of Comparison and Emerging Methodological Challenges. *International Perspectives on Higher Education Research*, Volume 9, pp. 1 - 19.
- Askling, B., 2001. Higher Education and Academic Staff in a period of Policy and System Change. *Higher Education*, Volume 41, pp. 157 - 181.
- Atkinson, P. & Coffey, A., 2011. Analysing Documentary Realities. In: D. Silverman, ed. *Qualitative Research: Issues of Theory, Method and Practice*. London, England: SAGE, pp. 77 - 91.
- Bagnall, R. G., 2002. Globalisation and its Consequences for Scholarship in Philosophy of Education. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 34(1), pp. 103 - 114.
- Ball, S., 1994. *Education Reform: A Critical and Post-Structural Approach*. London: Routledge.
- Ball, S., 2013. *The Education Debate*. 2nd ed. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Bauer, M., 2000. Higher Education Reform in Sweden: Consolidation, Transformation and Renewal. In: J. File & L. Goedegebuure, eds. *Thinking About the South African Higher Education Institutional Landscape. An International Comparative Perspective on Institutional Differentiation and Restructuring*. Pretoria, South Africa: The Council on Higher Education, pp. 157 - 166.
- Bauman, Z., 1998. *Globalisation The Human Consequences*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bazeley, P., 2009. Analysing Qualitative Data: More than 'Identifying Themes'. *Malaysian Journal of Qualitative Research*, Volume 2, pp. 6 - 22.
- Beerens, E., 2008. Universal Policies for the Knowledge Society: Global Standardisation, Local Reinvention. *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology*, Volume 7, pp. 15 - 36.
- Berdahl, R., 1985. Strategy and Government: US State Systems and Institutional Role and Mission. *International Journal of Institutional Management in Higher Education*, 9(3), pp. 301 - 307.
- Birnbaum, R., 2000. *Management Fads in Higher Education: Where they come from, what they do, why they fail*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Blackstone, T., 2001. Why Learn? Higher Education in a Learning Society. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 55(2), pp. 175 - 184.

- Bleiklie, I., 2005. Organizing Higher Education in a Knowledge Society. *Higher Education*, 49(1), pp. 31 - 59.
- Boland, T., 2015. *A Dialogue on the Future Funding of Higher Education in Ireland*, Dublin: Royal Irish Academy.
- Bonaccorsi, A. & Daraio, C., 2007. *Universities and Strategic Knowledge Creation: Specialization and Performance in Europe*. Cheltenham, England: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Bowe, R., Ball, S. & Gold, A., 1992. *Reforming Education and Changing Schools: Case Studies in Policy Sociology*. London: Elsevier.
- Boyatzis, R., 1998. *Transforming Qualitative Information: Thematic Analysis and Code Development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V., 2006. Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), pp. 77 - 101.
- Brown, P., Green, A. & Lauder, H., 2001. *High Skills: Globalisation, Competitiveness and Skill Formation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bruton, R., 2016. [Online]
Available at: <https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2016-10-06a.259>
- Bueschel, A., 2009. The Landscape of Policies and Practices that Support Student Preparation and Success. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 145(Spring), pp. 1 - 10.
- Bullen, E., Robb, S. & Kenway, J., 2004. 'Creative Destruction' - Knowledge Economy Policy and the Future of the Arts and Humanities in the Academy. *Journal of Education Policy*, 19(3), pp. 3 - 22.
- Buono, A. & Bowditch, J., 1989. *The Human Side of mergers and Acquisitions*. San Francisco: Jossey - Bass.
- Burgess, T., 1972. *The Shape of Higher Education*. London, England: Cornmarket Press.
- CAO, 2016. [Online]
Available at: http://www2.cao.ie/app_stats/pdf/appstats01feb2015.pdf
[Accessed 17 August 2016].
- Cartwright, S. & Cooper, C., 1996. *Mergers and Acquisitions: the Human Factor*. 2nd ed. ed. Oxford: Butterworth - Heinemann.
- CIRCA Group Europe, 1996. *A Comparative International Assessment of the Organisation, Management and Funding of University Research in Ireland and Europe*, Dublin: HEA.
- Clancy, P., 1982. *Participation in Higher Education*, Dublin: The Higher Education Authority.
- Clancy, P., 1989. The Evolution of Policy in Third-level Education. In: *Irish Educational Policy: Process and Substance*. Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, pp. 99 - 132.
- Clancy, P., 1996. Investment in Education. The Equality Perspective: Progress and Possibilities. *Administration*, 44(3), pp. 28 - 41.

- Clancy, P., 1999. Barriers to Entering Higher Education. In: N. & D. T. Ward, ed. *Irish Education for the 21st Century*. Dublin: Oak tree Press, pp. 113 - 135.
- Clancy, P., 2008. The Non-University Sector in Irish Higher Education. In: *Non-University Sector in European Higher Education*. Dordecht: s.n.
- Clancy, P., 2015. *Irish Higher Education: A Comparative Perspective*. Dublin: IPA.
- Clancy, P. & Benson, C., 1979. *Higher Education in Dublin: A Study of Some Emerging Needs*, Dublin: HEA.
- Clancy, P. & Wall, J., 2000. *Social Background of Higher Education Entrants*. Dublin: Higher Education Authority.
- Clark, B., 1960. The "Cooling Out" Function in Higher Education. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 65(6), pp. 569 - 576.
- Clark, B., 1980. The "Cooling Out" Function Revisited. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 8(4), pp. 15 - 32.
- Clark, B., 1983 (a). *The Higher Education System: A Cross National Perspective*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Clark, B., 1983 (b). *The Higher Education System - Academic Organisation in Cross-National Perspective*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Clark, B., 1987. *The Academic Profession*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Clark, B., 1998. *Creating Entrepreneurial Universities - Organisational Pathways of Transformation*. Oxford: Pergamon.
- Clark, B., 2000. The Entrepreneurial University: New Foundations for Collegiality, Autonomy and Achievement. *Higher Education Management*, 13(2), pp. 9 - 24.
- Clark, B., 2004. Delineating the Character of the Entrepreneurial University. *Higher Education Policy*, 17(4), pp. 355 - 370.
- Clark, B., 2008. *On Higher Education, Selected Writings, 1956 - 2006*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Cochran-Smith, M. & Fries, M., 2001. Sticks, Stones and Ideology; The Discourse of Reform in Teacherr Education. *Educational Researcher*, 30(8), pp. 3 - 15.
- Commission on Higher Education, 1967 (a). *Commission on Higher Education 1960 - 1967 Volume 1*, Dublin: The Stationery Office.
- Commission on Higher Education, 1967 (b). *Commission on Higher Education 1960 - 1967 Volume 2*, Dublin: The Stationery Office.
- Commission on Higher Education, 1967 (c). *1960 - 1967 Presentation and Summary of Report*, Dublin: s.n.
- Connolly, M., Jones, C. & Jones, N., 2007. Managing Collaboration across Further and Higher Education: A Case in Practice. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 31(2), pp. 159 - 169.

