

**DESCRIPTION OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND
TRAINING IN IRELAND**

**D. Harper
R. Fox
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THEME 1 – General Policy context – framework for the knowledge society

1.1 Socio-Cultural Context

Ireland is a parliamentary democracy. The National Parliament (Oireachtas) consists of the President and two houses; a House of Representatives (Dail Eireann) and a Senate (Seanad). All laws passed by the Oireachtas must conform to the Irish Constitution. The President must sign all legislation for it to become law.

Responsibility for education and training lies with government ministries (known as departments). However in the case of certain education and training organisations, control has been developed to regional or local areas. A number of local and community structures have been established in recent years which allow relevant groups to influence the education and training authorities.

Ireland has been a member of the European Community since 1973 and there continues to be strong support for EU membership in Ireland. Ireland was among the first group of the EU member states to form the EMU on January 1st 1999 and accepted the provisions of the Nice treaty in October 2002. Over the past 15 years a system of National Partnership has been in place involving Government, the Social Partners and other relevant interest groups. This has resulted in a series of three-year national agreements covering such issues as pay, taxation, social welfare and social policy. Currently, 'Sustaining Progress' agreed in 2003 provides a framework for continuing economic and social development.

1.2 Population

The total population of Ireland at April 2002 is estimated at 3.917 million. That represents an increase of 290,000 since 1996 and 391,000 since 1991. The population density of Ireland is 51 per square kilometre. The major centre of population in Ireland is Dublin city and country with 1.1 million inhabitants. The other major cities are Cork (123,000) and Limerick (54,000).

The 2002 population was the highest level of population since 1871. Ireland has traditionally had a high level of population growth due to a high birth rate. However, this growth has been lessened or even made negative by high levels of emigration. The number of births fell in the 1980s and coupled with high levels of emigration resulted in a drop in the average annual natural increase between 1981-1996. There has been a slight increase in the birth rate since the mid 1990s and a marked decrease in emigration resulting in the significant rise in the population since 1996. The number over 65 years makes up 11% of the total population, but this is set to increase in the future as the Irish population starts to age. Table1 shows the demographic trends by age up to 2025. The number in the 0-24 age group is expected to fall by 52,000 while the number aged 65 and over is expected to increase by 308,000, leading to a significant ageing of the population.

Table 1
Demographic Trends by Age 2001-2025

Age-Group	2001	2025	Change
0-24	1,479,000	1,427,000	-52,000
25-64	1,922,000	2,402,000	+480,000
65+	426,000	734,000	+308,000
Total	3,827,000	4,563,000	+736,000

Source: ESRI

1.3 Economy, Labour Force and Unemployment

The Irish economy has experienced very strong growth over the last decade. GDP in 2002 is estimate to have been €127,550m. This is a rise of 7% over 2001 and follows increases of 11.2% in 2001 and 14.6% in the year 2000 (see Table 2). Irish GDP in real terms in 2002 is 80% higher than in 1996. Inflation has been above the EU average and was 4.5% in 2002. Overall, prices have risen by 36.4% since 1991.

Table 2
GDP 1991-2002

Year	GDP at Current Market Prices (€m)	Inflation Index	GDP at Constant (1991) Market Prices (€m)
1991	€36,311	100	€36,311
1996	€58,080	111.5	€52,090
2001	€114,479	130.5	€87,723
2002	€127,550	136.4	€93,512

Source: CSO, Central Bank Quarterly Bulletin Spring 2002.

Irish GDP per capita (at market prices) in 2002 is forecast to be €32,563 and will have risen by 33% in real terms since 1998. In 2002 Ireland is forecast to have a positive trade balance in goods and services of €23.4 billion (18.3%) of GDP. In 2001 agriculture, manufacturing, and services accounted for 4.8%, 44.1% and 51.1% of the economy respectively. The employment breakdown by sector is given below in Table 3.

Table 3
Employment in April in Thousands

Section	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Agriculture	131	129	130	123	121	120
Industry	412	430	488	504	494	492
Services	852	880	1075	1114	1150	1154
Total	1395	1439	1692	1741	1765	1766

Source: Quarterly National Household Survey 2002 and ESRI Quarterly Economic Commentary

Table 3 shows the numbers employed from 1998 to 2002 and forecasts for 2003. Employment rose over the period 1998 – 2002 by 370,000 (26.5%). However, the rate of growth in employment has slowed in the years 2001 and 2002. In the fourth quarter of 2002 there were 1.771 million persons in employment, an annual increase of 17,800. The employment rate in 2002 was 65.0%. The male employment rate was 74.9% while the female employment rate was 55%. Public Sector employment accounted for almost all of this annual increase. There was, however, a sharp decline in industrial employment which was down 15,800 in the year. The only occupational category to experience a decline in employment was plant and machine operatives (-16,600). That a decline occurred in this category is hardly surprising given the fall in industrial employment.

The largest occupational increases were for professionals (+12,500), personal and protective services (+7,500) and for craft and related workers (+5,300). Female employment rose by 10,200 while male employment increased by 7,600.

The latest available labour force figure for the EU shows that employment grew by 1.1% between the second quarters of 2000 and 2001. This is lower than the 2.8% increase in Ireland for the same period. The Irish employment growth rate in the year to the second quarter of 2002 was 1.9%.

Until comparatively recently Ireland's unemployment rate was one of the highest in the European Union. However, as Table 4 shows it fell rapidly in recent years. The unemployment rate was 4.4% in 2002. The male unemployment rate was 4.8% slightly higher than the female rate of 4.2%. In most European countries the female rate tends to be higher. The under-25 age group had an unemployment rate of 8.5%. The slight increase in unemployment since 2001 is forecast to continue into 2003 with unemployment (ILO definition) expected to reach 100,000 before the end of the year.

Table 4
Unemployment Trends and Forecasts 000's

	Live Register	LFS Unemployed	% Unemployed ILO Basis
1998	234	160	9.3
1999	220	148	8.3
2000	156	76	4.3
2001	142	71	3.9
2002	163	82	4.4
2003	186	100	5.5

Sources: ESRI Quarterly Economic Commentary Spring 2003, FAS Labour Market Quarterly Commentary March 2003.

Female participation in the labour force, which has traditionally been low, has seen marked improvement in recent years and stood at 47.5% in 2001¹ which is higher than the EU average of 47.0%. However, for women aged 25-54, the age group most likely to be in the Labour Force, the female participation rate was 66.0% compared to 72.6% for the EU.

¹ The EU female participation rate for 2002 is not yet available, so the 2001 Irish female participation rate is used for comparative purposes. The Irish female participation rate for 2002 was 48.8%

THEME 2 – Policy development – objectives, frameworks, mechanisms, priorities

2.1 Objectives and Priorities

Vocational education and training in Ireland is seen both in policy and structural terms as being one of the main pillars essential to the building and maintaining of a highly skilled work force operating within a knowledge society.

VET policy falls within the remit of several Government Departments (Ministries). No comprehensive statement of policy has been produced. Within the Education sector the two main developments in recent years were the White Paper on Adult Education 2000; *Learning for Life*, and the new national framework of qualifications. Within the labour market context, government policy on training has been set out in the annual Employment Action Plans developed in the context of the European Employment Guidelines. Ireland's three-year national partnership agreements, involving Government, social and community partners, have all included agreed policies in relation to education and training. In Partnership 2000 lifelong learning was given strong emphasis. In the subsequent agreement, the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness, this theme was developed considerably. This resulted in the Task Force on Lifelong Learning which reported in 2002.

Ireland's employment and human resource development programmes form a major part of the National Development Plan 2000-2006. The Employment and Human Resources Development Operational Programme (EHRDOP) sets out the range of programmes and services to be provided with the objective of promoting economic growth, improving access to employment opportunities, addressing skills and labour shortages and tackling social exclusion. . As well as the traditional goals of VET policy, the Programme emphasizes a number of horizontal objectives; rural development, poverty, the environment, equality and North South co-operation. Therefore, the Programme gives an additional focus to the achievement of results in these areas.

The most recent Programme for Government agreed by the coalition parties in 2002 makes a commitment to carrying out a fundamental review of training and employment supports to ensure that they focus on the needs of the most marginalized and disadvantaged groups to help them to progress to the open labour market. There is also a commitment to introduce new supports for those experiencing severe employability barriers including a training fund of up to €2,500 per person.

The New Deal – A Plan for Educational Opportunity launched by the Dept. of Education in 1999 sets out initiatives in a range of areas at every level of the system from early childhood through to adult literacy and third level education to take place over the period 2000-2002. Given the deadline of June 2006 for the implementation of the national framework of qualifications, and the range of groups contributing to the development of the debate on various aspects of vocational education and training policy, it is probable that over the next five years VET programmes and services will undergo further change in order to provide improved access, better progression and more transparent, and more transferable, accreditation.

The White Paper on Adult Education - *Learning for Life* was published in 2000 and the Report of the Task Force on Lifelong Learning was published in 2002. Together these two documents will act as key reference points in the decade ahead for all the stakeholders to continue the move towards co-ordination and coherence in vocational education and training and adult learning provision.

The White Paper reflected on the role of adult education in society and, in setting out principles, policies and strategies, built on the very wide consultation process which had followed the publication in 1998 of the Green Paper *Adult Education in an Era of Lifelong learning*. The policies outlined in the White Paper were complemented by the work of the *Task Force on Lifelong Learning* which was established by the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment in collaboration with the Department of Education and Science and reported in 2002. A total of eight Government Departments with responsibilities for education, sectoral training, welfare and social and community development policies were represented on the Task Force, as well as education, training, social partner, community and voluntary interests and industrial development agencies.

The focus of the Task Force on Lifelong Learning was on the labour market aspects of lifelong learning and concentrated on the key themes of:

- Developing and implementing a National Framework of Qualifications
- Ensuring Basic Skills for all
- Providing Comprehensive Guidance, Counselling and Information
- Addressing delivery, access and funding measures
- Providing better opportunities for workplace learning, and learning for workers.

Within the labour market context, Government priorities on training have been set out in the annual Employment Action Plans.

2.2 Framework and Mechanisms

Ireland is a parliamentary democracy. All laws passed by the parliament must conform to the Irish Constitution. Responsibility for publicly funded education and training lies with government ministries (known as departments). These act directly, or through publicly owned intermediaries.

The Minister of Education and Science is responsible for provision of vocational education and training (mainly initial, but also continuing) in schools and colleges at second level, and at further and higher education levels.

The Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment has responsibility for policies to upgrade the skills and competencies of the adult population within a framework of lifelong learning. These policies are implemented, inter alia, through FAS, the National Training and Employment Authority.

Other Ministers have responsibility for aspects of sectoral training, such as agriculture, fisheries, tourism. However, the central thrust of Government policy is to

support integrated working nationally and locally in the context of a social partnership model.

Policy implementation issues are addressed by Government Departments in consultation with the social partners. There are national fora to facilitate these processes which have supported enhanced collaboration between education, training, industry and community interests, and local structures (e.g. County/City Development Boards, Area Partnerships) to provide for integrated working at local level.

A number of changes in Ireland over the last decade have indicated the need for certain changes in the VET systems. These changes include:

- Flexible hours
- Provision for a wider age group
- Access at varying levels
- An integrated and transparent accreditation system of qualification

Over the past few years there have been a number of important developments. In 1999 the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act was passed. This Act led to the establishment of the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI). The main focus of this body is on establishing a national framework of qualifications for non-university education awards at further and higher level. The national qualifications structures include education, training, social partner, community and voluntary and learner interests. As part of this overall national framework two award Councils have been set up under the provisions of the Act; FETAC, the Further Education and Training Awards Council, and HETAC, the Higher Education and Training Awards Council. The role of these Councils at their respective levels is to determine the standards of knowledge and skill or competence to be acquired by learners for awards that they make. There are separate but interdependent roles for the Awards Councils and the Qualifications Authority under the Act. The role of the awards Councils is to develop policies and criteria for the making of further/higher education and training awards and the validation of programmes of further/higher education and training and to implement such policies. (More details are presented in Theme 8.)

In 2000 the National Rehabilitation Board was abolished and its non-vocational training activities were transferred to the Ministry of Health. Its vocational training and employment services for persons with a disability were mainstreamed and are now provided by FAS.

To further develop lifelong learning and adult education, a National Adult Learning Council has been established. Both the National Development Plan (2000-2006) and the National Employment Action Plan 2000 make provision for substantial funding to enhance educational and training opportunities and to make these more widely available e.g. expansion of part-time options across PLC, Youthreach and VTOS programmes. The National Employment Action Plan targets the long-term unemployed, and by assisting this group back to work it is hoped to address labour and skill shortages.

The National Training Fund Act 2000 set up a dedicated fund for those in employment and those who wish to take up employment. It is funded from a levy on employers (see Theme 10.1). To better align education and training provision to future skill needs, an Expert Group on Future Skill Needs was established comprising representatives from economic and educational interests. (see Theme 7.1).

The Equality Act 1998 extended equality legislation to cover nine categories of persons. An Equality Authority was established to address issues in this area. This has resulted in additional emphasis on equality issues in the education and training arena.

THEME 3 - Institutional Framework

3.1 Administrative framework

Outside the third level education sector, the principal providers of vocational education are the Vocational Education Committees (VECs) which are statutory bodies at county level, charged with responsibility for vocational and continuing education, and FAS, the National Training and Employment Authority. Other statutory providers include CERT (tourism training)² and Teagasc (agricultural training). These bodies are funded from the exchequer and some programmes receive assistance from the European Social Fund.

