Vocational Education at Secondary Level in Ireland

Mary Canning
Acknowledgements

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### Abbreviations and Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Central Statistics Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>DES</td>
<td>Department of Education and Science</td>
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<td>EGFSN</td>
<td>Expert Group on Future Skills Needs</td>
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<td>ESRI</td>
<td>Economic and Social Research Institute</td>
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<td>FÁS</td>
<td>Foras Aiseanna Saothair (Training and Employment Authority)</td>
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<td>FETAC</td>
<td>Further Education and Training Awards Council</td>
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<td>HEA</td>
<td>Higher Education Authority</td>
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<td>IBEC</td>
<td>Irish Business and Employers Confederation</td>
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<td>IOT</td>
<td>Institutes of Technology</td>
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<td>LCA</td>
<td>Leaving Certificate Applied</td>
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<td>LCVP</td>
<td>Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme</td>
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<td>NCCA</td>
<td>National Council for Curriculum and Assessment</td>
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<td>NCEA</td>
<td>National Council for Educational Awards</td>
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<td>NQAI</td>
<td>National Qualifications Authority of Ireland</td>
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<td>NFQ</td>
<td>National Framework of Qualifications</td>
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<td>PISA</td>
<td>OECD Programme for International Student Assessment</td>
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<td>PLC</td>
<td>Post Leaving Certificate Program,</td>
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<tr>
<td>RTCs</td>
<td>Regional Technical Colleges</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEC</td>
<td>State Examinations Commission</td>
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<td>VEC</td>
<td>Vocational Education Committee</td>
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1. **Introduction**

In Ireland, during the 1980s and 1990s, the Government and the social partners (employers and unions) increasingly came to view investment in human capital as a strategic objective in the national development planning process. In order to meet the challenges of developing a relevant and flexible education system to meet this strategic objective, a series of policies, programs and implementing institutions were elaborated throughout the 1990s and into the 21st century. This paper will highlight some of those initiatives with a focus on the Vocational Education system. With an international audience in mind, Section 2 gives some background about the social and economic context of Ireland from the 1960s onwards and briefly describes the key features of the Irish education system. Section 3 examines the impressive progress that was made to diversify post primary education through the development of new programs, new curricula and assessment methodologies and a new qualification framework – all with full stakeholder involvement. Section 4 sets out some relevant outcomes and Sections 5 and 6 discuss the outstanding issues and the implications for vocational education in a competitive global knowledge economy.

2. **Context**

Up to the 1960s Ireland had a sharply differentiated two-tier post-primary system – academically oriented secondary schools and vocational schools. Vocational Schools provided a narrowly focussed two-year continuation course of practical and applied studies. In the early 1960s, the Government realised the social and economic importance of modernising education and, under successive Ministers, embarked upon a series of reforms which included a strategy to broaden access and increase flexibility through the creation of new institutional models while introducing new curricula and pedagogical services to existing second level schools.

Universal free post-primary education was introduced in 1967 which led to greatly increased participation rates in secondary education. The immediate impact of the universal free post-primary education policy was greatly to expand enrolments in education beyond the mandatory school age. In 1972-3 (the earliest year for which age-specific enrolment rates are available) 58.3 percent of 16 year olds and 43.7 percent of 17 year olds were enrolled in full-time education. Ten years later, these had risen to 76.3 percent and 58.4 percent respectively, and in a further decade, to 92.6 percent and 80.8 percent. Two new kinds of post-primary school were introduced: comprehensive schools in 1965 and community schools in 1970. As part of the program of education reform, the status of vocational schools was enhanced in the 1960s so that they were enabled to offer less rigidly technical education. Regional Technical colleges to ensure the provision of trained manpower were also introduced at this time. Participation in higher education, which was fee-paying, was low at around 10 percent.

For the next twenty years (from approximately 1970-1992) Ireland experienced very difficult economic circumstances. Unemployment rates in the late 1980s and early 1990s peaked at around 17 percent, with higher rates for school leavers. Emigration, which had always been a feature of Irish society, also soared with thousands of secondary school and university graduates leaving the country every year. However, since the early nineties, Ireland has been experiencing a period of unprecedented economic growth, well ahead of the OECD average, achieving an average GDP growth rate of 4.8 percent between 1990-95, and 9.5 percent from 1995-2000. Since
2000, the per capita GDP of Ireland has grown at annual rates of 2.5 %– 4.2%, substantially exceeding the EU average in every year. In 2003, Ireland had the second highest GDP per capita within the enlarged EU -- almost one-third higher than the EU 25 average. \(^1\) The country benefited from a high level of investment by multinational companies and significant growth in the area of high technology enterprises such as information and communication technologies, chemical and pharmaceutical industries, and financial services. By 2000 the unemployment rate fell to below 4 percent, and in 2007 it is 4.5 percent. Instead of an older tradition of emigration, the pattern has shifted to inward migration and the active recruitment of foreign workers.

Ireland joined the EU in 1973 and economic policy-makers quickly proved adept at maximising the potential and opportunities thus created, and, especially in the case of education and training, access to European Social Funds. Incentives to inward international investment were developed. At the same time, in the 1980s the Government also came to see that attracting sustainable foreign direct investment would require the parallel development of human capital. Consequently, a greater focus on education reform was initiated and a wide range of education and training programs were implemented at all levels. OECD attributes the impressive gains in labour productivity to investments made in education from 1967.\(^2\) An analysis of CSO data and , an evaluation of Ireland’s occupational profile, using years of education as a proxy for skill levels, has found that ‘high skilled’ employment increased between 1991 and 2001 while ‘low skilled’ employment declined. After 1991, even more emphasis was placed on the importance of relevant education and training, to the national economic well being as described below in the discussion of policy initiatives.