- Coolahan, J., 1990. The Commission on Higher Education, 1967, and Third-Level Policy in Contemporary Ireland. *Irish Educational Studies*, 9(1), pp. 1 - 12.
- Coxon, E., 2002. From Patronage to Profiteering? New Zealand's Educational Relationship with the Small States of Oceania. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 34(1), pp. 57 - 75.
- Crawley, S. & Gerard, M., 2006. The "Celtic Tiger" and a Knowledge Economy. *Industry and Higher Education*, 20(4), pp. 25 - 229.
- Cresswell, J. & Miller, D., 2000. Determining Validity in Qualitative Inquiry. *Theory into Practice*, 39(3), pp. 124 - 131.
- Culliton Report, 1992. *A Time for Change: Industrial Policy for the 1990s, Report of the Industrial Review Group*, Dublin: Stationery Office.
- Dale, R., 2000. Globalization and Education: Demonstrating A 'Common World Educational Culture' or Locating A 'Globally Structured Educational Agenda'?. *Educational Theory*, 50(4), pp. 427 - 448.
- De Vaus, D., 2008. Comparative Cross National Research. In: *Handbook of Social Research*. London: Sage.
- Delanty, G., 2001. *Challenging Knowledge - The University in the Knowledge Society*. Buckingham: SRHE and Open University Press.
- Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, 2011. *Report of the Research Prioritisation Steering Group*, Dublin: The Stationery Office.
- Dept of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, 2006. *Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation (SSTI), 2006 - 2013*, Dublin: Government of Ireland.
- Dept of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, 2015. *Innovation 2020 - Ireland's Strategy for Research and Development, Science and Technology*, Dublin: Government of Ireland.
- DiMaggio, P. & Powell, W., 1983. The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields. *American Sociological Review*, 48(2), pp. 147 - 160.
- Dochas, 2013. *Public and Civil Society Attitudes towards the European Union, Ireland and Global Development*, Dublin: Dóchas.
- Dodds, A., 2012. *Comparative Public Policy*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- DoES, 1980. *White Paper on Educational Development*, Dublin: The Stationery Office.
- DoES, 1984. *Programme for Action in Education*, Dublin: Department of Education and Skills.
- DoES, 1985. *Partners in Education Serving Community Needs*, Dublin: The Department of Education.
- DoES, 1992. *Education for a Changing World, Green Paper on Education*, Dublin: The Department of Education.
- DoES, 1995. *Charting Our Education Future*, Dublin: Department of Education.

- DoES, 1998. *Adult Education in an Era of Lifelong Learning*, Dublin: The Stationery Office.
- DoES, 2004. *A Brief Description of the Irish Education System*, Dublin: Department of Education and Science.
- DoES, 2007. *Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025*, Dublin: Government of Ireland.
- DoES, 2008. *National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2008 - 2013*, Dublin: Higher Education Authority.
- DoES, 2009. *Policy Options for New Student Contribution*, Dublin: The Stationery Office.
- DoES, 2010. *Inversting in Global relationships - Ireland's International Education Strategy 2010 - 2015*, Dublin: The Stationery Office.
- DoES, 2014. *National Strategy - A National Research Prioritisation Exercise*, Dublin: The Stationery Office.
- DoES, 2015. *Technological Universities Bill*, Dublin: Government of Ireland.
- DoES, 2016. *A Strategy for Funding in Higher Education*, Dublin: The Stationery Office.
- Doh, P., 2008. Global Integration Policies Versus Institutional Dynamics of Higher Education. *European Education*, 40(1), pp. 78 - 96.
- Doz, Y. & Hamel, G., 1998. *Alliance Advantage, the Art of Creating Value through Partnerships*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Du Gay, P., 1996. *Consumption and Identity at Work*. London: Sage.
- EAEA, 2006. *Adult Education Trends and issues in Europe*, Brussels: European Association for the Education of Adults.
- Eddy, P., 2010. Partnerships and Collaborations in Higher Education. *ASHE Higher Education Report*, 36(2), pp. 1 - 115.
- Estermann, T. & Pruvot, E., 2015. The Rise of University Mergers in Europe. *International Higher Education*, Fall(82), pp. 21 - 13.
- Eurich, N., 1981. *Systems of Higher Education in Twelve Countries: A Comparative View*. New York: Praeger.
- European Commission, 2010. *Europe 2020: A Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive growth*, Brussels: European Commission.
- European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2015. *the European Higher Education Area in 2015: Bologna Process Implementation Report*, Brussels: European Commission.
- European Union, European Commission, 2003. *The role of universities in the Europe of knowledge*. [Online]
[Accessed 20 July 2017].
- Eurostat, 2016. *Key Figures on Europe, 2016 Edition*, Luxembourg: Luxembourg Publications Office of the European Union.

EUSEC, 1960. *Report on Education and Training of Professional Engineers*, Brussels: EUSEC.