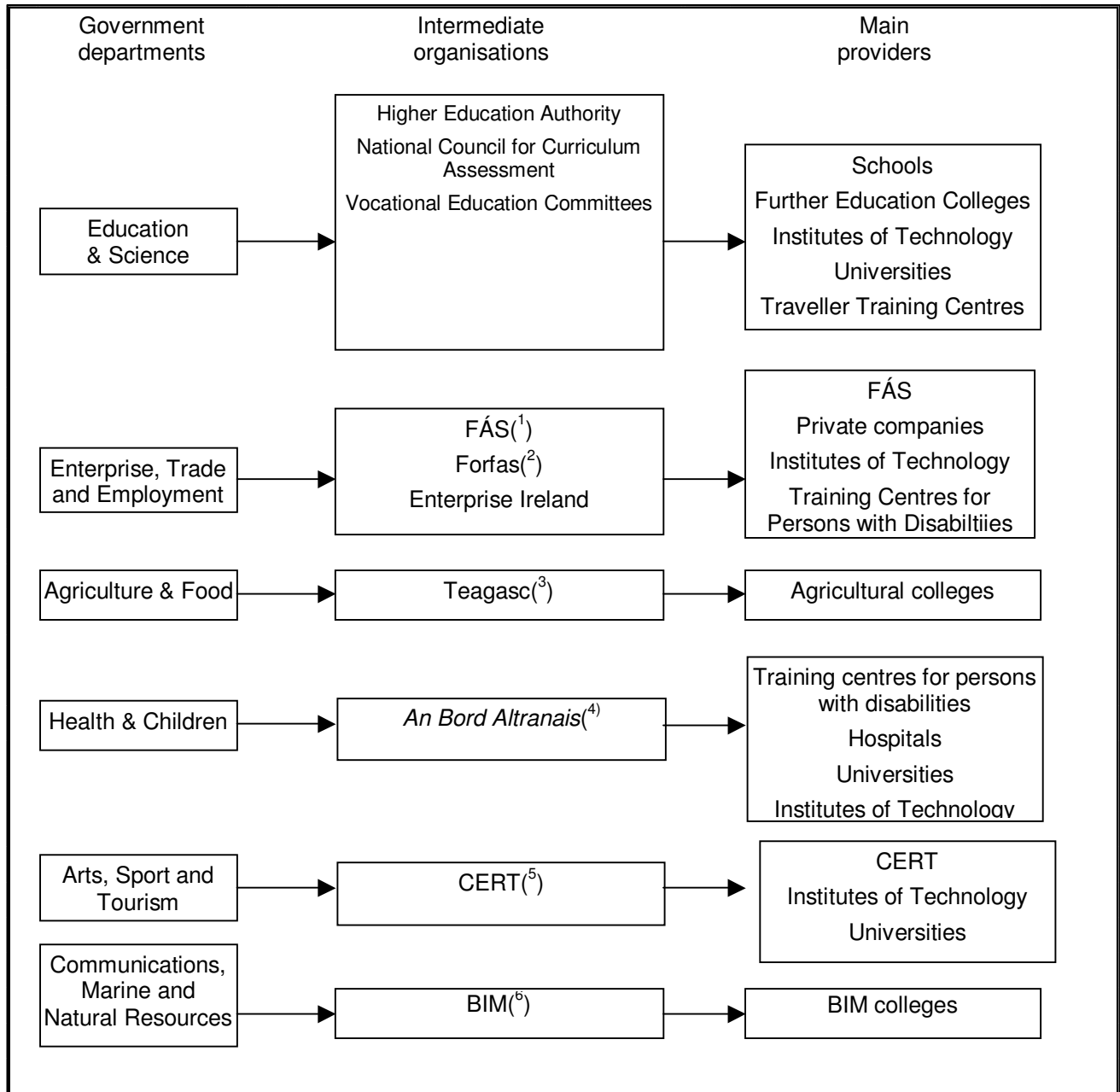
Vocational education and training is provided in a multiplicity of centres funded by the State either directly or through the intermediary bodies referred to above. These centres including universities, Institutes of Technology, Further Education Colleges, local (VEC) vocational education and training centres, Youthreach and Traveller Training Centres, FAS Community Training Workshops, dedicated sectoral training centres e.g. for agriculture, tourism. There is also a wide range of private providers which includes some private third level colleges and commercial training bodies. The vast majority of vocational education and training provision, however, is within the State sector.

Figure 1 summarises the position in respect of the main public VET bodies. The diagram indicates three levels: government departments which set policy and overall direction; intermediate organisations which may be involved in channelling funds or in other ways helping to implement government policy; and VET provider bodies.

² In June 2003 CERT was dissolved and incorporated into a new organisation called Failte Ireland.

Figure 1

Vocational education and training: administrative structure



Legend:

- (1) The Training & Employment Authority.
- (2) The National Policy Board for Enterprise, Trade, Science, Technology and Innovation.
- (3) Agriculture and Food Development Authority.
- (4) The Nursing Board
- (5) Council for Education, Recruitment, Training (Hotels, Catering and Tourism Industry), now Failte Ireland.
- (6) The Sea Fisheries Board

Role of Intermediary Bodies

The Higher Education Authority (HEA) is the statutory body responsible for the funding of universities and designated third-level education institutions. Its functions under the terms of the Higher Education Authority Act, 1971, include the development of third-level education to meet the needs of the community and to perform an advisory role in relation to all third-level education. Designated institutions are the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, the National College of Art and Design and the Royal Irish Academy. The teacher training colleges – Mary Immaculate College, Limerick and St. Patrick’s College Drumcondra are also funded through the HEA.

Vocational Education Committees operate in accordance with the provisions of the Vocational Education Act 1930 and Amendments, and provide a wide range of education, training and support services within local communities. These education and training programmes include second level, adult, community and second chance education, post-leaving certificate programmes, prison education, traveller education and a variety of E.U. funded and co-operative training programmes as well as supports for youth and sport and other activities.

State-sponsored bodies are publicly funded and ultimately accountable to the relevant minister. However, they are permitted autonomy in implementing government policy. In general, they are directed by a board, appointed by the relevant minister, who will often seek to ensure that the board is representative of the various interests involved.

As Ireland is not a large country, it does not in general have strong regional authorities. The vast majority of public decisions about VET, and the funding of public VET, are made through national bodies such as the Department of Education and Science, the Council for Education, Recruitment, Training (CERT) or FÁS. Vocational education committees (VECs) have statutorily defined autonomy to identify and meet local needs for vocational education. However, they also are reliant on national exchequer funding for the majority of their expenditure.

The major bodies in respect of the delivery of vocational training in Ireland are the VECs, the institutes of technology, FÁS and CERT (as well as enterprises themselves).

VECs (vocational education committees) are statutory committees of county councils and other local authorities. There is a VEC for each county and county borough in Ireland - 39 in total. They are responsible for technical and continuing education in their area and run vocational schools to meet their objectives. They are also involved with adult education and vocational training for unemployed people.

Institutes of technology are third-level institutions run by independent boards of management with a large element of funding and direction from the Ministry of Education. There are 14 institutes; their main function is the provision of initial vocational training for young persons.

Third level colleges have a specific remit to support industry and to provide for industry liaison and business innovation. Access Officers and national access measures are also provided to link colleges with the school system and local communities.

FÁS is the national training and employment authority. It has 20 training centres and also delivers training through subcontracting training providers. It provides initial vocational training, training for unemployed people and continuing vocational training. FAS published a new strategy 2002-2005 in 2001. This emphasized the key focus on improving the employability of persons in the Irish labour force, whether employed or unemployed, the need to give increased attention to persons at work and the importance of focusing on the most disadvantaged clients.

CERT (now Failte Ireland) is responsible for training and recruitment in the tourism industry. It provides either directly, or in cooperation with institutes of technology, initial vocational training, training for unemployed people and support for continuing training in the tourism sector. It has a small number of training centres but most training takes place in institutes of technology or at the workplace.

Bord Iasca Mhara (BIM) is the sea fisheries board. It provides training for the fishing industry. Teagasc is the state agency responsible for training in the agricultural sector, which also includes forestry.

The majority of publicly supported vocational training in Ireland relates to initial vocational training and training for unemployed people. However, different institutions have different levels of emphasis between the three main types of training; initial, unemployed and continuing. Figure 2 (copied from an earlier CEDEFOP report) presents an indicative overview of the relative importance of these types for different institutions. It also indicates whether the institutions deliver training directly or on a subcontracted basis.

Figure 2

Indicative overview of training institutions and types of training

Institution	Types			Delivery	
	Initial	Continuing	Unemployed	Direct	Contract
Second Level schools	XXX	X		*	
Vocational schools	XXX	X	X	*	
Institutes of Technology	XXX	X		*	
FÁS	XX	X	XXX	*	*
Agricultural colleges	XXX	X		*	
Training centres for disabilities	XX	X	XX	*	
CERT	XX	X	XX	*	*
BIM	XX	X	X	*	
Enterprises	X	XX		*	*
Private training bodies	X	XX			

Source- CEDEFOP Monograph: Vocational Education and Training in Ireland 1998.

Note: The 'Xs' show the relative concentration on different types of training by the organisations listed. The number of 'Xs' reflect the relative concentration within the organisation - not volumes between organisations. The asterisks indicate whether the activity is conducted through institutions directly, or through subcontracted facilities.

3.2 Legislative Framework

Legislation is important in respect of vocational training in Ireland: through the creation of publicly funded organizations to manage, advise on, or deliver vocational training; through providing the policy framework for public expenditure on vocational training; through establishing funding systems; and through creating regulations and certification. Legislation is the responsibility of the Irish parliament. In general, Ireland has followed the model of the United Kingdom whereby legislation provides the broad operational framework. This is then implemented through secondary legislation (detailed statutory instruments and ministerial orders.)

In respect of vocational training within the education system, the most important piece of legislation is the Vocational Education Act, 1930 and amendments. This led to the establishment of vocational education committees (VECs)

In respect of other vocational training, the most significant pieces of legislation relate to the establishment of a number of public bodies in the 1960s and early 1970s including AnCO (the Industrial Training Authority), CERT in respect of hotels and catering, ACOT in respect of agriculture, and other bodies relating to fishing and

nursing. At that time, as part of the establishment of AnCO in 1967, the first legislation requiring employers to be subject to a levy was made. In 1988 FAS, the national training and employment authority, was established. More recently, legislation in 1994 introduced a levy system to fund apprenticeship. However, this was replaced by the National Training Fund Act (2000).

The Education Act 1998 makes provision for the education of every person in the State, including any person with a disability or has other special educational needs, and to provide generally for primary, post-primary, adult and continuing education and vocational education and training. The Act makes specific provision for the promotion of opportunities for adults, in particular adults who as children did not avail of or benefit from education in schools, to avail of educational opportunities through adult and continuing education.

Another important legislative development was the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999, which set up structures for a national framework of qualifications. The Act came into full force in June 2001. Its main aims are to establish and develop standards of knowledge, skill and competence; promote the quality of further and higher education and training; provide a system for co-ordinating and comparing awards and promote access, transfer and progression for learners. The NQAI, HETAC and FETAC were set up under the provisions of the Act.

The Education Welfare Act, 2000 provides a framework for promoting regular school attendance and tackling problems of absenteeism and early school leaving. The Act forms an important part of Government Policy to reduce disadvantage in Irish society. Under the Act, the school leaving age has been raised to 16 years or the completion of the first three years post primary whichever is the later. The Act established a National Welfare Board employing education welfare officers throughout the country to encourage regular attendance at school. These officers concentrate on children at risk and those who are experiencing difficulties in school which might prove an impediment to attendance. The Act also makes specific provision for the continuing education and training of young people aged 16 and 17 years who have left school early to take up employment. These early school leavers will now register with the National Educational Welfare Board and will be assisted in availing of appropriate educational opportunities.

3.3 Role of the social partners

The social partners have been involved in vocational training for a long time. In general, their role as providers has been concentrated in training in industrial relations/human resources matters. In more recent years they have developed a role in the provision of vocational training on a pilot basis. This work is generally undertaken in order to popularise the idea of training in the workplace and is exemplified by the 'training awareness campaign' run jointly by ICTU (Irish Congress of Trade Unions) and IBEC (Irish Business and Employers Confederation) under the ADAPT programme.

The social partners have an established place in their representative capacity within those structures established by the State to meet the country's training needs. Specifically, the social partners have seats on the board of FÁS and on its advisory

bodies. It has been a major principle of the FÁS board and its committees that the social partners (employers and unions) have equal representation on them. The social partners are also members of the board of CERT, responsible for training in the catering/tourism industry, and Teagasc, in relation to training for agriculture. They also play an important role in relation to award bodies established under the Qualifications Act (1999).

Since 1987, Ireland has had a series of three-year ‘national partnership agreements’ covering a range of economic and social policy issues. These agreements have been negotiated by government and the social partners and provide overall policy objectives in a range of areas including vocational training. They do not have any legal standing but are nevertheless important in guiding policy development. Such agreements have included, for example, policies in relation to apprenticeship, the needs of early school leavers, persons with disabilities and long-term unemployed people. The last agreement (2000 – 2002) included a specific section on lifelong learning.

THEME 4 - Initial Education and Training

4.1 Background and Information on Attainment Levels

The Irish education system involves compulsory education from the ages of six to 16 inclusive. Primary education can be commenced from the age of 4.5 years and lasts for up to 8 years finishing at age 11-12. Secondary education lasts for 5-6 years with the three year Junior Cycle (or lower secondary) from 12 to 15 years (i.e. 3 years) and then a further 2-3 years for Senior Cycle (or upper secondary) education .