### 2.2 Some features of the Irish Education System

It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the Irish Education system in depth; but, a diagrammatic overview of the Education system can be found in Appendix One.,\(^3\) Governance and financing vary according to level. Most primary (national) schools in Ireland are privately owned and managed, mostly by Church authorities. They are, however, almost entirely financed by the State and free of charge. Secondary schools in Ireland continue also to be privately owned and managed by religious orders or other denominational groups; these institutions although funded by the State, enjoy a large degree of autonomy. Some secondary schools charge fees. Comprehensive and Community (C&C) Schools are owned and managed by local Boards of Management of differing composition but are state funded. Vocational Schools are second level public schools which are financed by national and local government, are free of charge and are managed through local Vocational Education Committees (VECs), appointed by local authorities.\(^4\) The State finances most higher education institutions. C&C, vocational and bachelor level tertiary education are free of charge to EU nationals.

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\(^1\) Central Statistics Office, Measuring Ireland’s Progress, 2004. cso.ie

\(^2\) OECD Country Economic Review, Ireland, 2006 page

\(^3\) For a full background see, Coolahan, Irish Education, , history and structure.

\(^4\) Local authorities include County Councils, Borough Councils, City Councils and some Town Councils.
Enrolment of full-time students in institutions aided by Department of Education (thousands).

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Level</td>
<td>481</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>567</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Level</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Level</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>632</strong></td>
<td><strong>828</strong></td>
<td><strong>955</strong></td>
<td><strong>944</strong></td>
<td><strong>927</strong></td>
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Number of full-time students in institutions aided by the Department of Education, 2005/2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>No. of Students</th>
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<tr>
<td>First Level</td>
<td>457,889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Level</td>
<td>332,407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>183,766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community and Comprehensive</td>
<td>51,738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational</td>
<td>96,903</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Level</td>
<td>136,719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutes of Technology/Technological Colleges</td>
<td>53,386</td>
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<tr>
<td>HEA Colleges (excl. RCSI)</td>
<td>80,801</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Aided (incl. teacher training)</td>
<td>2,532</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>927,015</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Department of Education and Science website: www.education.ie

2.3 Policy Environment

Since the 1960s, a number of international and national reports stimulated the debate on the need for the reform of education and training:

- “Investment in Education”, a joint report by the Irish Government and the OECD in 1962, was the first comprehensive survey of the primary and second level systems which laid the groundwork for a number of major policy initiatives, including the introduction of universal free post primary education.

- In 1987 a national agreement was negotiated by the Government with the social partners, the first of five such agreements, which created a stable and secure environment for investment, with a minimum of industrial unrest. In the National Plan that followed, education was targeted as a key area for investment,
• The OECD Review of Irish Education in 1991, while affirming the strengths of the education system, also highlighted the need for improvement and modernisation;

• In 1992 the Culliton Report, a *Time for Change: Industrial Policy for the 1990s*, emphasized the need to improve the link between education and the economy. It called for a shift away from the liberal arts to more practical and marketable skills;

• Also in 1992, a Government discussion paper *Education for a Changing World* stimulated vigorous public debate, generating a consultative process with the involvement of all key stakeholders which included thousands of written submissions and led to a National Education Convention in 1993 and to a Government White Paper, *Changing Our Education Future*, in 1995. This White Paper stressed the importance of quality, equity and accountability in Irish Education and formulated fundamental policy objectives including the retention of all pupils up to the end of post-primary schooling, or the completion of a senior training course. Curricular and assessment reform at all levels was to be implemented as was school self evaluation, and greater teacher collaboration within schools. Two comprehensive education acts which formed the legislative framework for the change agenda followed: the Irish Universities Act (1997) and the Education Act (1998);

• The policy debate was rounded out by the 2000 publication by OECD of the 1995 International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) which demonstrated significantly lower rates of literacy in Irish adults than in other European countries. The IALS finding that 25 percent of the labour force in Ireland had difficulty with simple literacy tasks, acted as a wake-up call which together with the White Paper, *Learning For Life* (2000) resulted in the policy on lifelong learning with a particular focus on adult education and the rapid growth in adult literacy services.

• Since 2000, there have been numerous further initiatives in response, inter alia, to the changes required by globalisation, a growing population and growing immigration and the EU competitiveness agenda set out in the Lisbon strategy. The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs report, *Tomorrow’s Skills: Towards a National Skills Strategy*, March 2007, which is discussed in the final section of this paper, provides an excellent overview of the current issues confronting the Irish education system.

### 3. System Responses

#### 3.1 Structural changes to create improved labour market linkages

As noted above, in the second half of the 1960s, in addition to the modernisation of academic secondary education, two new types of schools, comprehensive and community (C&C), were developed as an incentive to encourage less academic students to continue in post primary education by providing an alternative to the traditional binary choice of secondary or vocational education schooling.

Comprehensive Schools were first developed in the mid 1960s as a response to the needs of areas where, historically, there were no post primary schools. The objectives of comprehensive schools...
were to provide free education in a range of academic and practical subjects with a clear focus on equality of educational opportunity and on the provision of diverse forms of youth and adult education. These schools were co-educational, offered a wide curriculum suitable for students of all aptitudes and provided psychological guidance as well as transport services.

Community schools were introduced on a national scale in 1970 and, in essence, subsumed the functions of the comprehensive schools (of which no further were opened after 1974). Community schools were viewed as a means of achieving economies of scale by encouraging cooperation among smaller post primary schools. The vision for the community schools is that they deliver modern post primary education services for all members of the community (including adults) free of charge.

As part of the program of education reform, the status of Vocational Schools was also enhanced in the 1960s with a view to making them more socially attractive and labour market relevant. A less narrow and rigid curriculum was introduced together with a new technical Leaving Certificate ( later to become the vocational Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme as discussed below).

Meanwhile, a comprehensive curriculum, offering a range of subject choices in academic as well as practical subjects, was introduced in all post primary educational institutions, including the more academic secondary schools. Curriculum choices were expanded in all institutions and new pedagogical methods and improved career counselling were widely introduced. Vocational schools continued to concentrate on preparing students for immediate entry to the labour market but this technical education was and is invariably accompanied by a full range of curricular options. C&C schools offer educational opportunities to suit every ability. All Vocational and C&C schools offer pre-employment and ICT modules.