Expert Group on Future Funding for Higher Education, 2015 (a). *The Role, Value and Scale of Higher Education in Ireland*, Dublin: HEA.

Expert Group on Future Funding for Higher Education, 2015 (b). *Optimising Resources in Irish Higher Education, Discussion Paper 2*, Dublin: HEA.

Expert Group on Future Funding for Higher Education, 2016. *Investing in National Ambition: A Strategy for Funding Higher Education*, Dublin: Higher Education Authority.

Fairclough, N., 1993. Critical Discourse Analysis and the Marketisation of Public Discourse: The Universities. *Discourse and Society*, 4(2), pp. 133 - 168.

Fairclough, N., 1995. *Critical Discourse Analysis: the Critical Study of Language*. Harlow: Longman.

Fairclough, N., 2003. *Analysing Discourse and Text: Textual Analysis for Social Research*. London: Routledge.

Farrell, B., 1983. *Seán Lemass*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan.

Fitzgerald, G., 1991. *All in a Life*, Dublin: Gill and Macmillan.

Fitzsimons, P., 2000. Changing Conceptions of Globalisation: Changing Conceptions of Education. *Educational Theory*, 50(4), pp. 505 - 520.

Fleming, P., Harley, B. & Sewell, G., 2004. A Little Knowledge is a Dangerous Thing: Getting Below the Surface of the Growth of 'Knowledge Work' in Australia. *Work, Employment and Society*, 18(4), pp. 725 - 747.

Flick, U., 2002. *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*. London: Sage.

Florida, R., 2002. *The Rise of the Creative Class*. New York: Basic Books.

Foucault, M., 1991. Governmentality. In: Burchell, G., Gordon, C. & Miller, P., ed. *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 87 - 104.

German Council of Science and Humanities, 2010. [Online]
Available at: www.wissenschaftsrat.de/download/archiv/10387-10_engl.pdf

Gibbons, M.; Limoges, C.; Nowotny, H.; Schwartzmann, S.; Scott, P.; Trow, M, 1994. *The Production of Knowledge: The Dynamics of Science and Research in Contemporary Studies*. London: Sage.

Giddens, A., 2001. *The Global Third Way Debate*. Cambridge: Polity.

Gildersleeve, R., Kuntz, A. & Pasque, P., 2010. The Role of Critical Inquiry in (Re)Constructing the Public Agenda for Higher Education: Confronting the Conservative Modernization of the Academy. *The Review of Higher Education*, 34(1), pp. 85 - 121.

Giroux, H., 2003. Selling Out Higher Education. *Policy Futures in Education*, 1(1), pp. 179 - 200.

- Glion Colloquium, 2009. *The Second Glion Declaration - Universities and the Innovative Spirit*. Geneva, Glion Colloquium.
- Goedegebuure, L., 2012. *Mergers and More: The Changing Tertiary landscape in the 21st Century*, Oslo: HEIK working Paper.
- Goedegebuure, L. & van Vught, F., 1994. *Comparative Policy Studies in Higher Education*. Utrecht: CHEPS.
- Goggin, B. & Kelleher, M., 2011. *Institutes of Technology RGAM Student Audit Report*, Dublin: HEA.
- Government Committee for Scientific and Technical Personnel, 1961. *Outline Programme for Scientific Personnel 1961 - 1962*, s.l.: s.n.
- Government of Ireland, 1930. *The Vocational Education Act, 1930*, Dublin: Stationery Office.
- Government of Ireland, 1931. *The Apprenticeship Act, 1931*, Dublin: Stationery Office.
- Government of Ireland, 1959. *The Apprenticeship Act, 1959*, Dublin: Stationery Office.
- Government of Ireland, 1971. *The Higher Education Authority Act, 1971*, Dublin: Stationery Office.
- Government of Ireland, 1979. *National Council for Educational Awards Act, 1979*, Dublin: Stationery Office.
- Government of Ireland, 1987. *The Programme for National Recovery*, Dublin: Stationery Office.
- Government of Ireland, 1997. *Universities Act, 1997*, Dublin: Stationery Office.
- Government of Ireland, 1999. *Commission on the Points System*, Dublin: Stationery Office.
- Government of Ireland, 1999. *Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999*, Dublin: Stationery Office.
- Government of Ireland, 2003. www.irlgov.ie. [Online] [Accessed July 2014].
- Government of Ireland, 2006. *The Institutes of Technology Act, 2006*, Dublin: Stationery Office.
- Government of Ireland, 2012. *Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act, 2012*, Dublin: Stationery Office.
- Government of Ireland, 2014. *General and Technological Universities Bill*, Dublin: Stationery Office.
- Green, A., 1997. *Education, Globalisation and the Nation State*. London: MacMillan.
- Gunn, A., 2015. The Role of Political and Policy Studies in Higher Education Policy Research. *Theory and Method in Higher Education Research*, Volume 1, pp. 27 - 47.