Free second-level education was introduced in the 1960's Up to that time the majority finished school with primary education only. However, participation levels at second-level have increased considerably since. Indeed over the last three decades there has been a very strong demand for second-level education. This, in turn, led to an increasing demand for third-level education.

The education system in Ireland is very broadly based. Schools can choose curricula from a menu of more than thirty subjects incorporating the civic, social, personal, cultural, academic and vocational dimensions. The increasing demand for higher levels of education has meant that the emphasis on academic performance and vocational relevance is also increasing.

Table 5 below shows the educational attainment of the Irish population compared to a number of countries. Despite the fact that the percentage of persons with lower secondary education is high the educational attainment of young people is increasing steadily.

Table 5
Educational Attainment of Population (25-64)

	Lower Sec.	Upper Sec.	Non University	University
Ireland	49	30	10	11
UK	18	57	8	17
Sweden	23	48	16	13
Germany	19	53	15	13
Italy	57	30	4	9
Spain	65	14	6	15
USA	13	51	8	27

Source: Education at a Glance, OECD, 2001, Table A2.1.a

Thus 79% of 25-64 year olds had obtained upper secondary education. In relation to third-level nearly 21% of 25-64 year olds had attained tertiary level education.

The number of persons in full-time education by ISCED level is shown in Table 6 below:

Table 6
Number of Persons in full-time Education
by ISCED Level

ISCED Level	Number
0	1,514
1	449,638
2	183,883
3	147,517
4	26,660
5B	39,673
5A	80,378
6	2,344
Total	931,607

Source: Dept. of Education, Statistical Report 1999/2000

4.2 Pre-Primary Education

Pre-primary attendance at school is not compulsory. Prior to the publication of the White Paper on Early Childhood Education most pre-school education was at the discretion of parents and generally had to be financed by them.

A number of programmes are provided for 3 year olds. The most extensive of these – the Early Start Pilot pre-school programme – was established in 1994. This one year programme for children aged three years aims to provide children who are most at risk of educational disadvantage with an educational programme to enhance their development and prevent failure at school.

There is also a considerable amount of pre primary education provision within local communities often part-funded from public funds and there is also a substantial private pre-school education sector which attracts tax incentives.

4.3 Primary Education

Primary education is free and lasts approximately 8 years. All pupils follow the same National Curriculum as set out by the Department of Education and Science. The aim of the curriculum is to develop the child as an individual and strong emphasis is placed on child-centred learning techniques. Pupils with special needs are largely integrated in primary schools with a small minority catered for in special schools or in special classes within primary schools. The main subjects taught at this level are reading, writing, arithmetic, Irish, English, history, music, art, drama geography and some science. Appropriate religious instruction is provided in line with the ethos of the school. There were 439,560 students attending primary education schools in 2000/2001.

4.4 Lower Secondary Education

The second level education sector comprises secondary, vocational, community and comprehensive schools. Voluntary secondary schools are privately owned and managed. The Trustees of the majority of these schools are religious communities or Boards of Governors. Vocational schools are administered by Vocational Education Committees while Community and Comprehensive schools are managed by Boards of Management composed of relevant community interests

Lower second level education (the Junior Cycle) consists of a three year programme from 12 to 15/16 years . The principal objective of the junior cycle is for students to complete a broad, balanced, and coherent curriculum composed of a variety of courses incorporating a core and optional areas of study The Junior Certificate examination is taken at the end of the junior cycle. This is a national state examination comprising written examination papers and relevant oral/aural and practical tests. Typically students sit the examination in seven to ten subjects including Irish, English, Mathematics, History and Geography. Schools provide a variety of additional subjects such as modern languages, art, music, home economics, materials technology (wood), woodwork, metalwork and technical graphics. All junior cycle students follow a social, personal and health education programme. Guidance and counselling is provided as well as Physical Education. There were 183,883 young persons attending the Junior Cycle in 1999/2000.

Most pupils proceed to Upper Secondary education (see Section 4.5). Another substantial number pursue an apprenticeship (see Section 4.6).

4.5 Upper Secondary Education

At the end of compulsory schooling, the majority of students proceed to upper secondary education (or the Senior Cycle). This consists of an (optional) Transition Year followed by one of three versions of the two-year Leaving Certificate programme.

The Transition Year programme is offered following completion of the Junior Cycle. It is a year of active learning which emphasises personal and interpersonal development, and experiential learning opportunities. The programme guidelines facilitate the school in developing its own curriculum to suit the needs and interests of the students who can also contribute to the development of the programme. Students are encouraged to explore and develop their own particular academic, leisure, career and vocational interests as well as greater personal, social and cultural awareness of school, community and wider issues.

The mission of Transition Year is to promote the personal, social, educational and vocational development of the students and to prepare them to participate as responsible members of society. The development of such a programme was restricted to a small number of schools for many years. Over the past 10 years, the programme concept has been greatly enlarged and extensively developed and supported by the Department of Education and Science. It is now taken by a majority of the student cohort and is offered by most second level schools. The Transition

Year remains optional, however, and some students prefer to directly proceed to one of the Leaving Certificate programmes.

There are three options within the Leaving Certificate:

- The traditional Leaving Certificate programme is taken by the majority of students. It is the accepted basis for entry into third level education, Colleges of Further and Higher Education institutions. The programme is of two years duration and the curriculum can be selected from an extensive range of subjects including languages, arts, humanities, sciences and technology. Typically, students take from 6 to 8 subjects in the Leaving Certificate examinations.
- The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) is a more vocationally-oriented version of the traditional Leaving Certificate containing vocational and enterprise education emphases. As with the traditional Leaving Certificate it is fully accepted as a basis for entry to third level.
- The Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme is a separate, distinct and innovative programme designed for those who do not wish to take the direct route to third level education.

The percentages of pupils studying these three options in 1999/2000 were Traditional (74%), Leaving Certificate Vocational (21%) and Leaving Certificate Applied (5%).

The LCVP is based on combinations of Leaving Certificate subjects and aims to provide students with the opportunity to engage in self-directed learning, and to promote innovation and enterprise. These objectives are largely achieved through the requirement to follow two activity-driven modules known as Link Modules – Enterprise Education, Preparation for the World of Work. The Link Modules are designed to develop:

- Communication skills, including ICT skills.
- Research and report writing.
- Teamworking, including interpersonal skills, listening skills, leadership and decision-making skills.

The use of active teaching and learning methodologies is encouraged across the LCVP curriculum. Experiences such as work placement, career investigation, mini-enterprise and business visits are an integral part of the programme. Vocational relevance is enhanced by putting in place opportunities for students to plan, organise and engage in active learning experiences both inside and outside the classroom.

In 2001, of the 54,499 students who completed the leaving Certificate, 12,354 or 23% completed the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.

The LCA focuses on preparing students for the transition from school to adult and working life. Key principles underlying the LCA are activity-based learning and teaching, and maximising the student's involvement with the local community. The programme differs from the traditional Leaving Certificate by being more practical, community based, work-oriented and task-centred. Continuous assessment is used as

the basis of about two-thirds of the final examination result, and those who successfully complete the programme are eligible for entry into a wide variety of Post-Leaving Certificate courses from which entry to third level may subsequently be gained if appropriate. The LCA does not provide direct entry to third level.

4.6 YOUTHREACH

Youthreach is a joint initiative between the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. The YOUTHREACH programme was introduced in 1989 and provides two years' integrated education, training and work experience for young people in the 15 to 20 year age group who have left school early without qualifications or vocational training. These comprise about 7% of the age cohort. The programme consists of two distinct phases:

- a Foundation Phase to help overcome learning difficulties, develop self-confidence and a range of competences essential for further learning; and
- a Progression Phase which provides more specific development through a range of education, training and work experience options.

Basic skills training, practical work training and general education are features of the programme and the application of new technology is integrated into all aspects of programme content. Courses are full-time, of 35 hours duration per week, and are available on a year-round basis. A training allowance is paid to participants. Training focuses on personal development with a strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy, work experience, and vocational skills. (e.g., hairdressing, catering, woodwork and metalwork) and new technology skills.

The programme is provided in over 100 locations throughout the country, in YOUTHREACH Centres run by Vocational Education Committees (VECs) and in Community Training Workshops funded by FAS. The programme is managed locally by the VECs and FAS regional management. This local orientation means that courses are responsive to the needs of participants, their communities and differing economic environments alike.

Under the Back to Education Initiative (Part-time options measure) arrangements are being made to introduce more flexible delivery options. At national level, the implementation of the Youthreach programme is monitored and co-ordinated by an inter-Departmental Committee representative of the Departments of Education and Enterprise and Employment and FAS. A joint Education/FAS working group is active in providing the back-up necessary to support the initiative.

The principle underpinning these alternative programmes is to make them different from the formal structure within the school system and group size is kept deliberately small. There is a strong emphasis on individual personal needs. By far the greatest proportion of places are taken up by young people from disadvantaged areas who are the prime target of these programmes. Expenditure on the Youthreach programme amounted to €24.5m in centres run in the education system and €29.1m in Community Training Workshops and other FÁS facilities in 2002. In 2002, over

2,600 early school leavers participated in the programme in Youthreach Centres and about 3,300 completed FAS training courses.

National certification is provided at FETAC (NCVA) Foundation Level and Level 1, and options in the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate Applied are also available. The Senior Traveller Training Centres operate on the same basis as Youthreach, but there is no upper age limit. Particular efforts are made to encourage Traveller parents into the centres because of the impact this can have on their childrens' schooling. Responsibility for the network of Travellers Training Centres changed to the education sector (from FAS) with effect from 6th April, 1998.

Following the passing of the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, further measures are being put in place to ensure that all young persons gain a satisfactory foundation of education before leaving the education system.

4.7 Apprenticeship

This section covers two main forms of alternating training: the apprenticeship system and the new traineeship system developed by FÁS. Apprenticeship is the recognised means by which persons are trained to become craft persons in Ireland. In the past, this involved 'serving your time' for periods of 7 years or more with day release to technical schools.

In the early 1970s a new apprenticeship system i.e. "Time-served System" was established and implemented for designated apprentices in construction and other specified industrial trades. This reduced the training period to four years and established a first year 'off-the-job' of full-time training which was generally provided in FAS Training Centres throughout the country. Apprentices then went on day or block release to education colleges during the later years of their apprenticeship and took the Junior and Senior Trades examinations.

Following a review of the system and consultation with the various interest groups, the Minister for Labour in 1991 introduced a new system of apprenticeship i.e. "Standards Based System" This was implemented fully in 1993. The system is managed by FÁS with the support of the National Apprenticeship Advisory Committee which consists of the social partners, FÁS and the Dept. of Education and Science.

This new system of apprenticeship training provides alternating on-the-job training in conjunction with off-the-job training in FAS Training Centres and Institutes of Technology. An apprenticeship normally lasts four years. On successful completion of training an apprentice receives the National Craft Certificate awarded by FETAC which is a compulsory requirement for craftperson status.

The curricula for apprenticeships are based on uniform pre-specified standards which are agreed with industry. They are written by experts nominated by employers, trade unions, the Department of Education and Science and FAS.

The standards-based apprenticeship has seven phases, three off-the-job and four on-the-job. Phases 1, 3, 5 and 7 take place with the employer. Phases 2, 4 and 6 take place off-the-job. The duration of off-the-job phases is approximately 40 weeks; divided approximately as follows:-

Phase 2:	20 weeks	FAS Training Centre
Phase 4:	10 weeks	Institute of Technology
Phase 6:	10 weeks	Institute of Technology

The first phase (on-the-job) is an introduction to apprenticeship, safety, the world of work and to the basic skills of the trade. The remaining phases of on-the-job training and development entail the practice and further development of skills learned in the off-the-job phases. Each off-the-job phase is delivered in a single institution to ensure integration of practical training with the necessary theory, maths, science, technical drawing and personal skills. Off-the-job training introduces the apprentice to the skills and related knowledge of the trade and provides time to practice these further.

Apprentices are recruited and employed by companies and receive wages based on a (varying) percentage of the full craft wage. Arrangements have been agreed for the funding of apprentice costs during off-the-job phases (see Theme 10.2).

Apprentices must be at least 16 years of age and have a minimum of grade D in 5 subjects in the Junior Certificate or equivalent. Where persons with disabilities do not meet the entry requirements they may still be registered as apprentices by employers on successful completion of an approved preparatory training course for persons with disabilities and an assessment interview by FAS.

There are additional incentives provided by FAS to assist the entry of women into apprenticeships. FAS offers a bursary to employers to encourage an increased level of recruitment of women apprentices. However, the number of female apprentices remains very small.

There are 26 trades designated by FAS under the standards-based system. Table 7 below shows the number of apprentices registered by trade group over the period 1998 to 2002. Recent years have seen a rapid expansion in apprentice registrations from 16,125 in 1998 to 25,178 in 2002. Total public expenditure on the apprenticeship system in 2002 was €159m, made up of €131m in FÁS and €28m in the education system.

Table 7
Apprentice Population by Trade Groups from 1998-2002

	1998	1999	2000	2001
Furniture	554	729	856	951
Printing	283	302	259	213
Electrical	4056	5620	6849	7488
Motor	1981	2366	2577	2668
Engineering	3013	3521	3720	3595
Construction	6238	8111	9396	10548
Total	16125	20649	23657	25463

About 10-15% of all school leavers follow the designated apprenticeship routes. A similar model is found in some other areas of training e.g. farming, and the Defence Forces. In addition, many professional bodies also operate apprenticeship-style schemes involving full-time employment with day release or evening courses. The professional bodies set standards and examinations in relation to their professions, for example in accountancy and law.