A comparison of the enrollment rates in C&C and in Vocational schools between 1978/79 and 2005/06 shows that the policy of diversifying the system was apparently successful as the overall proportion of enrolments in both vocational and community/comprehensive schools increased. However, the proportion of pupils enrolled in the more traditional academic secondary schools actually decreased which may be an unwelcome and unintended outcome given the challenges, discussed below, of a knowledge economy and Irish competitiveness in 2007.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pupil Numbers in post primary schools in 1978/79:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Schools</td>
<td>196,606</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational Schools</td>
<td>68,120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Schools</td>
<td>14,204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive Schools</td>
<td>8,152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>287,082</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pupil Numbers in post primary schools in 2005/06</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Schools</td>
<td>183,766</td>
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<td>51,738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>332,407</td>
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</table>

Source; Department of Education and Science website: Statistical Reports, author’s calculations
In effect, there is now no great difference between secondary and C&C and vocational schools. All three types of post-primary school discussed above follow the same State prescribed curriculum which is comprehensive in nature and all post primary students take the same State public examinations. There are two key public examinations: the Junior Certificate, (ages 15/16) and the Leaving Certificate (ages 17/18). Besides the traditional or established (and more academic) Leaving Certificate, two alternative types of school leaving certificate, vocational and applied, have been introduced in latter years and are discussed below. Leaving Certificate subjects are examined at higher and lower levels. Not surprisingly, anecdotal evidence suggests that pupils in the traditional (and often fee paying) secondary schools are more likely to follow a more academic curriculum at higher level. For most students, the attainment of a Level 4 or 5 qualification or progression to third level education are solely determined by results attained in the established Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Vocational programme (LCVP) or the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme, discussed below.5

Paralleling the restructuring of secondary education have been profound structural changes in vocational education at post-secondary level. The new Regional Technical Colleges were developed in the 1960s offering a distinctive form of labour market oriented education, especially in the scientific disciplines needed for the new industries that were being attracted to Ireland such as information technology and pharmaceuticals; in turn, these Regional Colleges became the Institutes of Technology (IoTs) in January 1998 and came under the umbrella of the Higher Education Authority in late 2006. Meanwhile, two new National Institutes of Higher Education were created in 1970 (Limerick) and 1980 (Dublin) to provide more diversified and employer focused higher education. Both became universities in 1989. Detailed description of these changes or analysis of their results is beyond the scope of this paper.

3.2 Programs to align Second Level Vocational Education with the emerging knowledge society

The re-structuring of the senior cycle in 1994/95 established the Transition Year as a mainstream programme and introduced the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA).

Transition Year: This optional year of study is interposed between Junior Certificate and progression to one of three Leaving Certificate courses (the final two years at second level). It provides a bridge to enable students to make the transition from the more dependent type of learning associated with the Junior Certificate to the more independent learning environment associated with the Senior Cycle i.e. the Leaving Certificate. About 70 percent of all post primary schools offer the transition year programme and they have considerable autonomy within a national curriculum framework. This year encourages personal and social development and recognises the need for students to grow in independence. Students remain in their schools but are free to take a much less structured curriculum which emphasises the promotion of interdisciplinary, self-directed learning through the development of general, technical and academic skills. Work experience, which is usually sourced either by the school career counsellor or by the students themselves through personal contacts, is an important part of transition year curriculum. Students mature greatly during the year and, because of the experience gained through the world of work module, a common outcome is a change of direction.

5 The DES publishes detailed breakdowns of performance in the Leaving Certificate examinations in its Annual Statistical Reports. www.education.ie
in subject and career choice. In 2002/3, transition year students numbered about a third of the students in each year of the Senior Cycle.

A relatively new phenomenon is the **Schools' Business Partnership programme**, managed by Business in the Community Ireland (BITCI), which was set up in 2001. It is the only such programme in Ireland jointly funded by both business and the Government and attracts more than 3,000 students, in more than 120 schools nationwide in an innovative educational and business partnership programme aimed at deterring early school leaving. Under the programme, companies are matched with local schools and employees give advice to teenagers on interview techniques and completing their curriculum vitae (CV). A summer work placement is also organised offering short-term jobs in some of the country's leading financial firms. Students discover the wide range of career options available to them and realise the importance of staying in school and completing their exams. Employers declare that the Schools’ Business Partnership has succeeded in mobilising and assisting Irish industry's engagement with its future employees and that participating businesses are themselves benefiting from actively engaging with their communities and local schools.

**The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme** was introduced in 1989 and modifies the established Leaving Certificate Programme, with a concentration on technical subjects and some additional modules which have a vocational focus. Due to its high vocational content, it attracts funding from the European Social Fund. In 1994, it was expanded to broaden the choice of subjects and to strengthen the vocational content of the programme by including three Link Modules: Enterprise Education, Preparation for Work and Work Experience. Students opting for the LCVP must take: (i) five Leaving Certificate subjects, including two subjects from a specified set of vocational subjects; (2) a recognized course in a modern European Language; and (3) the three mandatory Link Modules. These link modules are designed to be combined flexibly and are examined through written and portfolio work. Take up of the LCVP has more than doubled since 1996, from 16,500 to in 1996/1997 to almost 33,000 in 2002/03.

By 2002/2003, 61 percent of school leavers sat the established Leaving Certificate, 29 percent took the Leaving Certificate Vocational Program (against a background of a decline in total senior cycle enrolment) 7 percent sat the Leaving Certificate Applied and 3 percent were repeats. A higher proportion of boys take the Established LC and the LCA, while, counter-intuitively, girls have a higher participation rate in the LCVP.6

**The Leaving Certificate Applied Programme** was introduced in 1995 and is a self-contained two-year course. It is a person centred course involving a cross-curricular approach rather than a subject based structure. It has, as its primary objective, the preparation of participants for adult and working life through relevant learning experiences, which develop the following areas of human endeavour: spiritual, intellectual, social, emotional, aesthetic and physical. The framework of the LCA Programme consists of a number of link modules grouped under three general headings: (i) general education; (2) vocational education; and (3) vocational preparation. LCA participation is highest among young people from manual backgrounds. There are lower rates of participation among those from more advantaged backgrounds. While students taking the LCA are not eligible for direct entry into tertiary education, there is, however, evidence to suggest that the LCA has an important impact on retention at post primary level.7

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6 Sé Sí, Figure 2.8 page 29. There is no convincing hypothesis to explain the reasons for the greater take up of this program by girls.