- Habermas, J., 1998. Learning by Disaster? A Diagnostic Look Back at the Short 20th Century. *Constellations*, 5(3), pp. 307 - 320.
- Harman, G., 2000. Institutional Mergers in Australian Higher Education since 1960. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 54(4), pp. 343 - 366.
- Harman, G. & Harman, K., 2003. Institutional Mergers in Higher Education: Lessons from International Experience. *Tertiary Education and Management*, 9(1), pp. 119 - 128.
- Hazelkorn, E. & Harkin, S., 2014. Restructuring Irish Higher Education Through Collaboration or Merger. In: *Mergers and Alliances in Higher Education: International Practices and Emerging Opportunities*. s.l.:Springer.
- HEA, 2008. *National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2008 - 2013*, Dublin: National Office of Equity of Access to HE, HEA.
- HEA, 2011 (a). *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030*, Dublin: Government Publications Office.
- HEA, 2011 (b). *Employment Control Framework for the Higher Education Sector*, Dublin: HEA.
- HEA, 2012 (a). *Toward a Future Higher Education Landscape*, Dublin: Higher Education Authority.
- HEA, 2012 (b). *A Proposed Reconfiguration of the Irish System of Higher Education*, Dublin: Higher Education Authority.
- HEA, 2012 (c). *Institutional Responses to the Landscape Document and Achieving the Objectives of the National Strategy for Higher Education: A Gap Analysis*, Dublin: HEA.
- HEA, 2013 (a). *Completing the Landscape Process for Irish Higher Education*, Dublin: Higher Education Authority.
- HEA, 2013 (b). *Towards a Performance Evaluation Framework: Profiling Irish Higher Education*, Dublin: HEA.
- HEA, 2013 (c). *Report to the Minister for Education and Skills on System Reconfiguration, Inter-institutional Collaboration and System Governance in Irish Higher Education*, Dublin: HEA.
- HEA, 2013 (d). *Guidelines for Completion of Mission-based Compacts*, Dublin: Higher Education Authority.
- HEA, 2014. *Higher Education System Performance: First Report 2014 - 2016*, Dublin: Higher Education Authority.
- HEA, 2015 (a). *Higher Education System Performance: Institutional and Sectoral Profiles 2012/13*, Dublin: Higher Education Authority.
- HEA, 2015 (b). *Higher Education System Performance Institutional and Sectoral Profiles 2012 / 13*, Dublin: HEA.
- HEA, 2016 (a). *A Study of Progression in Irish Higher Education 2012 / 13*, Dublin: HEA.

- HEA, 2016 (b). *Financial Review of the Institutes of Technology*, Dublin: HEA.
- HEA, 2016 (c). *Financial Review of the Institutes of Technology*, Dublin: Higher Education Authority.
- HEA, 2016 (d). *Key Facts and Figures*, Dublin: Higher Education Authority.
- Healy, T. & Slowey, M., 2006. Social Inclusion and Adult Engagement in Lifelong Learning - Some Comparative Implications for European States based in Ireland's Celtic Tiger Experience. *Compare*, 36(3), pp. 359 - 378.
- Heath, S., Fuller, A. & Paton, K., 2008. Network-based Ambivalence and Educational Decision-making: A Case Study of Non-participation in Higher Education. *Research Papers in Education*, 23(2), pp. 219 - 229.
- HEFCE, 2004. *Mergers in the Higher Education Sector: A Guide to Good Practice*, London: HEFCE.
- Hinfelaar, M., 2012. Emerging Higher Education Strategy in Ireland: Amalgamate or Perish. *Higher Education Management and Policy*, 24(1), pp. 33 - 47.
- Hodgson, A. & Spours, K., 2012. UK, Three Versions of Localism: Implications for Upper Secondary Education and Lifelong Learning in the. *Journal of Education Policy*, pp. 193 - 210.
- Holm, P., Jarrick, A. & Scott, D., 2105. *Humanities World Report*, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Huisman, J., 1995. *Differentiation, Diversity and Dependency in Higher Education*. Utrecht: Lemma.
- Humes, W. & Brice, T., 2003. Post-structuralism and Policy Research in Education. *Journal of Education Policy*, 18(2), pp. 175 - 187.
- Hunt, C., 2011. *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030*, Dublin, Ireland: Department of Education and Skills.
- Hyatt, D., 2005. Time for a Change: A Critical Discoursal Analysis of Synchronic Context with Diachronic Relevance. *Discourse and Society*.
- Hyatt, D., 2013 (a). The Critical Policy Discourse Analysis Frame: Helping Doctoral Students Engage with the Education Policy Analysis. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 18(8), pp. 833 - 845.
- Hyatt, D., 2013 (b). The Critical Higher Education Policy Discourse Framework. *International Perspectives on Higher Education Research*, Volume 9, pp. 41 - 59.
- International Expert Panel for the Higher Education Authority, 2012, August. *A Proposed Reconfiguration of the Irish System of Higher Education*, Dublin: Higher Education Authority.
- Inis, E. & Wood, P., 1999. *Citizenship and Identity*. London: Sage.
- Jaworsky, A. & Coupland, N., 2010. Perspectives on Discourse Analysis. In: *The Discourse Reader*. London: Routledge, pp. 1 - 37.

- Jonsson, J. & Erikson, R., 2007. Why Educational Expansion is not such a Great Strategy for Equality - Theory and Evidence. In: Shavit, Y; , Arum, R. & Gamoran, A., eds. *Stratification in Higher Education*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. 113 - 139.
- Kanter, R., 1994. Collaborative Advantage. *Harvard Business Review*, 72(4), pp. 96 - 108.
- Katsarova, I., 2015. *Higher Education in the EU, Approaches, Issues and Trends*, Brussels: European Parliamentary Research Service.
- Kehm, B. & Pasternak, P., 2012. the German "Excellence Initiative" and Its Role in Restructuring the National Higher Education Landscape. In: D. Palfreyman & T. Tapper, eds. *Structuring Mass Higher Education: the Role of Elite Institutions*. New York: Routledge, pp. 113 - 127.
- Kivistö, J., 2008. An Assessment of Agency Theory as a Framework for the Government-University Relationship. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, pp. 339 - 350.
- Kyvik, S., 2004. Structural Changes in Higher Education Systems in Western Europe. *Higher Education in Europe*, 29(3), pp. 393 - 409.
- Laperche, B. & Uzunidis, D., 2011. the Impacts of Reforms on Research and Innovation in France: Direction, Planning and Co-ordination. *Higher Education Management and Policy*, 23(2), pp. 9 - 26.
- Lefrere, P., 2007. Competing Higher Education Futures in a Globalised World. *European Journal of Education*, 42(2), pp. 201 - 212.
- Locke, W., 2007. Higher Education Mergers: Integrating Organisational Cultures and Developing Appropriate Management Styles. *Higher Education Quarterly*, January, Volume 61, pp. 83 - 102.
- Lynch, K., 2006. Neo-Liberalism and Marketisation: The implications for Higher Education. *European Educational Research Journal*, 5(1), pp. 1 - 17.
- Lynch, K. & O'Riordan, C., 1998. Inequality in Higher Education: A Case Study of Class Barriers. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 19(4), pp. 445 - 478.
- Maasen, P., 2000. The Changing Role of Stakeholders in Dutch University Governance. *European Journal of Education*, 35(4), pp. 449 - 464.
- Machado, M. L., Ferreira, J., Santiago, R. & Taylor, J., 2008. Reframing the Non-University Sector in Europe - Convergence or Diversity?. In: Taylor, J.S., Ferreira, J.B., de Lourdes Machado, M. & Santiago, R., eds. *Non-University Higher Education in Europe*. Netherlands: Springer, pp. 245 - 260.
- Marginson, S., 2011. *Criteria for Technological University Designation*, Dublin: HEA.
- Marginson, S. & Rhoades, G., 2002. Beyond National States, Markets and Systems of Higher Education: A Glonacal Agency Heuristic. *Higher Education*, 43(3), pp. 281 - 309.