There is a three-year Farm Apprenticeship Scheme administered by the Farm Apprenticeship Board, a private voluntary board grant-aided by Teagasc. The objective of the course is to train farm managers. Entrants to the scheme must have completed a one-year course at a residential Agricultural College and have reached the set standard in its examinations. Arrangements also exist for transferring from the Certificate in Farming programme into the Farm Apprenticeship scheme. Apprentices are placed for one year on each of three master farms and receive four weeks' course work each year on day-and block-release courses. In 2001 a total of 105 young persons started farm apprenticeships.

Traineeships involves employers and FÁS working together in a dual system of occupational training leading to a qualification. The training content and occupational standards are based on employer consultation and lead to certification by FETAC. Traineeships combine workplace training with formal off-the-job tuition in a FÁS Training Centre which is conducted by experienced and professional trainers. Workplace training provides planned and structured training, which is carried out under normal operational conditions on-the-job. In the host company trainees are assigned a mentor/skills coach who supervises on-the-job training to an agreed workplace training plan which allows trainees to build on skills learned in the FÁS Training Centre.

Traineeships vary in duration from six to twenty-four months, depending on the scope of the curriculum, the skill requirement of the occupation and the entry level of the trainees. About 1,400 persons completed traineeship in 2002. However, the programme is growing with over 2,000 starters in 2002 and an expenditure by FÁS of €14.9m.

4.8 Post-Secondary Non-Tertiary Education

There are a range of training possibilities for persons after completing secondary education. The two largest programmes are the Post-Leaving Certificate courses (PLCs) run by the VECs and some secondary schools and FÁS training for young job-seekers.

Post-Leaving Certificate Courses (Education System)

Post Leaving Certificate courses were introduced in 1985 with European Social Fund support to provide a bridge between school and work for those who needed vocational training to enhance their chance of gaining employment. Programmes are of 1 and 2 year duration and lead to certification at Levels 2 and 3 from the Further Education and Training Awards Council. The programmes are provided in some second level schools and colleges and 92% of provision is in the VEC sector. The scope of the programmes has widened considerably since 1985, and some 40.8% of all participants are over 21. They are accordingly an important re-entry route to learning for adults, as well as catering for some 18% of all school leavers each year

The programme continues to grow, and offers over 1,000 courses in some 229 centres. A wide range of disciplines are covered including Business, Electronics Engineering, Computing, Catering, Sport and Leisure, Theatre and Stage, Performance Art, Art Craft and Design, Equestrian Studies, Multi-media studies, Journalism, Tourism, Marketing, Childcare and Community Care, Hairdressing and Beauty Care, Horticulture, Applied Science etc.

These courses offer an alternative to programmes on offer in higher education, in subject matter and approach. Certain PLCs are accepted as bridges into higher education. There were 24,337 PLC participants in 1999/2000 and in 2002/2003 28,656 persons enrolled on PLC courses. In 2001 the number of full-time PLC students who completed and gained certification was 21,819.

Post Leaving Certificate courses adopt an integrated approach, focusing on technical knowledge, core skills and work experience. Almost 50% of the time spent on these courses is devoted to knowledge and skill training related to employment, with a further 25% on relevant work-based experience.

PLC courses include:

- technical knowledge - the development of the vocational skills needed for the particular discipline;
- personal development - the fostering of interpersonal skills, computer familiarisation, mathematical and literacy skills together with a positive attitude to learning, adaptability and initiative; and
- work experience - exposing the trainee to work experience which gives relevance to the skills learned and an appreciation of an adult's role in working life.

A key feature of the courses is the adoption of an approach which enables schools and colleges to respond flexibly to the needs of the locality. Each school providing PLC programmes is required to designate a co-ordinator. Part of the co-ordinator's brief includes an examination of local requirements and resources in consultation and co-operation with employers, voluntary agencies, trade unions and the training agencies. Programme options are designed to be sufficiently broadly-based to allow entry into a series of possible occupations and provide a solid foundation for life long learning. A range of vocational designations and modules is available for schools to choose from (e.g., business studies, engineering, construction, electronics, craft and design, science, services, horticulture, tourism, media studies, etc.). Schools may adapt a general programme to suit their particular needs or devise new modules.

Most PLCs lead to an award from FETAC. The main focus of the courses is to prepare people for employment. It is also possible to proceed from PLC to third-level education. At the present time about 1,000 places are reserved annually in the Institutes of Technology for students who have FETAC awards. This allows access for persons who do not have the requisite qualifications of third-level applicants.

Students do not pay fees to attend PLCs courses and, since 1998-99, grants are available for students on PLC courses. The conditions and rates for grants are the same as those for third-level courses.

Non-Education System Provision

FÁS provides training for unemployed persons and other job-seekers in its Training Centres and on programmes provided on contract by external providers of training. The duration of these full-time courses varies, but usually they last for about four to six months. All training costs, including training allowances, are paid by FÁS. The majority of participants are young persons although courses are open to all age groups.

Persons seeking training are interviewed by the local FÁS Employment Service Office and directed to appropriate courses. Courses provided range from specific occupational skills, through enterprise training for entrepreneurs, to remedial/foundation training for the socially disadvantaged. In 2002 about 10,000 persons started such training courses.

CERT, the State Tourism Authority, provides full-time day/block release courses for craft and management trainees in the hotel, catering and tourism industry. These courses are geared for first-time young entrants who wish to pursue careers in tourism, catering and related occupations. The trainees are generally aged from 17 to 24 years and must have a minimum of Junior Certificate level education. The courses range from one to four years, depending on whether they are full-time, block or day-release courses. These courses are held in Institutes of Technology (Dublin, Cork and Waterford) or CERT Hotel Schools. In 2002 a total of 2,282 persons attended such courses.

CERT is heavily involved in facilitating training in tourism skills on a number of courses run in the education system. In 2001 this included 3,465 persons on the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme, 1,978 on the Tourism Awareness

Programme and 194 PLC students. CERT spent €9.4m on this range of activities in 2002.

Teagasc provides training for young people wishing to pursue a career in agriculture. The main programme availed of is the Certificate in Farming – General Agriculture. Successful completion gives young people:

- Knowledge and skills that will be required to compete and survive in farming in the future.
- Personal and life skills through living and working with others.
- Eligibility for Government and EU Grants.

Teagasc runs a wide range of programmes in agriculture, horticulture, rural development and food production. In 2001 for the first time agricultural and horticultural training was brought into the mainstream education system. All Teagasc courses were upgraded and nationally accredited. Students now apply through the normal CAO system for third-level courses. An important component of the new system is the possibility of progressing up to university degree level. Nationally accredited vocational courses are provided in:

- Agriculture
- Horticulture
- Horse Production
- Pigs and Forestry

Enrolment in courses was just over 900 in the 2001/2002 academic year. Teagasc also provides a comprehensive range of short courses for adult farmers. A total of 5,907 participants took part in these in 2002.

Bord Iasca Mhara provides training courses related to the fishing and fish processing industries. These are run in special facilities and mobile training units. Attendance at all centres amounted to 1,867 in 2002, equating to 1,426 participants availing of one or more training courses. Training for forestry workers is organised by Coillte, the State Forestry Agency. In 2002 2,581 persons attended training courses in this area. The Equine Institute provides training for persons working in the horse industry. In 2002 a total of 736 persons were trained, of which 22 were in receipt of national certificates/diplomas.

4.9 Third-Level Education

The third level education system, funded by the State, comprises the University sector, the Technological sector and the Colleges of Education.

There are 7 Universities, 5 Primary Teacher Training Colleges, 2 Home Economics Colleges and a Physical Education College in the University of Limerick. Teachers of Art are trained in the National College of Art & Design (NCAD) in Dublin. Teachers of Religion are trained in the Mater Dei Institute of Education in Dublin.

In addition there are a number of independent private colleges offering third level qualifications.

Numbers in full-time third-level education grew from 18,500 in 1965 to 119,991 in 2000/2001. There is strong competition to get into universities and colleges, especially into certain popular disciplines. Entry into third-level education is based mainly on results in the Leaving Certificate examination. A 'points' system, computed on 6 subjects in the Leaving Certificate operates where there are more eligible applicants than places on the courses.

Up until 1995 third level education was not, in general, free and the individual would bear a considerable part of the cost. However, a system of means-tested grants was in existence. In 1995 the Government decided to abolish under-graduate tuition fees in public third-level bodies. Students from families on low incomes who comply with the academic criteria and means conditions continue to receive assistance towards their cost of living.

Third level degree programmes are normally of three or four years duration with sub-degree certificates and diplomas being two and three years respectively. A total of 122,395 persons were attending full-time third-level courses in 1999-2000. Of these 66,181 (54%) were attending universities, and the balance at Institutes of Technology and other colleges. The vast majority of third-level students attend institutions funded by the State. In 1999/2000 there were 6,699 students in non-aided colleges. In the same year there were 35,812 entrants to full-time state-funded courses.

The OECD 2002 'Education at a glance' (Table C. 2.1) shows that 26% of the cohort in Ireland entered Tertiary Type B education and 31% entered Tertiary Type A in 2000. This can be compared with the OECD average rates of 15% and 45% respectively for a similar cohort. The Operational Programme for Employment and Human Resources Development 2000-2006 contains three specific measures within the third-level system. The largest of these is the Middle-Level Technician/Higher Technical Business Skills measure which essentially covers all courses at certificate and diploma level. In 2002 there were 33,137 students participating at a cost of €252.6 million. A second measure relates to Undergraduate Skills. This relates to the provision of certain additional third-level places to respond to identified skill needs in the labour market (e.g. IT courses). In the 2002/2003 academic year it is estimated that there are 3,810 students enrolled in universities within this measure. In addition, there were 411 students in Institutes of Technology under the Accelerated Technician Programme. A third strand of this measure is the Institute Trainee Programme under which about 200 trainees participated in 2002. The cost of this measure in 2002 was €18.6 million.

The third measure is post-graduate conversion courses which consist usually of one-year diplomas in 'skill shortage' disciplines. These apply both in the university and technological sectors of higher-education. In 2001/2006 there were 1,407 students and this is estimated to have risen to about 1,750 in 2002/2003. Expenditure was €8.7m in 2002.

THEME 5 - Continuing Education and Training for Adults

5.1 Background and general introduction

There is not a sharp distinction in Ireland between initial and continuing vocational training. Rather, Government policy makes a distinction between programmes for young persons and students, programmes for the unemployed (whether old or young) and programmes for persons in employment. These distinctions in particular concern Government responsibility and funding.

In recent years continuing vocational training (CVT) in Ireland has moved to a more prominent place on the political agenda than it occupied in the 1980s and early 1990s. One reason for this change in emphasis has been the growing awareness in Government, among employers and in trade unions that in a fast-changing, world economy, Irish companies would need to become more responsive to change, more competitive and that Irish workers would require on-going education and training to keep their skills up-to-date and relevant. The pace of change and the importance of life-long learning have been increasingly recognised. Consequently, in recent years there has been increased emphasis and improved provision in the field of continuing vocational training. In particular the White Paper on Adult Education – Learning for Life – was published by the Dept. of Education and Science in 2000 and a report by a Task Force on Lifelong Learning was published in 2002.

The White Paper on Adult Education put strong emphasis on the provision of new and enhanced learning opportunities for both unemployed and employed adults. The main providers of continuing vocational education and training are the Vocational Education Committees and FÁS. Vocational Education Committees provide a range of programmes in the field of continuing education and training including adult literacy, second chance education for unemployed persons, post-leaving certificate programmes for school leavers and adults, prison education and traveller education. . In relation to the continuing training of unemployed people, FÁS provides a comprehensive range of training courses. Companies themselves also provide a considerable amount of training for their own employees and, more recently, employers and trade unions have combined to provide continuing training for workers in some areas.

5.2 Planning & Organising of Learning

Government policy in relation to continuing vocational training is primarily a matter for the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, which largely approaches the issue from an economic and labour market perspective. Policy is developed in collaboration with the Department of Education and Science which has responsibility for the provision of education and training places in the Universities and Institutes of Technology, further education colleges and adult education centres and with other Government Departments in relation to their own special areas – for example in relation to agriculture, fishing or tourism. Other Government departments have an interest in their own special areas – for example in relation to agriculture, fishing or tourism.

From the economic and labour market perspectives, Government policy has long been that the training of persons at work is primarily the responsibility of employers themselves, but that government should play a role in helping and encouraging employers to meet this responsibility. This has been achieved primarily through a public agency (FÁS) which has had the role of encouraging, advising and assisting companies to meet their training needs.

The National Partnership Agreements in recent years acknowledge the importance of workplace and life long learning. Under the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness 2000-2002 the Government and Social Partners agreed a series of actions which should enhance the opportunities and extent of continuing education and training. In the latest national agreement – Sustaining Progress – the Social Partners have agreed to implement the recommendations of the Task Force on Lifelong Learning.

There is no legal entitlement to education/training leave in Ireland. However, some of the bigger organisations provide paid release for employees to participate in approved courses. The Task Force Lifelong Learning report noted that a majority of its members were of the view that a strong case exists in principle for the introduction of a learning leave entitlement which would be underpinned in law. However, employer representatives on the Task Force expressed strong opposition to the introduction of statutory paid learning leave.

The Task Force on Life Long Learning identified the following as being essential parts of any framework for the development of accessible, structured, opportunities in this area:

- Developing and implementing the national framework of qualifications.
- Ensuring basic skills for all.
- Providing comprehensive and coherent guidance and information.
- Addressing delivery access and funding issues.
- Better learning opportunities in the workplace and for workers.