Leaving Certificate Applied: June 2007

More than 30,000 people have now selected this option which was developed for students who decide that the traditional Leaving Certificate doesn’t cater for their needs. Some of these may wish to go straight into work after school and the LCA provides skills that will help them in that respect. Other students find that academic subjects and exams don’t suit them and the more practical nature of the LCA subjects can prove a better fit. This option is now on offer in 370 schools and centres around Ireland.

The LCA is different from the regular Leaving Cert in its structure and methods of assessment. The two years are broken down into four half-year blocks, known as sessions. Subjects range from English and communications and community care to science, engineering and dance. Career guidance and general life skills are also strong features.

Students are awarded credits for achievements and tasks at the end of each session and the final grade that they receive depends on the number of credits gained throughout the programme. There is a final examination that accounts for approximately one-third of the overall marks.

Many students have jobs, further training or education arranged before completing the final examination. Often these opportunities come about through work experience, which is a strong feature of the LCA. Linkages with local employers are established by the school counselling services and by individual teachers and students complete four separate work experience modules throughout the two years.

LCA coordinators speak of the change that comes about when students who have been demoralised within the system suddenly realise that they can be successful and achieve good marks. “Many of our LCA students would have had a poor experience of school and very low self-esteem as a result. Within six months, they do their first tasks and get their first results. I think that it’s then they realise, ‘I can really do this!”

Irish Times, June 7, 2007

In 1977-78 innovative Pre Employment Courses were organised to respond to Ireland’s growing unemployment problem. These courses included preparation for the world of work and job seeking skills and attracted substantial matching funding by the European Union,. A further initiative was the introduction of Vocational Preparation and Training programmes (VPT 1 and VPT 2, now called the Post Leaving Certificate program, PLC) in 1984/85. The Post Leaving Certificate programme is principally aimed at those who have completed senior cycle education. It comprises full-time one and two year (and some three and four year) courses of integrated education, training and work experience provided in schools and colleges such as the Vocational Schools and the Regional Technical Colleges. The courses are designed to prepare participants for employment or further education/training, and develop the skills needed for specific occupations. Beyond improving a student’s work opportunities. PLC course are certified by the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) with many learners using their awards with the specific intention of progressing to third level, through a system known as the Higher Education Links Scheme. In 2005, 69,829 awards were made. Of these, over 56,000 were for Records of Achievement. The remaining 13,000 awards (at NFQ levels 5 and 6) were in the
following disciplines: health and welfare (41 percent), social sciences, business and law (30 percent) and humanities and arts (14 percent). According to the ESRI, 85 percent of students who completed the programme in 2004 progressed to employment or further education or training. It is worth noting that 72 percent of all PLC students are female.

For pupils who drop out of mainstream schooling, for a variety of reasons, second-chance and alternative programmes are available:

- The **Youthreach** programme is a free two-year programme of education, training and work experience available to young people between 15 and 20 years who have left school with no formal qualification. Year one is a foundation year and is followed by a progression year which leads to an opportunity to attain FETAC awards (at NFQ level 3 and 4), the Leaving Certificate Applied, as well as Junior and Leaving Certificate subjects. Youthreach is run jointly by the Vocational Education Committees and FÁS (the Training and Employment Authority). It is funded by the Department of Education and Science and Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment with assistance from the European Social Fund. Enrollment in Youthreach courses, was 3,258 persons in 2004 when it operated in 88 centres at a cost of €44.6 million. Of those who completed the course, 72 percent went on to employment or further education.

- The **Vocational Training Opportunity Scheme** (VTOS) is focused on the provision of courses for the unemployed who are over twenty-one and have been receiving social welfare payments. VTOS provides free of charge modular labour market oriented courses which are certified by FETAC. About 5500 participants were enrolled in these courses in 2004.

- The **Back to Education Initiative** is aimed at young people and adults. This scheme is offered on a part-time basis, enabling people to combine education and training with other commitments. A scheme of free tuition and reduced fees applies.

- **Traveller Training Centres** address the unique set of challenges and perspectives of the travelling community. Further details about these and other specialised programmes and initiatives are available on the Department of Education and Science website.

**Vocational Teachers**

Teachers of general and of specialist subjects in Vocational Schools, Community Colleges, Community & Comprehensive Schools, Institutes of Technology, Further Education and other specialist areas must be graduates of the Colleges of Education, which are devoted predominantly to teacher education of primary and post-primary and are closely linked to universities either as Recognised Colleges or as Associated Colleges. Accordingly, their academic and quality assurance procedures come within the university framework and follow its

8 Travellers are widely recognised as a specific ethnic and cultural sub group within Irish society, a group which encounters severe discrimination in many areas.

9 www.education.ie
patterns. One example of how these colleges have been upgraded is Thomond College of Education which, in the past, trained teachers of physical education, metalwork, rural science and woodwork. Since 1991, the College has been integrated into the University of Limerick and now forms the Department of Educational and Professional Studies at the university. Details of in-service training and professional development, including a special programme of ongoing teacher and principal support can be accessed on the Teacher Education page on the DES website. Teachers are also assisted in the introduction of new curricula, subjects and syllabuses by the work of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. Teachers and lecturers in Vocational Schools, Community Colleges, Community & Comprehensive Schools, Institutes of Technology, Further Education and other specialist areas are represented by the Teachers’ Union of Ireland at salary and work condition negotiations with Government as part of the national wage agreement process.

3.3 Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

Ireland has developed significant institutional capacity to analyse, monitor and evaluate the outcomes of the education system. A range of mechanisms have been put in place through a number of autonomous organisations and institutions to ensure that transparency, equality and access are assured. Governance arrangements for these autonomous organisations include teachers, employers, students, government and professional experts.