- Masschelein, J. & Simons, M., 2002. An Adequate Education in a Globalised World? A Note on Immunisation against Being-Together. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 36(4), pp. 589 - 608.
- Mazza, C., Quattrone, P. & Riccabone, A., 2008. *European Universities in Transition: issues, Models and Cases*. Cheltenham, England: Edward elgar Publishing.
- McCarthy, C., 2009. *Report of the Special Group on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure Programmes*, Dublin: Department of Finance.
- McCoy, S. & Smyth, E., 2010. Higher Education Expansion and Differentiation in the Republic of Ireland. *Higher Education*, 61(3), pp. 243 - 260.
- McCulloch, G., 2004. *Documentary Resaerch in Education, History and the Social Sciences*. London: Routledge Falmer.
- McGuinness, S. et al., 2012. *A Study of Future Demand for Higher Education in Ireland*, Dublin: HEA.
- McGuinness, S., Bergin, A. & Whelan, A., 2015. *Overeducation in Europe: Is there Scope for a Common Policy Approach?*, Dublin: Strategic Transitions for Youth Labour in Europe.
- McManus, A., 2014. *Irish Education The Ministerial Legacy, 1919 - 99*. Dublin: The History Press Ltd.
- Montgomery, L. & Canaan, J., 2004. Conceptualising Higher Education Students as Social Actors in a Globalising World: A Special Issue. *Internatinal Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 17(6), pp. 739 - 748.
- Munck, R., 2005. *Globalisation and Social Exclusion, A Transformationalist Perspective*. Bloomfield: Kumarian Press.
- Murphy, M. & F. T., 2003. Partners in Participation: Integrated Approaches to Widening Access in Higher Education. *European Journal of Education*, 38(1), pp. 25 - 39.
- Murray, N., 2015. [Online]
Available at: <http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/tui-set-for-strike-ballot-if-college-merger-goes-ahead-313556.html>
- National Industrial Economic Council, 1966. *National Industrial Economic Council Comments on "Investment in Education"*, Dublin: NIEC.
- NCEA, 1976. *Report of the Working Party on Complementary Studies*, Dublin: NCEA.
- Neave, G., 1979. Academic Drift: Some Views from Europe. *Studies in Higher Education*, 4(2), pp. 143 - 159.
- Neave, G., 1983. The Dynamics of Integration in Non-integrated Systems of Higher Education in Western Europe. In: H. Hermanns, U. Teichler & H. Wasser, eds. *The Complete University*. Cambridge, England: Schenkman.
- Neave, G., 2012. *The Evaluative State, Institutional Autonomy and Re-Engineering Higher Education in Western Europe*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

- Neave, G. & van Vught, F., 1994. *Government and Higher Education Relationships Across Three Continents Winds of Change*. Oxford: Pergamon.
- Nikandrou, I., Papalexandris, N. & Bourantas, D., 2000. Gaining Employee Trust after Acquisition: Implications for Managerial Action. *Employee Relations*, 22(4), pp. 334 - 355.
- Ó Buachalla, S., 1988. *Education Policy in Twentieth Century Ireland*. Dublin: Wolfhound Press.
- O'Connell, P., 2006. Who went to College? Socio Economic Inequality in Entry to Higher Education in the Republic of Ireland in 2004. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 60(4), pp. 312 - 332.
- O'Connor, S., 1986. *A Troubled Sky: Reflections on the Irish Educational Scene 1957 - 68*, Educational Research Centre: Dublin.
- OECD, 1964. *Training of Technicians in Ireland*. Paris: OECD.
- OECD, 1973. *Short-Cycle Higher Education - A Search for Identity*, Paris: OECD.
- OECD, 1974. *Towards Mass Higher Education: Issues and Dilemmas*, Paris: OECD.
- OECD, 2004 (a). Review of National Policies for Education: Review of Higher Education in Ireland.
- OECD, 2004 (b). *Internationalisation and Trade in Higher Education: Opportunities and Challenges*, Paris: OECD.
- OECD, 2008. *Tertiary Education for a Knowledge Society*, Paris: OECD.
- OECD, 2014. *Education at a Glance*, Paris: OECD.
- OECD, n.d. *Glossary of Statistical Terms*. [Online] Available at: www.oecd.org/glossary [Accessed 14 August 2015].
- O'Hara, B., 1993. *Regional Technical College Galway - The First 21 Years*. Galway: RTC Galway.
- Oireachtas Library and Research Service, 2014. *Higher Education in Ireland: for Economy and Society?*, Dublin: Government of Ireland.
- Olssen, M. & Peters, M., 2005. Neoliberalism, Higher Education and the Knowledge Economy. *Journal of Education Policy*, 20(3), pp. 313 - 345.
- O'Riain, S., 2004. *The Politics of High Tech Growth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Osborne, R., 1996. *Higher Education in Ireland: North and South*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Osborne, R., 2006. Cross-border Higher Education Collaboration in Europe: Lessons for the "two Irelands"? *European Journal of Education*, 41(1), pp. 115 - 129.
- Ozga, J. & Jones, R., 2006. Travelling and Embedded Policy: The Case for Knowledge Transfer. *Journal of Education Policy*, 21(1), pp. 1 - 17.