The White Paper on Adult Education marks the adoption of lifelong learning as the governing principle of educational policy. It also highlights the fact that there is now official recognition by the state that its educational commitment extends to include not only those in school and college but also that part of the population which has left the initial education system.

In terms of prioritisation, Government policy is to give particular attention to disadvantaged groups and persons with low educational attainment. For example, in the further education sector the White Paper on Adult Education makes provision for a major investment in adult literacy. In addition, the Back to Education Initiative is providing a major expansion of part-time options principally aimed at persons with less than Upper Secondary education.

5.3 Delivery Mechanism and Providers

There is a wide range of organisations involved in the provision and delivery of continuing education and training. These differences reflect the differing status of participants (e.g. unemployed, employed, other), and the different content required (e.g. literacy, computer skills and sectoral skills).

Training of the Employed

Employers generally provide training on the basis of their own requirements and needs. This training is provided on a commercial basis by a large number of organisations, mainly private. However, in specific instances there is financial support through FÁS or Enterprise Ireland. In some cases companies will pool resources to identify training needs and make provision for meeting them. An industry-led initiative “Skillnets” was established in 1999 to encourage and foster this kind of co-operation.

FÁS provides a range of supports to different sectors of industry, to improve the skills and capabilities of employees and hence company performance. One of the major forms of support, in operation until 2002, was the Training Support Scheme. This Scheme provided financial grants to SMEs (up to 150 employees) seeking to improve the skills of their employees at all levels with the company – from operative to management. In 2002 a total of 2133 companies were supported under this Scheme in relation to the training of 10,316 employees. Alongside the Training Support Scheme (which in 2002 covered companies in the commercial, financial and transport sectors), FÁS operated a Construction Training Incentive Scheme for companies in that sector. In 2002 34,710 employees were trained under this Scheme.

FÁS is strongly committed to helping the development of Irish companies through human resources development. Excellence through People (ETP) is Ireland’s national standard for human resource development. FÁS manages this voluntary initiative that aims to improve a company’s operation through staff training and improving employee communication and involvement in the company. Ireland and Britain are the only two countries in the world to have developed a recognised national standard in this area. There has been a steady increase in the number of companies holding the Excellence through People Award – 234 at the end of 2002.

FÁS is also involved, in co-operation with industry representatives, in the identification of sectoral training needs and the development of suitable training programmes in response, supported by financial incentives. In 2003 FÁS will be commencing a new Competency Development Programme aimed at raising the skills level of employees. The programme will be targeted at a limited number of key skill needs identified by research and/or conversation with the relevant/industry sectoral stakeholders. Priority will be given to employees who require up-skilling, cross-skilling and portable skills development. For identified skill needs under the programme, financial subsidies will be provided to reduce the cost of approved training courses.

Enterprise Ireland is a government organisation charged with assisting the development of Irish enterprises. It aims to work in partnership with client

companies to develop sustainable competitive advantage, leading to a significant increase in profitable sales, export and employment. Its clients are companies in manufacturing and internationally-traded services. It provides services in the human resources development area including education, training and development programmes. It runs a Mentor Network involving experienced managers advising young SMEs. It also provides financial support to selected companies as part of a business development plan. One element of such a plan is human resources development and funding may be provided by Enterprise Ireland to cover part of the costs of training.

The pilot Training Networks Programme, operated by Skillnets Ltd., has made a significant contribution to in-company training over the last few years. Since 1999, the Training Networks Programme has funded 40 Training Networks and 20 Research Networks. Over 2,300 companies have been involved in the Programme and in excess of 12,800 people have benefited from training.

A total of 456 courses were delivered through the Training Networks Programme. 129 of these were newly developed courses and 218 were significantly customised courses. Nearly 25% of all courses/modules were certified. The programme has had a significant impact in encouraging SMEs to invest in training – 73% of the companies in the programme had less than 50 employees and 38% of participating companies had less than 10 employees. The Training Networks Programme was due to finish at the end of March 2002, but in the light of the positive evaluation of the programme a decision was taken to continue Skillnets until the end of 2005.

The results of the evaluation are presented in the Skillnets final report 1999-2002. The Skillnets Evaluation assessed the networks and the overall programme to see was it in fact enterprise-led and concluded that “all the evidence collected by surveys, interviews and life analyses indicates that all of the training networks were enterprise-led”.

The evaluators found that the initial Skillnets proposal was developed by the promoter or by the promoter and member companies in over 58% of the networks. A further 17% were developed by the project manager or the project manager and member companies. Only in 5-6% of the cases was a professional advisor a key first mover.

In looking at whether the member companies were involved in the management of the networks, 21 networks stated that the level of participation by their member companies was high; 15 reported medium participation; and eight networks reported low participation.

The evaluators showed that over 87% of networks (41 networks) had a high or medium frequency of management/planning meetings, while 84% had a high/medium frequency of development meetings. The report also notes that:

- Training in small firms participating in the programme is now more of an ongoing and integral part of their operation rather than merely an option.
- Training is based on real and clearly identified company needs and since it is led by the firms themselves, it is completely linked with work. It is triggered by the demands of work, and happens increasingly on the job.

- As a result of this close link with processes, training tends to become flexible, delivered as and when it is needed (many times at weekends) to achieve specific results.
- Definitions of skills become less generalised and more focused and precise. Several networks have defined – in general detail – core competencies for skill and functional areas linked to a process of continuous training and certification.

The CVTS Survey of Ireland found that seventy-nine percent of companies carried out some training in 1999. Nearly all companies employing 50 or more persons trained. Training was most prevalent in manufacturing and financial/business services, whereas construction and transport/communication companies were less likely to train. Even taking account of size and sector, overseas subsidiaries were more likely to train.

About a quarter of a million employees attended formal training courses during the year; 41% of all employees. Employees in larger companies were more likely to receive formal training. Overall, a higher proportion of females than males attended training courses. Employees spent 1.4 million days on training courses; the equivalent of 2.4 days per employee. There was a tendency for managers/professionals and clerical/services workers to be more likely to receive training, whether formal or otherwise, than craft and other manual workers.

Health/safety/environmental protection training was the most commonly provided type of training course. This amounted to 20% of all training course time. The other two major areas were computing/IT (17%) and machine operation/quality control (16%). Two-thirds of training course time was delivered through internally-managed courses. Of the externally-managed courses, private training organisations were by far the largest providers.

Literacy

The International Adult Literacy Survey provided a profile of the literacy skills of adults aged 16-64 across a number of OECD countries. The Irish study was undertaken in 1995 and the results published in 1997. The survey found that about 25% of the Irish population were found to score at the lowest level (Level 1), performing at best tasks which required the reader to locate a simple piece of information in a text, with no distracting information, and when the structure of the text assists the task. The survey showed:

- Substantially lower levels of literacy in the older age groups
- Close links between lower scores and low educational levels (more than 3/5ths of those who scored at Level 1 had left school without completing junior cycle)
- Unemployed people scoring lower than those in employment – the ratio of unemployed to employed people scoring at the lowest literacy level in the Irish survey is 2:1
- Lower literacy levels associated with low income
- A lack of awareness of the need to improve skills among the employed, with only 5% indicating that this impeded their advancement

- While 24.3% had participated in adult education or training in the previous year, this was strongly associated with prior literacy levels and educational attainment. This experience has been mirrored in the other countries surveyed – those with the lowest levels of education are least likely to participate in adult education and training. For 51.5% of those in employment, the adult education or training was employer sponsored.

Measures to Address Adult Literacy Problems

Adult Literacy Services are provided by the VECs and funded by the Department of Education and Science. Each VEC employs Adult Education Organisers to manage the overall delivery of adult education in their schemes, and Adult Literacy Organisers to manage the literacy aspect of the service. Literacy tutors are employed to teach group classes and volunteers are trained to provide free 1:1 tuition.

The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) is a voluntary body, funded by the Department of Education and Science which advises on quality and provides training for staff across a range of agencies particularly the VECs, FAS, TEAGASC, and Employment and Welfare Services. NALA also commissions research and has an extensive network of contacts with similar agencies in other countries.

The financial provision in the education sector for adult literacy increased from a base of £0.85 m in 1997 to €17.9 m in 2003. The increase in funds have enabled a very significant expansion in provision with more flexible learning options, including morning daytime and night –time classes. The number of clients catered for annually has increased from 5,000 in 1997 to over 28,000 at December, 2002. Specific target groups accessing literacy programmes include family groups involving adults and their children, travellers, non-nationals, and unemployed people participating in social employment programmes.

A wide range of media are used to promote the service including church announcements, local radio, poster, leaflets etc. Referral networks with FAS, Local Employment Services, Partnerships, Health Centres, welfare and community groups, playgroups, schools and school parent committees, libraries etc are being expanded and strengthened. A national referral directory on adult literacy services has been published and disseminated.

The Department of Education and Science commissioned the production of a TV series in literacy awareness and tuition for adults for the first time in 2000. The third such series “*Read Write Now*” was broadcast on National TV (RTE 1) in October-December 2002 in the form of 12 half hour programmes. The broadcasts were supplemented by a national freephone helpline provided by NALA, and learner workbooks and resource packs. A weekly average of 146,000 people watched the programme. Videos of the series are sent free of charge to literacy schemes, public libraries, training centres and video outlets.

Programme support measures in adult literacy include:

- The development by NALA of a Quality Framework for adult literacy in collaboration with other European partners

- The development of a nationally certified staff development programme
- The establishment of an Inter-Departmental Group on Literacy for the Unemployed
- The creation of a multi-agency Workplace Literacy Strategy Group
- The provision of Literacy Information days for employers, trade unions, social employment supervisors and trainers.
- Research on the development of an assessment framework for the adult literacy service

Literacy has been identified as one of the key areas needing specific attention for a large number of employed people. To assist in addressing this problem NALA has been working with companies at workplace level to develop suitable programmes in this area. There are also many other initiatives involving a mix of organisations (including schools, colleges, FÁS Training Centres and employees associations, Trade Unions and local development organisations).

Access to literacy programmes is free and available during the day or in the evenings. It can be accessed by any adult in need of such training either through a group or on a one to one basis. Programmes are available nationwide and clients catered for have increased from 5,000 to 13,000 between 1997 and 2000. Family literacy groups involving both adults and their children are running successfully and a number of open learning centres is being piloted along with literacy groups for migrant workers and travellers. Programmes for the unemployed can be accessed by FÁS Community Employment Programmes participants. The National Development Plan 2000-2006 has allocated €73.8m to literacy training.

Back to Education Initiative

The Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) comprises a range of second-chance educational and training options for adults to re-enter the labour market or upgrade their skills within it, with increased emphasis on flexibility of delivery and particular focus in the areas of ICT and technical training.

The priority is the one million adults with less than upper second level education. An adult ICT skills module is part of the programme. Tuition is free for means tested welfare recipients. There is a fee reduction of 30% of tuition costs for unwaged adults with less than upper second level education. All others pay fees.

Provision includes FETAC Foundation levels 1 2 and 3 and subjects in the Junior and Leaving Certificates. However, only 30% of provision may be targeted at those who have already achieved at least 5D's in the Leaving Certificate and such provision must be directed at addressing skill needs e.g. computing, language and child-care.

In 2002, 6000 places were made available under the BTEI. This will increase on a phased basis with a view to having 20,000 extra places each year by 2006.

Training for Unemployed

Reference has been made in Section 4.7 to training programmes for young unemployed persons run, principally, by FÁS. In this section programmes oriented to older unemployed persons are considered. However, it must be emphasised that most FÁS training programmes are availed of by both young and older persons.

FÁS runs two training programmes particularly utilised by older persons – Return to Work for Women and Enterprise Training. As the name suggests, the former programme is aimed at women who have been out of the workforce for some time (usually to look after children) and now wish to return to work. The programme is typically of 12 weeks duration and provides social and interpersonal skills, confidence-building and up-dating of skills as required. Trainees either proceed to work or further training after the course. The Enterprise Training programme is designed to help unemployed persons start their own business. Normally, persons on the course have the technical skills and experience required to do so, but need training in such aspects as planning, marketing, finance and business law.

FÁS runs a major programme for the long-term unemployed known as Community Employment. The programme provides part-time employment for one year's duration for the long-term unemployed and other socially-disadvantaged groups (e.g. persons with disabilities and lone parents). Employment is provided by a wide range of voluntary and community (non-profit) organisations. The work carried out includes physical/environmental improvements, assistance in hospitals, personal services, community advice, and sporting, artistic, and theatrical activity. Although most of the programme consists of work, there is also provision for training. This takes two forms; structured, project-based, training, and core skills training. Although targeted at the most-difficult-to-employ group, Community Employment has been successful in providing work and training to many persons. This, in turn, has enabled a significant minority to gain 'normal' employment, or proceed to further education or training. There were about 25,000 people at the end of 2002 on this programme.

CERT runs training courses for unemployed persons and other job-seekers. These courses are run usually in special training centres. In 2002 a total of 1975 persons were trained. This comprised 929 at elementary level, 691 persons returning to work, 87 on day-release, 151 long-term unemployed and 117 international. Expenditure was €8.7m on this programme.

Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS)

VTOS provides second chance education and training for adults age 21 or more who have been receiving an unemployment payment for at least 6 months. Lone parents, dependent spouses and persons with disabilities who satisfy these criteria are also eligible. The programme is of 1-2 years duration and participants may choose from a range of options including Foundation Levels 1, 2 or 3 within FETAC or subjects in the Junior or Leaving Certificate or a portfolio approach to certification. Trainees receive an allowance in lieu of welfare entitlements. Childcare support is also available to encourage parents on to the programme. Local referral networks are in

place linking VTOS with Social Welfare and FÁS Employment Services. In 2002 €46.814m was provided to fund 5708 persons availing of the programme.