3.3.1 The National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), developed by the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland, (NQAI) facilitates progression through different levels and forms of learning from schools to the work place, and from further to higher education and training. The Framework includes awards made by the Further Education Training Awards Council (FETAC) and the Higher Education Training and Awards Council (HETAC). It also includes awards made by the universities at Levels 7-10. Based on the guiding principles of access, transfer, progression and quality, the Framework aims to provide a comprehensive pattern of awards whereby all certificated study and approved learning experiences are accredited in a way which maximises the opportunities for citizens to engage progressively in education and training on a life time basis. The NFQ comprises ten levels of qualifications, with each level based on nationally agreed standards, skills and competence. These standards define the learning outcomes to be achieved by learners seeking qualifications at each level. The ten levels include qualifications gained in settings from schools, to places of work, the community, training centres and to colleges and universities, from the most basic to the most advanced levels of learning.

The outcomes-based nature of qualifications in the framework is a significant change from the input-based (e.g. time served) nature of many existing qualifications. Competencies acquired on the job?

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10 www.nfq.ie
3.3.2 National Qualifications Authority of Ireland

The Qualifications (Education and Training) Act was enacted in 1999 to rationalize the system of awarding qualifications in Ireland. This Act established the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI), the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC), and the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC). These latter councils absorbed the work of, inter alia, the National Council for Vocational Awards which had been charged with setting, monitoring and certifying standards in vocational education and training in Ireland together with a range of other existing award agencies. In essence, it is the National Qualifications Authority that has the responsibility for all certified awards and qualifications in the non-university sector. In a lifelong learning era it is considered that issues of access, credits, equivalence, certification should be clear for all citizens and a seamless web exist for learners throughout their lives to have the maximum opportunity for access to and certification of educational endeavours. In promoting its work the NQAI is seeking to promote a culture change whereby the emphasis is placed on the outcomes of the programmes as achieved by the learner. In its overall emphasis on access, transfer and progression for learners the NQAI is likely to be regarded as a historic milestone in promoting lifelong learning within Ireland.

3.3.3 Curriculum and Assessment

Throughout the 1980s, the issue of curricular reform, with its associated pedagogic and assessment concerns was a key area of policy attention in Ireland. The reform agenda was undertaken by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), an advisory body to the Minister for Education, statutorily established by the Education Act of 1998. Today, the NCCA is committed to improving the quality of education through continuous review of curriculum and assessment provision. Its role is to lead developments in curriculum and
assessment and to support the implementation of changes resulting from this work. In seeking to promote an innovative and creative environment for all learners in schools and other educational settings, the NCCA works in partnership with all stakeholders.

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**National Council for Curriculum and Assessment**

“The NCCA will play a key role in providing an education system of the highest quality for learners to enable them to realise their full potential and to equip them for successful participation in, and contribution to, economic and civil society, and in so doing promoting the growth of a learning society”

The NCCA is active in the following five key areas:

1. planning curriculum and assessment initiatives
2. consulting with all key partner organisations
3. supporting the change process in schools
4. reviewing the experiences of the implementation of curriculum and assessment change
5. informing about developments in curriculum and assessment.

Funding for the NCCA is by way of a grant from the Department of Education and Science. Additional project specific funding is sourced from a range of organisations and agencies.

The work of the NCCA is carried out by a small executive staff. To progress and support its work, the Council has a range of sub-committees. These committees are made up of representatives of the Department of Education and Science and State Examinations Commission, teacher unions and school managerial bodies, parent organisations, subject associations and higher education interests including universities and other colleges.

The Council of the NCCA is a representative structure consisting of 25 members appointed by the Minister for Education and Science for a three-year term. The members represent teachers, school managers, parents, business, trade unions and other educational interests. Membership of the Council also includes representatives of the Department of Education and Science, the State Examinations Commission and one nominee of the Minister.

www.ncca.ie/

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3.3.4. School Improvement

Schools take much of the responsibility improve learning and teaching through self evaluation. Working closely with the NQAI, the NCCA, the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) and other agencies, the DES Schools’ Inspectorate is also closely involved with many of the initiatives to improve the quality of teaching and learning at first and second levels.
3.3.5. State Examinations Commission

The State Examinations Commission, a statutory body established in 2003, is responsible for the development, assessment, accreditation and certification of the second-level examinations of the Irish state: the Junior Certificate and the Leaving Certificate. The State Examinations Commission is a non-departmental public body under the aegis of the Department of Education and Science. The organisation is staffed by civil servants and there are five Commissioners appointed by the Minister for Education and Science.

The organisation is staffed by civil servants and there are five Commissioners appointed by the Minister for Education and Science.

The Commission deals with the provision and quality of the Irish State Examinations and is committed to working in partnership with school authorities and education providers in order to deliver a high quality examination and assessment system that is efficient, fair and accessible and to ensure that the system is operated in an environment of openness, transparency and accountability. The Commission is responsible for the operation of all aspects of the established Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme, Leaving Certificate Applied and Junior Certificate Examinations including written, oral, aural and practical components and assessed course work in some subjects. Two million components are examined annually. It also organises certain trade and professional examinations. Individual functions include: the preparation of examination papers and other examination materials; arrangements for the secure drafting, marking, administering and supervising of examinations and for marking work presented for assessment and examination; issuing examination results and determining review and appeal procedures.

Impressive on-line services are among a number of technology-based initiatives introduced in recent years to improve the efficiency and safeguard the security of the examination process, thus ensuring that the examination process is effective, open and transparent. At the heart of this is providing candidates with access to past examination papers, marking schemes and their own examination scripts and providing detailed information on each step of the process. Last year, more than 24,000 Irish students used the Results Service to access their results from over 40 different countries.

3. 4. Vocational education and training systems

FÁS, the Irish Training and Employment Authority, was established in January 1988 to provide a wide range of services to the labour market in Ireland. Its main functions are to organize community employment schemes and job placement and guidance services; assist community groups and workers’ co-operatives in the creation of jobs; and provide specific skills training and re-training, including apprenticeship training. FÁS trains approximately 33,000 unemployed/job-seekers and new labour market entrants annually both in its own network of training centres which are located all over Ireland as well as through contracts to private providers. This comprises 17,000 persons receiving skills or occupationally specific training, with the remainder attending more generic or foundation courses. In relation to the former category, this includes about 8,000 apprentices (primarily in construction and almost exclusively male), 2,000 traineeships (many in healthcare/childcare) and 7,000 specific skills courses (across a wide range of areas with a particular concentration on computer and engineering skills.