- Papastephanou, M., 2005. Globalisation, Globalism and Cosmopolitanism as an Educational Ideal. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 37(4), pp. 533 - 551.
- Patterson, G., 2001. Playing the Alliance Game in Higher Education. *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education*, 5(1), pp. 6 - 11.
- Peters, M., 2007. *Knowledge Economy, Development and the Future of Higher Education*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Pritchard, R., 1998. Institutional Lifecycles in British Higher Education. *Tertiary Management and Education*, 4(1), pp. 71 - 80.
- Pritchard, R. & Williamson, A., 2008. Long-term Human Outcomes of a "Shotgun Marriage in Higher Education: Anatomy of a Merger, Two Decades Later. *Higher Education Management and Policy*, 20(1), pp. 47 - 69.
- Pritchett, P., 1985. *After the Merger: Managing the Shockwaves*. Illinois: Dow Jones-Irwin.
- Quinn, R., 2006. *Straight Left A Journey in Politics*. Dublin: Hodder and Stoughton.
- Quinn, R., 2013, May 30. *Letter to Mr John Hennessy*, s.l.: Office of the Minister for Education and Skills.
- Regini, M., 2011. *European Universities and the Challenge of the Market: A Comparative Analysis*. Cheltenham, England: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Reichert, S., 2009. *Institutional Diversity in European Higher Education - Tensions and Challenges for Policy Makers and Institutional Leaders*, Brussels: European University Association.
- Rhoades, G., 1983. Conflicting Interests in Higher Education. *American Journal of Education*, Volume 91, pp. 283 - 327.
- Riesman, D., 1956. *Constraint and Variety in American Education*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Rinne, R. & Koivula, J., 2005. The Changing Place of the University and a Clash of Values: The Entrepreneurial University in the European Knowledge Society, A Review of the Literature. *Higher Education Management and Policy*, 17(3), pp. 91 - 123.
- Rizvi, F. & Lingard, B., 2000. Globalisation and Education: Complexities and Contingencies. *Educational Theory*, 50(4), pp. 419 - 426.
- Rizvi, F. & Lingard, B., 2010. *Globalising Education Policy*. London: Taylor and Francis.
- Robbins, L., 1963. *Report of the Committee appointed by the Prime Minister under the Chairmanship of Lord Robbins*, London: Her Majesty's Stationery office.
- Rogers, R.; Malacharuvil-Berkes, E.; Massey, M.; Hai, D.; O'Garro-Joseph, G., 2005. Critical Discourse Analysis in Education: A Review of Literature. *Review of Educational Research*, 75(3), pp. 365 - 416.
- Rowley, G., 1997(a). Mergers in Higher Education: A Strategic Analysis. *Higher Education Quarterly*, July, 51(3), pp. 251 - 263.

- Rowley, G., 1997(b). United We Stand: A Strategic Analysis of Mergers in Higher Education. *Public Money and Management*, 17(4), pp. 7 - 12.
- Rubenson, K. & Desjardins, R., 2009. The Impact of Welfare State Regimes on Barriers to Participation in Adult Education: A Bounded Agency Model. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 59(3), pp. 187 - 207.
- Scott, D., 2000. *Reading Educational Research and Policy*. London: Routledge Falmer.
- Scott, J., 1990. *A Matter of Record - Documentary Sources in Social Research*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Scott, J., 1990. *A Matter of Record - Documentary Sources in Social Science*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Scott, P., 1995 (a). *The Meanings of Mass Higher Education*. Buckingham: The Society for Research into Higher Education.
- Scott, P., 1995 (b). Unified and Binary Systems of Higher Education in Europe. In: *Goals and Purposes of Higher Education in the 21st Century*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, pp. 37 - 54.
- Scott, P., 2007. Back to the Future? The Evolution of Higher Education Systems. In: B. Kehm, ed. *Looking Back to Look Forward. Analyses of Higher Education after the turn of the Millennium*. Werkstattberichte 67: Kassel.
- Shattock, M., 2003. *Managing Successful Universities*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Sheil, T., 2010. Moving beyond University Rankings: Developing a World Class University System in Australia. *Australian Universities' Review*, 52(1), pp. 69 - 76.
- Silander, C., Haake, U. & Lindberg, L., 2013. The Different Worlds of Academia: A Horizontal Analysis of Gender Equality in Swedish Higher Education. *Higher Education*, Volume 66, pp. 173 - 188.
- Silva, E., 2009. Measuring Skills for 21st Century Learning. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 90(9), pp. 630 - 634.
- Simons, M., Olsen, M. & Peters, M., 2009. Re-reading Education Policies. In: *Re-reading Education Policies: A Handbook Studying the Policy Agenda of the 21st Century*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, pp. 41 - 102.
- Skilbeck, M., 2002. *The University Challenged: A Review of International Trends and Issues with Particular Reference to Ireland*. Dublin, HEA/CHI.U.
- Small, H., 2013. *The Value of Humanities*, Oxford: Oxford press.
- Sousa, S. & Magalhaes, A., 2013. Discourse Analysis in Higher Education. *International Perspectives on Higher Education Research*, Volume 9, pp. 81 - 96.
- St Aubyn, M., Pina, A., G. F. & Pais, J., 2009. *Study on the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Public Spending on Tertiary Education*, Brussels: European Commission.