Community Education

Grants are paid to VECs towards the cost of community education programmes and special initiatives for disadvantaged adults to enable them to access learning at moderate or no cost. The funds are generally used to offset the fee cost of attending courses and to provide tuition hours to a range of community education programmes. These programmes are provided either directly by the VECs or by community groups. In 2002 €6.28m was provided for funding of Community Education.

5.4 Access to learning opportunities and programmes

The basis of Ireland's economic and social policy over the past two decades has been to enhance the level of education and skills of the labour market. Because of the high levels of unemployment in the 1980s priority was given to provision for the unemployed. The balance has changed somewhat as unemployment levels decreased and with the present policy on Lifelong Learning and Adult Education aim to put in place a structure whereby any person irrespective of age, educational attainment or employment status can avail of a suitable opportunity when they want it. In terms of access as it currently structured there are four main routes open to adults.

Third Level Courses

Under the social inclusion measures in the National Development Plan there is provision for a Third Level Access Fund totalling €120m over the period 2000-2006 aimed at three groups.

- Students from disadvantaged areas
- Mature students
- Students with disabilities

So far measures such as the special rates of maintenance grant have been established. A number of additional social welfare payment are being made available and it is expected that the number of students qualifying for assistance under this programme will double to 7000 in the 2002/03 year.

While entry to third-level for school leavers is based on a points system there are special arrangements for accessing third level courses for mature students. These include assessment of individual achievement and a judgement on the potential benefit to the particular person.

As part of its efforts to improve access to mature students the Adult Education centre of the National University of Ireland runs a wide variety of courses as well as a Certificate in Foundation Level Studies – Returning to Learning, a Foundation in Science and Engineering and a Foundation in Commerce. A mature students officer is available in University also to provide advice and support to adults seeking to return to third level education. The University of Limerick provides an induction programme for undergraduate mature students. Participation in this programme

affords prospective students the opportunity to meet other students who will be an important social support to them throughout the year. Mature students may also avail of workshops and seminars throughout the year on topics such as:

- Study skills
- Career planning
- Basic Information Technology Tutorials
- Tuition for the Mathematics Learning Centre
- Revision and Exam Technique
- Stress Management

The Higher Education Authority has for a number of years provided dedicated funding to the Universities and other HEA designated institutions to support new developments in areas of strategic importance in higher education. One particular priority area is that of broadening access to the Universities and HEA institutions for students from traditionally under-represented groups. These include students from disadvantaged backgrounds, mature students and travellers. In 2001, the HEA provided over €5 million to support institutions in initiatives aimed to provide for such broadened access.

The HEA also, as a part of the targeted initiative process, undertakes periodic external evaluation of the targeted initiatives. An evaluation of the initiative for access for disadvantaged students was carried out in 2000 (Osborne and Leith 2000) and was a key source document for the subsequent Action Group on Access to Third Level, which proposed inter alia, building upon the work of the targeted initiatives as part of the creation of a national strategy for access.

Both FÁS and the VEC provide an extensive range of evening courses. In 2002 some 12,518 people attended evening courses in FÁS of which 4,098 obtained certificates. A total of 140,409 persons attended part-time adult education courses in vocational, community or comprehensive schools in 1999-2000.

5.5 Mechanisms to accredit prior learning

As part of its policies to promote and facilitate access, transfer and progression for learners, the National Qualifications Authority has determined procedures regarding the recognition of prior learning. These have been developed within a vision for access, transfer and progression:

‘The learner should be able to enter and successfully participate in a programme, or series of programmes leading to an award, or series of awards, in pursuit of their learning objectives. The national framework of qualifications and associated programme provision should be structured to facilitate learner entry, and to promote transfer and progression, so that learners are encouraged to participate in the learning process to enable them to realise their ambitions to the full extent of their abilities’ (Policies, actions and procedures for the promotion and facilitation of access, transfer and progression, March 2003, p.5).

The Authority has determined interim procedures relating to the specification of arrangements for the recognition of prior learning by providers of education and

training programmes leading to awards. These procedures are as follows: all providers are required to develop a statement of arrangements available in respect of each of their programmes for the recognition of prior learning, for entry, for credit towards an award and for access to a full award. These statements should define the purposes for which recognition of prior learning processes can be used, i.e. to enable entry to the programme; to provide exemptions from programme requirements or credit towards an award; or to establish eligibility for a full award. Where the recognition of prior learning is used to enable entry to a programme, the statement of arrangements available should indicate to learners the competences needed to succeed on the programme.

The awards Councils will ensure that providers implement procedures set out for them in relation to the development and publication of statements of arrangements available for the recognition of prior learning in programmes and processes leading to awards.

Also in the context of facilitating and supporting the recognition of prior learning, it is specified under the Qualifications Act (1999) that the awards Councils may make awards to persons who apply for such and who, in the opinion of the Council, have achieved the relevant standard. It is thus possible for a learner to achieve an award without having participated in a specific programme of learning.

A major new initiative to accredit prior learning (APL) in relation to craft skills was commenced by FÁS and the ESB in 2000. This involved ESB lines workers undergoing a process which enabled them to qualify as recognised electricians with a National Craft Certificate. The process involved a combination of APL and special training modules where required. Over the period 2000-2002 it is expected that about 400 lines workers will obtain a craft qualification in this way. FÁS initiatives to accredit prior learning have also taken place in the following areas – Retail, Construction, Electrical, Childcare and Call Centre personnel.

5.6 Bridging Initial and Post Initial Education and Training

There are a number of programmes at both initial and second level whose express purpose is to facilitate the progression of students to a higher level. At foundation level the FÁS Community Training Workshops and VEC Youthreach Centres provide training for early school leavers. FÁS also runs a number of bridging programmes to assist people in the transition from training to work. These provide support for the those in their first job during the first six months of employment.

The Higher Education Authority (HEA) produced a study on the issue of non-completion in undergraduate university courses in 2001. The report shows that of all first-time entrants to universities in the academic year 1992/93 67.9% of students graduated on time and a further 15.3% graduated late. This gives an overall completion rate of 83%. The HEA hosted a national seminar on course completion in higher education in 2001. This seminar provided an opportunity to consider the issues and trends arising from the studies produced by the Educational Research Centre. The need for qualitative research to be undertaken into factors influencing non-completion was highlighted at the seminar. The Educational Research Centre has undertaken this research with a view to developing appropriate strategies to deal with the issue and new initiatives are now underway.

5.7 Re-education and re-training needs due to labour market developments and mobility

In general re-training becomes a priority for companies in two specific situations - firstly, when new equipment is installed in a company and workers have to be re-trained to use it. The commissioners of the equipment usually provide on-site training for those workers who will be operating the equipment and FÁS may provide a tailor-made course either in-company or in one of its Training Centres if this is required. Enterprise Ireland may provide funding for re-training of this nature in certain situations.

The second circumstance is in cases of redundancy. FAS plays an active role in respect of company layoffs and closures. Along with the development agencies and relevant local organisations, FAS is a member of various Task Forces that attempt to both identify suitable job opportunities and assist redundant workers to fill them. The process typically involves the following components:

- Information sessions for all affected workers. The aim of these sessions is to outline the range of supports and services available from FAS and other public bodies.
- Full registration interviews by FAS Employment Services staff with all workers. These interviews will help assess suitable options and help the clients decide on the next steps for them. (Where possible these interviews are held on-site and held in accordance with the shift system if necessary.)
- Preparation of a 'Skills Analysis Report' by FAS based on the needs identified by the workers in relation to local opportunities.
- The provision of information, advice and referral to jobs, existing training courses or other options as appropriate.
- The identification by FAS of special or customised training programmes that are required if existing training programmes do not meet the needs. This may include the use of training capacity within other companies, part-time courses and e-learning options. In some cases special 2-3 day 'career planning and job seeking' training courses are run. In other cases, particular skills training programmes are run.
- On-going support and action to keep redundant workers 'in touch with the labour market'. For example, informing workers of suitable vacancies notified to FAS.

THEME 6 - Training of Trainers

6.1 General Background

In general, the main types of training required by teachers and trainers are pedagogical and professional. All organisations aim to ensure that teachers and trainers are regularly updated in terms of new skills and developments by providing on-going in service training.

6.2 Training of Teachers/Trainers in educational establishments

Recognised teachers in voluntary secondary schools are required to be registered by the Registration Council for Secondary Teachers, which is a statutorily constituted body under the Intermediate Education (Ireland) Act 1914. The Council prescribes the conditions for teaching in voluntary secondary schools in Ireland. In general the requirements for registration are (i) a relevant third level qualification (a Degree or equivalent) which enables the holder to teach at least one of the approved subjects or areas of study under the Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools, and (ii) an acceptable training in teaching qualification directed towards teaching students in the 12 to 18 years age range.

Other second level teachers are appointed to positions advertised for teaching of particular subjects and again a relevant third level qualification (a Degree or equivalent) in the specified subjects is the essential requirement.

The Teaching Council Act, 2001 provides for the establishment of a Teaching Council to promote teaching as a profession; to promote the professional development of teachers; to maintain and improve the quality of teaching in the state; to provide for the establishment of standards, policies and procedures for the education and training of teachers and other matters relating to teachers and the teaching profession; to provide for the registration and regulation of teachers and to enhance professional standards and competences.

A wide range of in-career development has been provided under the OP for EHRD 2000-06. This includes professional development of teachers generally, and support for teachers in schools in the context of changes in curricula and school programmes at first and second levels (i.e. revised Primary Curriculum, School Development Planning, Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE), English, Maths, Physics, Biology and Home Economics, etc). A Leadership Development Programme has been developed for Principals & Deputy Principals at primary and post-primary levels. The Substance Misuse Prevention Programme has been extended with specific emphasis on Local Drug Task Force areas. A Teachers Induction Pilot Project has commenced and will serve to benefit schools taking on newly qualified teachers. There are also substantial programmes in the areas of learning support and special needs and these continue to receive priority.

In the case of teachers or lecturers in Institutes of Technology and universities, they are required to have:

- a) An Honours Degree in their subject or an equivalent professional qualification.
- b) Three years relevant post-qualification work experience which can include teaching experience.

There is no requirement for any qualification in teaching for these third-level posts although it is the case that a significant proportion would hold such qualification and/or have relevant teaching experience.

The Training of Trainers measure for Third-Level provides targeted funding for staff development programmes and skills updating for staff in the sector. The aim of this programme is to provide the necessary training for staff in the third level sector to enable them to adapt to new technological, scientific and organisational challenges. In response to the broadening of higher education and training opportunities, this measure provides additional programmes to address these needs while also focusing on pedagogical training, teacher evaluation and appraisal and the development of management skills.

6.3 Training of Trainers at VET establishments

There is no national system for the pre-service and in-service training of teachers, trainers and tutors employed in vocational education and training. The majority of those employed in the sector have been recruited on the basis of a second-level teaching qualification, or a trade or business qualification. However, significant work has been undertaken in this area by FÁS, the National Training Authority both in the training of their trainers, in the registration of approved trainers and in leading the establishment of a trainers' network. Individual universities have provided programmes for staff in the sector aimed at specific target groups (e.g. people with disabilities) and the Department of Education and Science has funded national Certificate and Diploma programmes in the field of vocational education and training on an in-service basis, primarily for staff in Youthreach, Senior Traveller Training Centres and Adult Literacy Services. The issues relating to pre-service and in-service training were addressed in the White Paper - *Learning for Life* and the need to explore the feasibility of a generic training programme in this field was recognised, to be implemented initially in a modular format on an in-service basis, but ultimately to be available as a pre-service training programme for the sector.

Within FÁS, instructors and trainers are state employees and must comply with the standards as laid down in the statutory acts.

New trainers are required to have on entry to FÁS:

- A qualification in the discipline in which they will train, i.e. minimum of the Senior Trades Certification for craft instructors, or City and Guilds equivalent.
- In 'non-craft' areas a qualification equivalent to an undergraduate diploma is required and further in-house development.

- Employment experience in their discipline for a minimum of 2 years after the date of qualification including a minimum of 1 year's experience in a supervisory or management post in the area of their discipline.
- Competence in communication and interpersonal skills.

Instructors in CERT's Unemployed Training Centres are required to have an appropriate National Tourism Certification Board (NTCB) or City and Guilds craft qualification plus a minimum of three years appropriate experience. Instructors on full-time craft courses in CERT hotel schools and the Institutes of Technology are recruited in accordance with Department of Education regulations, e.g., instructors of craft-level cookery courses must have either an Advanced Cookery (Supervisory Level) Certificate from the NTCB, or the City and Guilds of London 706/3 Advanced Cookery Certificate.

It is estimated that approximately 600 trainers are involved in training for persons with disabilities. Entry criteria or minimum qualifications for trainers are determined by the individual employing organisation.

In recent years a number of organisations have developed programmes to provide training for their trainers. FÁS has developed a suite of open-learning based programmes which help trainees to improve their skills and acquire recognised certification.

Pedagogical training for FÁS trainers is predominantly provided through the completion of the range of training and education courses, ultimately leading to a BA Degree (or Masters) qualification.

The courses are certified by the National University of Ireland and comprise:

- Foundation in Training and Continuing Education
- Certificate in Training and Education
- Diploma in Training and Education
- Certificate in World Class Standards
- Certificate in Equality
- Degree in Training and Education
- Masters in Training and Education

FÁS is also working with NUI Maynooth to develop a Diploma in Social Inclusion. The approach will integrate the experiences gained from the 'Foundation in Training' programme and the work done by the National Rehabilitation Board to develop a diploma which would qualify people in the training of people with a disability. The Diploma will also address the wider issues of social inclusion, including the nine groups listed in the Equal Status Act 2000.