11 www.examinations.ie
Failte builds human resource capability in the tourist industry through its own training network of outreach centres. Teagasc provides research, training and advice for the agri-business sector. As both Failte and Teagasc are providers of post secondary training, they are beyond the scope of this paper.

### Apprenticeship Training in Ireland

Apprenticeship is the recognised means by which people are trained to become craftspeople in Ireland. The main craft trades (26 in all) have been designated by FÁS and come within the scope of the Statutory Apprenticeship system, which is organised in Ireland by FÁS in co-operation with the Department of Education and Science, employers and unions. Apprenticeship is a demand-driven, workplace and classroom, educational and training programme for employed people aimed at developing the skills of the apprentice to meet the needs of industry and the labour market. The curriculum for each apprenticeship programme is based on uniform, pre-specified standards which are agreed and determined by industry. The apprenticeship cycle is deemed to be complete when an apprentice has completed all of the alternating on-the-job and off-the-job phases of their apprenticeship, within the minimum timeframe from the date of registration, as well as achieving the qualifying standard throughout their apprenticeship. Successful completion of the apprenticeship is a compulsory requirement in order to be awarded the FETAC Advanced Certificate (NFQ Level 6) which is recognised internationally as the requirement for craftsman status. More than 8000 persons registered for apprenticeship training in 2004.

www.FÁS.ie/en/Training/Apprenticeships

### 3.5 Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC)

FETAC is the national awarding body for further education and training in Ireland and was established by the Minister of Education and Science in 2001. FETAC’s mission is to make quality assured awards in accordance with national standards within the NFQ creating opportunities for all learners in further education and training to have their achievements recognised and providing access to systematic progression pathways. FETAC gives people the opportunity to gain recognition for learning in education or training centres, in the workplace and in the community. It validates, monitors and ensures the quality of programmes and determines standards. Programmes leading to FETAC awards are offered nationwide by a wide range of providers in diverse settings, including FÁS, CERT, Teagasc, the Irish Fisheries Board, VECs, adult and community education and training centres, Institutes of Technology and in the workplace.
4. Outcomes

- **OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)** In the PISA 2003 tests, Irish 15 year-olds were ranked 7th out of 40 in terms of reading literacy, which was more or less equivalent to the PISA 2000 test.\(^{12}\) It must, however, be noted that this satisfactory result is based on a mean score which disguises a wide variation in capability among Irish 15 year-olds. In PISA 2003 mathematical literacy, Ireland’s score is more than one standard deviation below the average score obtained by the five best performers (Canada, Japan, Finland, Korea and the Netherlands)\(^ {13}\) This score of 20th out of 40 countries for mathematical literacy of 15 year-olds (again based on average scores) is particularly unsatisfactory and the variation in performance is even more disquieting. Ireland’s PISA 2003 ranking of 16th out of 40 countries for the scientific literacy of its 15 year-olds, based on average score, is also unsatisfactory.

- **Secondary Graduation Rates**: the proportion of school leavers who sat the Leaving Cert was 66 percent in 1982 increasing to 80 percent in 1993, and to 82 percent in 2002. In spite of the attribution of a 90 percent retention rate by OECD in Education at a Glance, 2006, placing Ireland fourth after Norway, Germany, Korea, and Israel,\(^ {14}\) actual retention rates have been obstinately slow to rise although by 2006 they are showing some improvement.\(^ {15}\) One area of concern remains the high number of boys (30 percent) who drop out of the secondary system before commencing a Leaving Certificate course of study. It is likely that many of these boys enrol in apprenticeships or other forms of further education and training. Of the 27,816 apprentices registered with FÁS on the 31st of December 2004, 11,515 (41.4%), were between the ages of 16 and 20 and 99.6 percent of these were male.\(^ {16}\) There are estimates “that 25 percent of young men now pursue further education and training by enrolling in apprenticeship programmes.”\(^ {17}\)

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\(^{12}\) In the PISA 2003 reading assessment, the proportion of Irish pupils registering poor performance dropped to 11.0 percent. Se Sí page 61

\(^{13}\) OECD (2004), *Learning for Tomorrow’s World: First Results from PISA 2003*.

\(^{14}\) OECD Education at a Glance, 2006, Indicator A2 showing the output of upper secondary school age that follows and successfully completes upper secondary programmes for the first time; the figures are based on 2004 data showing an average retention rate of 82 percent.

\(^{15}\) See DES, Report on Retention of Pupils in Post-Primary Schools

\(^{16}\) 2004 FAS Annual Report, quoted in Sé Sí, Gender in Irish Education Department of Education and Science, 2007, Appendix 6, page 305

\(^{17}\) I am indebted to Dr. Muiris O’Connor of the Higher Education Authority for information on the complex issues of retention rates in both Irish and International contexts. See Sé Sí, Gender in Irish Education Department of Education and Science, 2007, pp 32-40 and 106-107.
By 2005, 86.1 per cent of the population, aged 20-24 have completed upper secondary education or equivalent (NFQ levels 4 and 5) – either through the Leaving Certificate or through alternate routes. Ireland currently performs well on this indicator, but lags the leading countries such as Norway which have retention rates of up to 96.3 percent. However, performance in mathematics and science at Leaving Certificate level continues to be weak, although there is emerging evidence of an improving trend in science in the Lower Certificate examinations in 2007.

Increased Participation Rates in tertiary education: 55 percent for both sexes

Tertiary Graduation and Survival Rates: Between 2000 and 2004, graduation rates in Ireland increased by about 6 percent. The highest tertiary-type A (traditional university degrees) “survival rates” are reported by Ireland, Japan and Korea. The proportion of persons aged 25-34 in Ireland with 3rd level education rose from 27.1 percent in 1999 to 39.4 percent in 2004. The corresponding EU 25 rate in 2004 was 24.8 percent.

Completion rates for degree programmes are satisfactory at 83 per cent for university degree programmes for both genders and 87 percent for institutes of technology degree programmes. However, completion rates for certificate and diploma level courses (70 per cent) and apprenticeship programmes (72 percent) are comparatively low.