- St George, E., 2006. Positioning Higher Education for the Knowledge-based Economy. *Higher Education*, Volume 52, pp. 589 - 610.
- State Examinations Commission, 2014. *Annual Report*, Athlone: State Examinations Commission.
- Steering Committee on Technical Education, 1967. *Report to Minister on Regional Technical Colleges*, Dublin: Stationery Office.
- Steering Committee, 1995. *Report of the Steering Committee*, Dublin: Stationery Office.
- Stiglitz, J., 2002. *Globalisation and its Discontents*. New York - London: WW Norton and Company.
- Stybel, L., 1985. After the Merger: The Human Element. *New England Business*, Volume 2, pp. 67 - 68.
- Sumner, J., 2008. Governance, Globalisation and Political Economy, Perspectives from Canadian Adult Education. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 59(1), pp. 22 - 41.
- Survey Team, 1962. *Investment in Education*, Dublin: The Stationery Office.
- Sweeney, P., 1998. *The Celtic Tiger*. Dublin: Institute of Public Administration.
- TEASTAS, 1997. *The Irish National Certification Authority, First Report*, Dublin: Stationery Office.
- Teichler, U., 1996. Comparative Higher Education: Potentials and Limits. *Higher Education*, 32(4), pp. 431 - 465.
- Teichler, U., 2002. Diversification of Higher Education and the Profile of the Individual Institution. *Higher Education Management and Policy*, 14(3), pp. 177 - 188.
- Teichler, U., 2004. *Changing Structures of Higher Education Systems: The Increasing Complexity of Underlying Forces*, Paris: UNESCO Forum Regional Scientific Committee for Europe and North America.
- Teichler, U., 2005. Research on Higher Education in Europe. *European Journal of Education*, 40(4), pp. 447 - 469.
- Teichler, U., 2008 (a). Diversification? Trends and Explanations of the Shape and Size of Higher Education. *Higher Education*, 56(3), pp. 349 - 379.
- Teichler, U., 2008 (b). The End of Alternatives to Universities or New Opportunities. In: J. Taylor, J. Ferreira, M. Machado & R. Santiago, eds. *Non-University Higher Education in Europe*. Netherlands: Springer, pp. 1 - 13.
- Teichler, U. & Sadlak, J., 2000. *Higher Education Research: its Relationships to Policy and Practice*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Thomas, G. & Meyer, J., 1987. Regimes Changes and State Power in an Intensifying World-state System. In: *Institutional Structure: Constituting State, Society and the Individual*. Berkeley Hills, CA: Sage, pp. 71 - 90.

- Thrift, N., 2008. University Reforms: The Tension between Form and Substance. In: C. Mazza, P. Quattrone & A. Riccaboni, eds. *European Universities in Transition*. Cheltenham, England: Edward elgar Publishing, pp. 17 - 29.
- Tight, M., 2004. Higher Education Research: An Atheoretical Community of Practice?. *Higher Education Research and Development*, pp. 395 - 411.
- Tight, M., 2012. *Researching Higher Education*. 2 ed. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Torres, C. & Van Heeretum, R., 2009. Globalistion and Neo-liberalism: The Challenges and Opportunities for Radical Pedagogy. In: *Re-reading Education Policies: A Handbook Studying teh Policy Agenda of hte 21st Century*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, pp. 41 - 102.
- Trow, M., 1973. *Problems in the Transition from Elite to Mass Education*, Berkeley, CA: Carnegie Commission of Higher Education.
- Trow, M., 1973. *Problems in Transition from Elite to Mass Higher Education*. New York: General Learning Press.
- Trow, M., 1976 (a). *The Implications of Low Growth Rates for higher Education*. Berkeley: University of California.
- Trow, M., 1976 (b). The Implications of Low Growth Rates for Higher Education. *Higher Education*, Volume 5, pp. 377 - 396.
- Trow, M., 1979. *Elite and Mass Higher Education: American Models and European Realities, Reserach into Higher Education: Processes and Structures*. Stockholm: National Board of Universities and Colleges.
- Trow, M., 2000. *From Mass Higher Education to Universal Access: The American Advantage*. Berkeley: University of California.
- Trow, M., 2005 (a). *Reflections on the transforming from elite to mass to universal access: Forms and phases of higher education in modern societies since WWII*, Berkeley, CA: University of California.
- Trow, M., 2005 (b). *An American Perspective on British Higher Education: The Decline of Diversity, Autonomy and Trust in Post-War British Higher Education*. Berkeley: University of California.
- Tuckett, A., 2005. Applying Thematic Analysis Theory to Practice: A Researcher's Experience. *Contemporary Nurse*, 19(1 - 2), pp. 75 - 87.
- Usher, R., 2002. Putting Space Back on the map: Globalisation, Place and Identity. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 34(1), pp. 41 - 55.
- Vaira, M., 2004. Globalization and Higher Education Organisational Change: A Framework for Analysis. *Higher Education*, Volume 48, pp. 483 - 510.
- van der Wende, M., 2001. Internationalisation Policies: About New Trends and Contrasting Paradigms. *Higher Education Policy*, 14(3), pp. 249 - 259.
- van Vught, F., 1989. *Government Strategies and Innovation in Higher Education*, London: Jessica Kingsley.

van Vught, F., 2007. *Diversity and Differentiation in Higher Education Systems*, Cape Town, South Africa: Paper presented at the Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET) Anniversary Conference.

van Vught, F., 2008. Mission Diversity and Reputation in Higher Education. *Higher Education Policy*, Volume 21, pp. 151 - 174.

van Vught, F. & Westerheijden, D., 1994. Towards a General Model of Quality Assessment of Higher Education. *Higher Education*, 28(3), pp. 355 - 371.

van Vught, F.A.; Massaro, V.; Egron-Polak, E.; Gallagher, M.; Holm-Nielsen, L.; Randall, J., 2012. *A Proposed Reconfiguration of the Irish System of Higher Education*, Dublin: HEA.

Vidovich, L., 2013. Policy Research in Higher Education; Theories and Methods for Globalising Times. *Theory and Method in Higher Education Research*, Volume 9, pp. 21 - 39.

Waks, L., 2006. Globalisation, State Transformation and Educational Restructuring: Why Post-Modern Diversity will prevail over Standardisation. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 25(5 - 6), pp. 403 - 424.