Apart from the public training and education organisations, there are a large number of private training companies and individual trainers. There are no regulations governing these companies and trainers apart from standard business legislation. There is nothing to stop anyone calling themselves a trainer. These trainers may or not have any formal qualification in the subject which is being taught. There is a

general assumption that 'if you know your subject then you can teach it'. However, if such trainers provide courses which receive public funding support, the public authorities usually insist on them having suitable qualifications. Thus, for example, FÁS maintained a register of approved trainers for training supported by the Training Support Scheme.

6.4 Trainers in the workplace

In many companies, there are training managers who are responsible for the organisation of training within the company. The majority of training managers have had some form of formal trainer training but many had little when they started in the job and they subsequently obtained training qualifications on a part-time basis. The responsibilities and rights of a trainer or tutor within companies do not differ from that of any other employee.

The Irish Institute of Training and Development was founded in 1968 and aims to provide a professional body to develop and monitor standards in training and development in Ireland. The IITD organises Certificate and Diploma part-time courses in training and human resources development in co-operation with a number of Institutes of Technology throughout Ireland.

In relation to the on-the-job training of apprentices, trainers must be themselves qualified as a craftsman or master craftsman. However, they do not require any training or teaching qualification.

THEME 7 - Skills and Competence Development and Innovative Pedagogy

7.1 Skills Anticipation Mechanisms

There are a number of mechanisms for skills anticipation in place in Ireland. The principal education and training organisations have established some form of future assessment, and the Expert Group on Future Skill Needs provides a research and co-ordination mechanism at national level. Increasingly, the requirements of the national system of certification is demanding that training/education organisations align their courses in a systematic manner to identified needs.

The Expert Group on Future Skill Needs was established in 1998 by the Government in the context of increasing concerns about labour and skill shortages in Ireland. The Expert Group reports jointly to the Ministers of Enterprise, Trade, Employment and Education and contains representatives of the social partners, Government Departments, industrial development organisations and education/training bodies. It thus represents an unique collaboration between the enterprise and education sectors. The Group has undertaken research on a wide range of skill areas including ICT, engineering, biotechnology, construction, pharmaceuticals, e-business, research and the labour market as a whole. Its recommendations have been very influential in increasing public investment in ICT and other scientific fields. In general, the Expert Group has concentrated on issues of the number of persons required and has not examined details of curricula.

Education and training organisations use a mixture of formal consultation, informal feedback and research to identify future skill needs. FÁS has a representative Board of Management and advisory committees in a number of sectors to inform it of sectoral needs. It also undertakes, through its research department, studies of future skill needs. At local level, decisions on training course mix are based on a variety of local data including course demand from the public, expected recruitment demand from new or expanding companies, the success of existing courses in terms of job placement and the views of various local organisations including social/voluntary organisations and chambers of commerce.

7.2 New pathways and new education partnerships

There is widespread recognition of the need to develop more flexible forms of delivery of education and training. Open and distance learning can ameliorate some of the geographical and time barriers faced by many potential learners by mobilising information and communication technologies, including internet access and video/telephone conferencing. Improvements in communications infrastructure, increases in the capabilities of personal computers and accessibility to computers at reducing hourly rates, or free of charge in the case of public libraries, make it an increasingly viable mechanism for learning.

Barriers to increased use of open and distance learning include the fact that, notwithstanding the positive developments recorded above, many people do not have regular access to the internet. In addition, the development costs of creating suitable open learning programmes should not be underestimated. It is also important to recognise that to be fully effective open and distance learning methods of delivery

need to be supplemented by support mechanisms that allow direct teacher-learner contact.

There are currently two main providers of distance education opportunities in Ireland; the National Distance Education Centre (OSCAIL) and the Open University. The number of students on under-graduate courses enrolled in the National Distance Education Centre has increased over recent years. The National Distance Education Centre based in Dublin City University was established as a collaborative structure of higher education and other providers in the State in the early 1980s. A report on a symposium on the Future of Open and Distance Learning in Higher Education in Ireland was published in July 2000. The report sets out that Ireland should have a national centre for open and distance learning in higher education. A national centre should be re-structured in such a way that it is seen to be independent of any one institution and its mode of governance should include representatives of all key institutional interests, but also representatives of the Social Partners.

FÁS Net College offers distance learning and development opportunities over the internet. It provides a range of course options, mainly in computer subjects, which are available for a fee, or free of charge to certain groups such as the unemployed. In its *Statement of Strategy 2002-2005* FÁS has indicated an intention to invest in the development of its Net College as a vehicle to promote the increasing use of e-learning. In 2002, 3170 persons followed FÁS Net College courses.

7.3 Responding to Changing Skill Needs

Overall development of the apprenticeship systems is co-ordinated by the National Apprenticeship Co-Ordination Committee. The Committee provides a consultative forum for FÁS, the Dept. of Education and Science, employer and union representatives. From time to time apprenticeship standards and curricula are reviewed by expert committees representing the social partners and education/training organisations.

The Institutes of Technology also have had systems in place for many years which involve them in researching needs, and obtaining external approval, before commencing new programmes of study. There is also an established process for reviewing such courses periodically (e.g. every five years).

At the overall level, under the Qualifications Act (1999) the awards Councils are to inform themselves of education, training skills and qualifications requirements of industry, including agriculture, business, tourism, trade, the professions and the public service and the level of knowledge, skill and competence to be acquired by learners and promote practices in education and training which meet those requirements.

THEME 8 – Validation of learning – recognition and mobility

8.1 Background and General Introduction

In the White Paper on Adult Education: Learning for Life published in 2000, Adult Education has been defined as:

“Systematic learning undertaken by adults who return to learning having concluded initial education or training”. The core principles underpinning the policy outlined in the White Paper are:

- Life long learning as a systematic approach
- Equality
- Interculturalism

It is indeed appropriate that the Irish Government decided to publish a White Paper on this issue at this time. During the 1990s Ireland experienced hitherto unprecedented economic growth and far-reaching social development. This led to a greater awareness of the need to foster an educated society to ensure continued economic prosperity.

In 2002 the Task Force on Life Long Learning produced its report in which it concluded that among other things:

- Life Long Learning requires a significant systematic shift within the education, training and certification systems and the enterprise sector along with a change of culture on the part of society and individuals.

One of the gaps in the provision of vocational education and training in Ireland until recently was the absence of a unified comprehensive framework for validation and certification. The Qualifications (Education and Training) Act (1999) established the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI). The remit of the Authority encompasses further and higher education and has three main functions.

- To establish and maintain a framework of qualifications based on standards of knowledge, skill or competence to be acquired by learners regardless of where, when or how such learning takes place whether in institutions or colleges of education and training, or in the workplace or the community.
- To facilitate lifelong learning through the promotion of access, transfer and progression for all learners including those who have special needs.
- To establish and promote the maintenance and improvement of the standards of awards of the further and higher education and training sector, other than in the universities and to liaise with bodies outside the state for the mutual recognition of awards at transnational level.

The national framework of qualifications is a new development and is not just an amalgam of existing awards and systems. It is an outcomes based approach to the recognition of learning. It is “a framework for the development, recognition and award of qualifications in the State, based on standards of knowledge, skill or competence to be acquired by learners” (Qualifications Act, 1999). In its policies and criteria (April 2002), the Authority further defined this to be

“the single, nationally and internationally accepted entity, through which all learning achievements may be measured and related to each other in a coherent way and which defines the relationship between all education and training awards”.

The framework embodies a vision for learning which recognises all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective.

The national framework of qualifications focuses primarily on learner needs. It promotes the setting of standards for awards in a coherent and transparent way and promotes the quality of both programmes and awards. The framework will create a coherent and understandable system for co-ordinating and comparing awards. In addition, it will facilitate international comparisons between awards. By broadening the possibilities for recognising learning, the framework will facilitate lifelong learning. In addition, it will also facilitate access, transfer and progression.

On 11 June 2001, the remaining parts of the Act were enacted and the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) and the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) were established. The two new awarding Councils will make national certification available for all education and training in the State, other than awards made in respect of primary and second-level education, the Dublin Institute of Technology and the Universities.

The two awards Councils have three principal functions:

1. The establishment of policies and criteria for the making of awards and the validation of programmes;
2. The determination of standards of knowledge, skill or competence to be acquired by learners, before an award may be made by a Council or recognised by a Council, and
3. The making and recognition of awards where persons have achieved the required standards as set out.

The two awards Councils have separate but inter-dependent roles. They set criteria for the making of awards, determine the standards of knowledge or skill to be acquired by learners before being granted an award and make or recognise awards where required standards have been reached. Members of the Councils are drawn from a wide spectrum including learners and providers of further and higher education and training and the social partners. Under the terms of the Act, any provider can apply to either of these Councils for validation of a programme of education or training regardless of where it is provided. Such programmes can take place in institutions, in the workplace or in the community and be either part-time or full-time. Ensuring the quality of awards is central to the tasks confronting the Councils. The awards made should be fully recognised both nationally and internationally. The Councils also provide for progression and transfer of students, with full recognition for their studies to date, to Institutes and Universities.

FETAC's remit includes validation of further education and training programmes and the establishment of quality assurance mechanisms. The validation of prior and experiential learning, work-based learning and community and private sector education come under its aegis. It supercedes the functions of the National Council for Vocational Awards and takes over the certification functions of the main training institutions, FÁS – Training and Employment Authority, National Tourism Certification Board, Teagasc – Agriculture and Food Development Authority and the Fisheries Board, thus bringing together former certification agencies under one banner.

HETAC, which assumes the functions of the National Council for Educational Awards, is the awarding body for the third-level educational and training institutions outside the university sector. It will, like FETAC, undertake the validation of programmes and set and monitor standards. It is also charged with ensuring that student assessment procedures within institutions are fair and consistent and ensuring academic and financial protection for students in commercial educational institutions providing programmes validated by HETAC. It also monitors the educational needs of the economy in the Institutes of Technology.

The NQAI recognises that changes in systems and structures, and in attitudes, are required to address many of the issues involved in achieving the objectives of enhanced arrangements for access, transfer and progression. An anticipated outcome of the work of the Authority, in general, is a more diverse learner community, with diverse needs, throughout further and higher education and training. It is a policy of the NQAI that changes should be brought about to meet these learners' needs. These changes will impact on many organisations, groups and individuals at all levels in education and training.

8.2 Facilitating the recognition of qualifications

A major policy goal in relation to the Irish qualification system is to improve access, transfer and progression. The NQAI has defined specific policies, actions and procedures through which it will meet its objectives in this regard. They are set out under four themes:

- Credit
- Transfer and progression routes
- Entry arrangements
- Information provision.

The key policy on credit is the development and implementation of a national approach to credit. This should meet the needs of learners in a lifelong learning context, facilitating credit accumulation, credit transfer and processes for the recognition of prior learning. It should also accord with ongoing developments in Europe in relation to credit systems.

Under the heading of transfer and progression routes, policy is that learners achieving awards should have eligibility to transfer or progress. It is the intention that all awards should have some associated possibilities for transfer or progression, and that support needs of learners to enable transfer or progression should be met. The NQAI have set out procedures for providers in relation to:

- Identification of transfer and progression routes
- Specification of requirements for transfer and progression
- The need to support learners to enable transfer and progression routes to operate.

Under the heading of entry arrangements, the NQAI policy is designed to extend accessibility, and to focus the concept of access on the achievement of an award (rather than on entry to a programme), through the definition of factors necessary as a basis for successful participation. This will require procedures for providers in relation to:

- Clear, fair and consistent arrangements for entry
- Appeals processes
- Statements of the knowledge, skill and competence needed as a basis for successful participation
- Clarity about awards demonstrating eligibility for entry.

Finally, information provision procedures are designed to ensure that all relevant institutions and organisations contribute to the provision of high-quality, comprehensive and accessible information for learners.

8.3 Recognition of non-formal and informal learning

The White Paper on Adult Education recognised the need for improvements in this area, with particular reference to community based education and workplace learning. In addition to certification system developments, the White Paper noted the need for systemised supports to guide learners.

The NQAI recognises that not all learning takes place in formal education or training programmes. To give full effect to lifelong learning it is important to recognise the value of all learning irrespective of how it was acquired. The NQAI has therefore

introduced policies to ensure that non formal learning is recognised and duly accredited. Specifically, providers of further and higher education and training must follow a set of procedures which include statements covering:

- The arrangements for eligibility to enter, including a statement of the knowledge, skill and competence needed by the learner as a basis for successful participation on the programme.
- Arrangements to assess learner's eligibility to enter
- Further selection arrangements, where these apply
- A statement of arrangements available for recognition of prior learning, for entry to each of their programmes, and for access to an award
- Possibilities for transfer and/or progression associated with the programme, including any relevant specific progression linkages
- Details of learning support available for specific learner groups such as learners with disabilities, or learners whose mother tongue is not English.

It is noted that one of these 'requirements' relates to the recognition of prior learning. However, it is necessary to acknowledge that at present there is little provision for the recognition of non-formal learning.

THEME 9 - Guidance and counselling for learning, career and employment

9.1 Strategy and Provision

Guidance services in Ireland are both education and labour market based, located within educational institutions and in employment services offices. Within educational settings, guidance services are based in post-primary schools, higher and further education institutions and through second chance education programmes e.g. Youthreach. In the labour market sector FÁS is statutorily responsible for the provision of guidance services. Guidance services are offered through local employment centres which offer services to the unemployed/jobseekers, persons with disabilities and asylum seekers in approximately 159 locations around the country.