While Ireland still had the second lowest unemployment rate in the EU in 2004 at less than half of the EU 25 average, the overall unemployment rate increased from a low point of 3.6 percent in 2001 to 4.4 percent in 2004. The unemployment rate for early school leavers aged 18-24 was 21.8 percent in 2004 compared with an unemployment rate of 7.9 percent for all persons aged 18-24.

Since joining the EU in 1973, Ireland has developed considerable capacity both within the DES and FAS to utilize European Social Funds efficiently and effectively with excellent results for a range of courses, notably Youthreach and Pre-Employment Programmes.

The availability of a well educated and trained workforce has contributed to foreign direct investment in Ireland. Employer surveys among multinational companies have indicated high rates of satisfaction with the job performance of school leavers and higher education graduates. In the World Competitiveness Yearbook 2006, Ireland is ranked 13th out of 61 in terms of the availability of skilled labour, 5th out of 61 in terms of the

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19 HEA, Who Went to College, 2004
20 OECD Education at a Glance, 2006, Indicator A 3
21 Who Went to College in 2004? A National Survey of New Entrants to higher Education, The rate was calculated by taking the number of new entrants to higher education in 2004 as a proportion of the age population cohort from which 70 percent - 80 percent of new entrants are drawn (this was 17-19 year olds in 2004).
22 For more detail on completion rates and for sources of data, see Tomorrow’s Skills: towards a National Skills Strategy. Section 4, skillsstrategy.ie
availability of financial skills and 7th out of 61 in terms of the availability of competent senior managers.  

- A substantial capacity for evidence based education policy making has been developed across a wide range of institutions in Ireland, including, inter alia, the DES, ESRI, HEA, NCCA, FÁS and the NFQ. The governance of these institutions with Boards composed of stakeholders including students, employers and teachers, has ensured that there is wide consultation and broad dissemination of the results of the education and training reforms.

- The creation of a logical and transparent Qualifications Framework has improved access for learners and facilitates a skills continuum whereby additional experience, education and training can be acquired to meet demand. Wide recognition of learning outcomes benefits national and international mobility and ensures that students, their parents and teachers are aware of the value of each course of study.

- A process of continuous Curriculum and Assessment reviews with input from all stakeholders together with a well developed range of Monitoring and Evaluation mechanisms contribute to the relevance and efficiency of the system.

5. Challenges

- Ireland is expected to continue to reap the benefits of population growth for the next decade or so; the population is forecast to exceed 5.3 million in 2020, from its current level of 4.25 million. Rising numbers throughout the education system will pose a challenge for investment, teacher training and schools’ infrastructure, something that is already severely testing the primary school sector. The labour force is also expected to grow rapidly at an average rate of 2.2 percent per annum up to 2015, and at a slightly slower rate thereafter. While migratory flows from Central Europe remain strong they have begun to moderate since peaking towards the end of 2006. The August 2007 employment forecast of FÁS and the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) predicts that net migration will halve from 60,000 this year to 30,000 in 2008, the majority of these continuing to arrive from Poland. The average unemployment rate is likely to remain below 5 percent for 2008 as inward-migration slows, while the numbers unemployed are forecast to rise from 99,000 in 2007 to 110,000 in 2008.

- The FÁS/ESRI report forecasts that the labour market in Ireland over the next five years will require occupations with high levels of skills and qualifications. In contrast, the prospects for jobs requiring few skills are relatively poor. This will also be true of early

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23 [http://www02.imd.ch/documents/wcc/content/overallgraph.pdf](http://www02.imd.ch/documents/wcc/content/overallgraph.pdf)

24 “The Expert Group believes that the NFQ is a vital tool in progressing the development of skills for a knowledge economy in Ireland and that the availability of data based on the NFQ is of the utmost importance”

25 *Occupational Employment Forecasts 2012* by Dr. Pete Lunn, Ms. Nicola Doyle and Prof. Gerard Hughes is a joint FÁS/ESRI publication. August 2, 2007. FÁS.ie
school leavers who will find it difficult to access their first employment; it will also affect those in employment with low skills who do not keep pace with changing skills requirements and are forced to transition between employments. These forecasts bear out the need for a continued emphasis on science and technology within the Irish education and training systems.

- Ireland's international trade competitiveness has deteriorated since 2000, mainly due to higher inflation and an appreciating euro. Cumulative inflation in Ireland over the period 2000-2004 was 16 percent compared to an EU 25 average of 9 percent. In 2007, inflation continues to increase.

- Furthermore, Ireland is significantly behind the EU leaders, Sweden and Finland, in innovation and technology indicators such as investment in research and technology and new patent applications.

- Irish expenditure on education continues to lag behind average EU and OECD performance. In 2003, OECD average expenditure on educational institutions relative to GDP was 5.4 percent. In the same year, Ireland’s average expenditure was below 4.5 percent. Expenditure shortfalls are greatest at primary and upper secondary levels (for example, $4,760 per primary school pupil compared to $5,400 in the US). It should be noted that Ireland’s performance would improve (though would continue to lag the OECD average) if GNP was used rather than GDP.

- It seems likely that, after retention rates plateaued for ten years, by 2005 about 86 percent of 20-24 year olds had achieved at least upper second-level. However, raising this number by another 6 percent as part of the national skills enhancement strategy discussed below in Section 6, will be a difficult challenge. One constraint is the large number of boys going into apprenticeship at the age of 16 or 17 where, the focus on learning a trade with its associated theoretical subjects reduces the focus on the broader generic skills needed for individual development. Combined with the lower take up proportionally of academic secondary education discussed in Section 3 above, this is a potentially serious issue for the future of Irish second level graduates in a knowledge society.

- Scientific and mathematical literacy performance is inconsistent with the Government’s stated national objective of transitioning to a knowledge-based, innovation-driven economy. A further cause for concern in relation to the future stock of mathematical and scientific capability is the sharp decline in the proportion of candidates taking higher-level mathematics and science papers in the Leaving Certificate examination in recent years, a trend that is confirmed in 2007.