Walshe, J., 1999. *A New Partnership in Education: From Consultation to Legislation in the Nineties*. Dublin: Institute of Public Administration.

Walsh, J., 2014. The Transformation of Higher Education in Ireland, 1945 - 1980. In: *Higher Education in Ireland: Practices, Policies and Possibilities*. Dublin: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 5 - 33.

Walter, G., 1985. *Culture Collisions in Mergers and Acquisitions*. Beverly Hills: Sage.

Warhurst, C. & Thompson, P., 2006. Mapping Knowledge in Work: Proxies or Practices. *Work, Employment and Society*, 21(1), pp. 103 - 120.

Watson, D., 2002. Is UKHE Fit for Purpose?. *Perspectives*, 6(3), pp. 63 - 72.

Webb, S. & Webb, B., 1975. *Methods of Social Study*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

West / Northwest Cluster, 2016. *West / Northwest Higher Education Cluster - Outputs and Reflections*, Galway: NUIG.

Western Development Commission, 1999. *Blueprint for Investing in the West*, Ballaghaderreen: WDC.

Wheelahan, L., 2012. Accessing Knowledge in the University of the Future: Lessons from Australia. In: R. Barnett, ed. *The Future University: Ideas and Possibilities*. New York, NY: Routledge, pp. 37 - 49.

White, T., 2001. *Investing in People - Higher Education in Ireland from 1960 to 2000*, Dublin: Institute of Public Administration.

Williams, 1985. *Higher Education in Ireland: Complementarity and Cooperation*, Belfast / Dublin: Northern Ireland Economic Council / National Economic and Social Council.

Wodak, R., 2001. The Discourse-Historical Approach. In: R. Wodak & M. Meyer, eds. *Methods in Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Sage, pp. 63 - 94.

Wodak, R. & Fairclough, N., 2010. Recontextualising European Higher Education Policies: the Case of Austria and Romania. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 7(1), pp. 19 - 40.

Yin, R., 2009. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. 4th ed. London, England: SAGE.

Young, M., 2009. Education, Globalisation and the 'Voice of Knowledge'. *Journal of Education and Work*, 22(3), pp. 193 - 204.

Zha, Q., 2009. Diversification or Homogenizations in Higher Education: A Global Allomorphism Perspective. *Higher Education in Europe*, 34(3 - 4), pp. 459 - 479.

Appendices

A Policy Discourse Analysis of the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 from a Non-University Perspective

Participant Information Leaflet

The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 was commissioned by the Higher Education Authority and was published in 2011, after a period of consultation by the Strategy Group, under the chairmanship of Colin Hunt. This marked a significant departure from normal Department of Education and Skills practice of producing Green and White Papers in the production and mediation of government policy for education. The National Strategy makes some radical proposals for the reconfiguration of the HE landscape in Ireland, but much of the focus is on the restructuring of the non-university sector, particularly the Institutes of Technology. The governance structure of the non-university sector changed in 2007 when the HEA was given the role of managing both sides of the HE system. What followed was a move to standardised practices for governance and funding as practiced by the university sector, while maintaining a “binary divide”. The reform agenda has provided many challenges to the non-university sector, and a policy trajectory approach to policy analysis was adopted to investigate the proposed changes to the non-university sector. The tensions and shift in power dynamics are key elements to the process of reform in what is a contested space.

Why is this research being conducted?

As a Head of Department in an Institute of Technology, I am interested in understanding the changing landscape of where I work and how changes will impact the IoT sector over the duration of the National Strategy to 2030.

Why have I been invited to take part?

While there has been a dearth of policy documentation from the Department of Education and Skills and the Higher Education Authority, you have been actively engaged in research in this space and have unique insights, due to your role, into the evolution of the national strategy. Your contributions to the discourse will therefore provide a basis for understanding the national strategy in a policy context.

The key questions being asked during the interviews will be:-

1. What role did the Hunt report envisage for the IoT sector in Ireland?
2. What was the justification for maintaining the binary divide?
3. What kind of organisations were the IoTs expected to evolve into?
4. How would you explain these developments over the last ten years?
5. What directions would you expect to see over the next ten years?

What will happen if I take part?

With your agreement, I propose to interview a number of key researchers in this space. The key interview questions will be circulated in advance which will provide a frame for the interview. The content of the interviews will be analysed to identify the key common themes which are relevant to framing the national strategy in a policy context.

Do I have to take part?

It is entirely up to you if you wish to take part. If you give permission, I will contact you in the coming days to arrange a meeting at a location and time of your choosing. If you decide to take part in the study you will be asked to sign a consent form on the day.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Yes. None of the interviewees will be mentioned by name or place of work.

Contact Details:-

Ciarán Ó hAnnracháin
Head of Department of Hospitality,
Tourism and Culinary Arts
LYIT School of Tourism
Shore Road, Killybegs
Co Donegal

Tel:
+353(0)749186603/+353(0)872664062

E: ciaran.ohanrachain@lyit.ie

**Alternative Contact / Project
Supervisor**

Prof. Gareth Parry
School of Education
University of Sheffield
Western Bank
Sheffield S10 2TN

E: g.w.parry@sheffield.ac.uk

Participant Consent Form

Title of Research Project: A Policy Trajectory Analysis of the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 from A Non-University Perspective.

Name of Researcher: Ciarán Ó hAnnracháin

Participant Identification Number for this project:
box

Please initial

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet/letter (delete as applicable) dated *[insert date]* explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. *Insert contact number here of lead researcher/member of research team (as appropriate).*
3. I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential (only if true). I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.
4. I agree for the data collected from me to be used in future research
5. I agree to take part in the above research project.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

(or legal representative)

Name of person taking consent

Date

Signature

(if different from lead researcher)

To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

Lead Researcher

Date

Signature

To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

Copies:

Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, the letter/pre-written script/information sheet and any other written information provided to the participants. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be placed in the project's main record (e.g. a site file), which must be kept in a secure location.