- High levels of non-completion amongst Youthreach and FÁS Community Training Workshops participants are a source of concern.

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26 Education at a Glance 2006. Table B2 1a
Ireland’s participation rate in continuing learning is relatively poor. Only 14 percent of 25-64 year-olds in Ireland were engaged in non-formal education and training in 2002, compared with 16.5 percent in the EU25 and 34.5 percent in the UK.

6 Implications for the Education and Training System

In its National Development Plan for 2007-2013, the Irish Government, mindful of the fact that labour productivity will be the key determinant of economic growth, remains determined that Ireland should continue to build on the educational strengths and outcomes achieved to date and targets €25.8 billion for human capital. The Expert Skills Group, which is spearheaded by the Department (Ministry) of Enterprise, Trade and Employment – not Education - is charged with reporting on what needs to be done to ensure that the education and training system continues to support the social, economic and innovative successes achieved to date and that the Irish workforce will sufficiently trained and educated to be able to respond flexibly and creatively to the challenges of globalisation. The EGFSN, mindful that innovation and productivity are the main drivers when it comes to the identification of future skills' needs, has laid out a detailed programme with measurable targets, benchmarks and estimated costs, a summary of which follows.

Specific targets to be achieved by 2020 and relevant to the focus of this paper include:

- **Increase retention** from 82 percent to 90 percent at Leaving Certificate Level;

- **Raise the proportion of the workforce with NFQ level 4 or 5 awards to 94%**, either through completion of Leaving Certificate or through equivalent more vocationally oriented programmes. In order to achieve this target, an additional 500,000 individuals within the workforce will need to progress by at least one NFQ level. Specifically, the skills of 70,000 individuals will have to be raised from NFQ levels 1 and 2 to level 3; 260,000 up to levels 4 and 5; and 170,000 to levels 6 to 10. In order to achieve this target, it is recommended that “In particular, consideration should be given to the strengthening of vocational options for students within the formal upper secondary level system and leading to level 4 or 5 qualifications.”

- **Raise progression from secondary school to higher education** from 55 percent in 2004 to 72 percent.

- Providers of Youthreach and FÁS Community Training Workshops should strive to ensure that all courses designed to accommodate students who do not complete upper secondary education lead to a qualification within the National Framework of Qualifications and lead to certification, ideally at levels 4 & 5.

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Skills for the Future : A One Step Up Approach

A One-Step-Up approach needs to involve a wide range of providers including Universities, Institutes of Technology, Vocational Education Committees, Skillsnet, FÁS and other development agencies and education providers. The initiative should be communicated clearly to all key stakeholders, and should incorporate the following key elements:

- Systematic identification of the needs of individuals and enterprises;
- Flexible and responsive training provision;
- A high profile National Media Awareness Campaign;
- An accreditation/quality assurance system; and
- Adequate funding.

All occupations are becoming more knowledge-intensive, with a corresponding rise in the requirement for qualifications and technical skills. Employees will be required to acquire a range of generic and transferable skills and attitudes. In most cases, work is becoming less routine, with a requirement for flexibility, continuous learning, and individual initiative and judgement. The Expert Group concludes that the following should be included in a generic skills portfolio:

- Basic/fundamental skills — such as literacy, numeracy, IT literacy;
- People-related skills — such as communication, interpersonal, team-working and customer-service skills; and
- Conceptual/thinking skills — such as collecting and organising information, problem-solving, planning and organising, learning-to-learn skills, innovation and creativity skills, systematic thinking.

The variety of levels and intensity with which any of these skills might be required will vary, depending on the job. Furthermore, other skills such as scientific literacy, enterprise skills and possibly broader citizenship skills might also be included in any essential generic skills set. There are initiatives already underway which will assist in developing generic skill competency. These initiatives comprise the inclusion of generic skills as a measured output at various levels in the NFQ and through the development of new curricula within which generic skills are embedded by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).

skillsstrategy.ie

These targets will impose considerable stress on the capacity of the education system to respond. Issues such as infrastructure (already a major problem at primary level in some parts of the country), the number and quality of teachers, the provision of adequate counselling and guidance services and the availability of relevant work experience opportunities are already looming for the post primary sector.

Moreover, the cost of the proposed upskilling to levels 3, 4 and 5 is estimated over a thirteen year period at €153 million per annum; the cost of upskilling at higher levels is estimated over a thirteen year period at €304 million per annum.
7 Lessons Learned

While the institutional and programmatic changes in the provision of vocational education in Ireland imply some mission drift towards the traditional secondary school model, it is true to say that both the Vocational and C&C schools are comfortable with their mission. Because, together with FÁS, these schools have been so competent in attracting matching finance from the European Social Funds for pre-employment and labour market relevant programmes, they are regarded as very successful in modern Ireland. Moreover, the range of technical and socially oriented programmes on offer responds well to the realities of an economy that has moved rapidly from an agricultural to a post industrial society (with very little manufacturing in between).

A key lesson learned is that improvements in education and training are never likely to yield quick results. However, a cohesive approach through national consensus building with all stakeholders involved has been a very successful approach to implementing education reform and modernisation in Ireland. Although there were changes of Government during the 1990s in Ireland, there was agreement and continuity among education and non education stakeholders about the vision, strategy and main policy agenda that had been developed using the consultative process discussed above. Because teachers and school management had been continually involved in decision making, there was no real resistance to these reforms when they were subsequently embodied in the legal framework.

8 Conclusion

Although Ireland has good and flexible vocational education provision with strong labour market linkages, the need to maintain competitiveness and to improve innovative capacity, while enhancing the skill level of the working population, presents a substantial challenge. We have seen that the labour market will require employees with broad, transferable skills with a good grounding in mathematics and science. The implication for the education and training system is that there will be a perpetual need to revise curricula and to keep teachers trained and up to date and capable of imparting constantly changing specific skills as the need arises. Without a doubt the policy making capacity and vision for the future exists as does the detailed mapping of the way forward. What will be required will be sustained and increased investment in the educational and training infrastructure for the foreseeable future.
Note that infant classes correspond to Pre-Primary in the International Standard Classification of Education.
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