At primary levels there is no formal guidance provision. However, there are elements of guidance in the curriculum e.g. ‘substance abuse’ programmes, ‘stay safe’ programmes. In some schools, support teachers are available to support the needs of children with social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties.

Guidance at second level is a universal entitlement as per the Education Act, 1998. Each school is granted an additional teaching resource to assist it with its guidance provision, ranging from approximately eight hours per week in small schools (< 250 students), to approximately two additional posts in schools with more than 1000 students. Guidance also forms part of the curriculum in senior cycle through the Transition Year Programme (TYP), Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). 103 schools recently benefited under the Guidance Enhancement Initiative, 2001. Under the Initiative schools submitted proposals for additional staffing resources for guidance purposes. Proposals that established links with the local and business community, promoted the uptake of science at senior cycle, and focused on disadvantage, were given priority.

In the further education sector the guidance and counselling provision is within the VEC system and in community education settings. The guidance allocation to VECs is the same as for post-primary schools. In addition, information regarding Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses is provided to students by the course tutor. Information is provided to participants on community education programmes through the course tutor/co-ordinator.

All universities and most Institutes of Technology (ITs) have careers and counselling services available to students. Careers services are based in Careers Advisory and Appointments Offices and counselling services are offered through the student counselling service.

In the adult education sector a range of services is available designed to assist people to make choices about their lives and to make changes consequent on these choices. Assessment helps clients to obtain a structured understanding of their own development. A counselling service is also available in the adult education sector to help clients explore their thoughts and feelings on their present situation and the options open to them for the future.

Guidance at primary, second-level and third-level is available free of charge as is guidance in the adult education sector. However, there are a small number of private providers where fees are charged – usually on an individual basis for professional advice, guidance and counselling in relation to career options.

The National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) is an agency of the Irish Department of Education and Science. Its main roles are to support and develop guidance practice in all areas of education and to contribute to policy formation in the Department in the field of guidance. In the White Paper on Adult Education the government proposed to put in place a National Adult Guidance and Counselling service and €35m was to be provided for this service over the period 2000-2006. The planned service should include personal, educational and career guidance and will cover the pre-entry, entry, on-going and pre-exit stages.

Ireland has not had an integrated comprehensive structure for providing career guidance and advice. However, the Task Force on Life Long Learning stated that:

“An integrated strategy for development is seen as vital with all relevant agencies participating in supporting co-ordinated actions – particularly through joint approaches by FÁS, the National Centre for Guidance in Education, second level, further and third level providers. Such integration could provide for joint web-based information systems, with hyperlinks between related web sites; development of an integrated database of learning options and co-operation with Northern Ireland Learn Direct guidance initiatives. The latter could build on the experience of FÁS to date in this area.”

Consequently, the Taskforce recommended that a single national source of learning information (the National Learning Line) should be developed. The service would compile information on Lifelong Learning, and provide it via a telephone service, the Internet and in disability-friendly media. The learning website should also provide links to relevant Websites (e.g. FÁS, VECs, Institutes of Technology, etc.) The potential for developing appropriate services on an all island basis should also be explored.

9.2 Target Groups and delivery

Outside the formal education system a National Employment Service is provided by FÁS in over 134 locations with an additional 25 services operating in disadvantaged areas. Vocational guidance and counselling is provided as a basic universal entitlement for clients of FÁS.

Career guidance provided by Employment Services Officers includes:

- Individual interviews
- ICT – career information databases
- Telephone information
- Psychological Testing
- Workplace experience

Recent initiatives include the establishment of a national internet-based vacancy-taking call centre CALLNET and the development of a multimedia careers package – Career Directions. Career Directions, FÁS’ computerised career guidance tool, was updated during 2002 and now hosts an extensive database on careers information. This interactive programme allows users to perform self-assessments and access its careers database, which contains information on over 720 careers.

The programme has been developed into a web-enabled package and also contains links to all current vacancies and training courses on the FÁS web site. Career Directions is also available on multimedia CD, online at www.careerdirections.ie and also through the FÁS website. Career Directions has been distributed to over 1,250 locations nationwide, including FÁS Employment Offices and Training Centres, guidance counsellors, Youth Information Centres, second level schools and publicly-funded careers services in third-level institutions.

There are over 30 Youth Information Centres (YICs) nationwide managed by a variety of youth organisations. YICs offer an information service on a wide number of issues including employment matters, local community services and education and training to young people.

Within the Youthreach programme for early school-leavers, there is a pilot measure for guidance, counselling and psychological services. This involves the provision of a number of hours per week assistance. Youthreach staff have been trained in non-formal guidance skills under the EU Employment Initiative.

9.3 Guidance and Counselling Personnel

Career guidance personnel in second-level schools are trained teachers who have completed a post-graduate qualification in guidance and counselling. These people are employed as teachers and may spend some of their time on normal teaching duties.

The Institute of Guidance Counsellors, established in 1968, is the professional body representing over 900 practitioners in second-level schools and in other settings. On behalf of its members and their clients the Institute has a liaison and advocacy role with government departments, management and trade unions organisations, national parent bodies, higher and technical education institutions, employment and training agencies, representatives of industry, and a wide range of non-government organisations. The institute has a constitution and a code of ethics. It promotes standards for entry into the profession and for the practice of guidance and counselling. It supports the professional development of its members through in-career training.

The National Centre for Guidance in Education also plays a role in developing the quality of career guidance in Ireland. It develops and evaluates guidance material, provides technical advice and information on guidance practice and organises in-career development training.

FÁS Employment Services staff are experienced staff who have experience of working life and have an aptitude for providing advice and guidance in this regard.

A formal qualification is not essential. However, FÁS has developed, in conjunction with the NUI Maynooth, a National Certificate in guidance and counselling and a higher level Diploma/Higher Diploma in adult guidance and counselling. FÁS staff are encouraged and enabled to obtain these qualifications. FÁS has also make provision to train relevant staff in skills to enable them to provide this service to persons with disabilities.

THEME 10 - Financing Investment in human resources

10.1 General overview and funding policy

The vast majority of funding for vocational training for individuals not in employment is provided by Government. This applies in respect of both training of young persons before entering employment, and the training of unemployed persons. This funding is channelled through two main Government Departments; the Dept. of Education and Science, and the Dept. of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. These Departments receive an annual allocation announced by the Minister for Finance at Budget time and approved by the Irish parliament. This money, in turn, is allocated by the two Departments to intermediary organisations who then spend it directly on delivering training programmes or by providing funds to the next level of delivery.

As well as national funds, Ireland also benefits from European Union funds provided by the European Social Fund under the EHRDOP which is part of the National Development Plan/Community support Framework 2000-06.

In relation to employed persons, Government policy is that the prime responsibility rests with employers. Consequently, employers pay most of the costs of employer training. There is public financial support for some forms of employee training.

The National Training Fund (NTF) was established by the National Training Fund Act, 2000, as a dedicated fund to support the training of those in employment and those who wish to take up employment. Section 7 of the National Training Fund Act provides for payments to be made from the Fund for schemes, the purposes of which are:

- a) to raise the skills of those in employment,
- b) to provide training to those who wish to acquire skills for the purposes of taking up employment, or
- c) to provide information in relation to existing, or likely future, requirements for skills in the economy.

This Section also provides that the Minister shall consult, from time to time, with representatives of employers and representatives of employees with respect to his/her functions under this Section of the Act. The National Training Advisory Committee provides a forum for the fulfillment of this provision.

The National Training Fund is resourced by a levy on employers of 0.7% of reckonable earnings of employees. It applies to the main kinds of employment - approximately 75% of all insurable employees. It is collected as part of the national Pay-Related Social Insurance scheme administered by the Dept. of Social and Family Affairs.

The NTF is separate from Exchequer funding. It is accounted for separately and is shown in the Book of Estimates as an Appendix to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment's Vote. In 2002, a total of €204.5 million was spent from the Fund on approved schemes.

The National Training Fund supports a range of training schemes administered by organisations such as FAS and Enterprise Ireland. Enterprise-led schemes, such as those operated by Skillnets Ltd., are also supported from the NTF. The schemes to be funded are approved by the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, with the sanction of the Minister for Finance as to the amounts to be allocated to the various schemes.

Due to the small size of the country, and administrative structures, nearly all funding is allocated on a national, rather than regional or local, basis.

No comprehensive statistics on expenditure on vocational education and training are collected in Ireland. This reflects the wide range of organisations with responsibilities in the area plus the difficulty of distinguishing unambiguously VET from other forms of education. However, most VET forms part of the National Development Plan/ EHRDOP 2000-2006 framework and it is an EU requirement that regular monitoring reports are prepared on this programme. These reports provide expenditure by measure on an annual basis. They also indicate the expected amount of ESF funding for each measure. Table 8 below has been compiled from the data for the period 2000-2002 and includes all measures within the EHRDOP except those of a primarily employment type.³ The measures are grouped within the four 'Pillar' classification used in the EHRDOP based on the four Pillars of the European Employment Guidelines. Broadly speaking the data includes all publicly-funded vocational training activities for the unemployed, post-second-level further education and below-degree-level higher education. By far the two biggest areas are programmes under the responsibility of the Dept. of Education and Science and FÁS. Total expenditure in 2002 was €1,507 million, compared to €1,430m and €1,137m in 2001 and 2000 respectively. Support from the European Social Fund was around the one hundred million euro mark – figures for 2002 are not finalised at present and may be adjusted upwards.

³ The most important exclusions were Community Employment (part of Measure 3) and Employment Support Services (Measure 15)

Table 8**Expenditure and Funding of VET in OPEHRD 2000-2006 (EM)**

Pillar	Total Expenditure			ESF Expenditure		
	2000	2001	2002	2000	2001	2002
Employability	362	502	560	89	88	62
Entrepreneurship	30	18	21	11	7	8
Adaptability	402	400	420	15	20	24
Equality	0	1	2	0	0	1
Other	342	509	504	0	0	0
Total	1137	1430	1507	115	115	95

The Employability pillar relates to preparing persons for employment – typically either young persons or the unemployed. This is a major area of expenditure at €560m in 2002 and the main area of ESF funding. Entrepreneurship relates both to business start-up and supports for training within existing companies. This is a relatively small pillar at €21m although the intention is to increase it. Adaptability includes various measures broadly oriented to life-long learning or further education/training including the Back to Education Initiative and the Middle-Level Technician/Higher Technical Business Skills measures. This is a large pillar at €420m in 2002. The final pillar is Equality which is a small measure funding special initiatives – mainstream gender equality initiatives are included in the other three pillars. Finally, the ‘other’ group of measures relates primarily to investment in physical infrastructure within the education system. None of this investment is supported by the ESF.

10.2 Funding for Initial Vocational Training

The State is the dominant funder of all IVT carried out within the education system. The European Social Fund provides a very significant level of support to this training. A small amount of funding is also raised from individuals and business sources. Schools are required to raise a percentage of the non-staff pay grant they receive from State sources as a ‘local contribution’. They must also pay the first portion of each teacher’s salary. These monies are raised by miscellaneous fund-raising activities organised by school boards of management and may also include a contribution from church sources. In the case of schools run by county/city vocational education committees (VECs), they receive a small amount of funding from VEC funds – which would include funds raised from property taxes on businesses. Schools, and more particularly, third-level colleges also receive occasional donations of money or equipment from local businesses.

Initial VET at second level, i.e. the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme (LCAP) and the Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC), are all State-funded on a formula basis. The formula is based on a standard pupil-teacher ratio. There is also a per-pupil non-pay grant.

In the case of secondary schools and community/comprehensive schools, each school's board of management receives funds directly from the Department of Education and Science. In the case of vocational schools, the funds go to the vocational education committees, which distribute them to the vocational schools under their responsibility. There is an annual application process where the schools and VECs apply to the Department of Education and Science and are issued with an approval to provide a certain number of places. In respect of PLCs the approval also relates to a particular mix of courses. In relation to capital expenditure, this is allocated in response to submissions, if approved, from schools or VECs to the Department of Education and Science.

In relation to third-level initial vocational training, each institute of technology produces a five-year strategic plan. It needs to obtain approval from the Department of Education and Science to introduce new courses – in line with overall decisions about student numbers. The institutes of technology are given an annual allocation of places and an approved level of staffing by the Department of Education and Science.

The grants for salaries to the institutes of technology are formula-based using teacher hours per annum per student (THAS). The THAS formula has different weights for different disciplines – more for science, information technology and engineering. Each college also gets a grant covering non-pay costs and a grant known as the 'ESF tuition fee' in respect of each student. The funds are paid directly by the Department of Education and Science to the different institutes.

Means-tested maintenance grants are available for students at institutes of technology and for those on Post-Leaving Certificate courses. Each local authority is responsible for paying maintenance grants to students whose home residence is in their area. The local authorities are then refunded the costs by the Department of Education and Science. Persons with disabilities can also obtain special financial support. There are also special supplementary grants for students from very socially-disadvantaged groups such as 'Top-Up Grants' and provision under the 'Student Assistance/Access Fund'.

Funding for apprenticeship comes from the government, employers and, indirectly, apprentices themselves. Apprentices are employees of companies under an apprenticeship contract. They receive a wage while in apprenticeship, which varies by year of apprenticeship, and is a percentage of the full (adult) craft worker wage. During the phases of on-the-job training, the employer pays the apprentices' wages and bears whatever other costs are incurred. During the periods of off-the-job training and education, the State, through FÁS, pays an allowance to the apprentices equivalent to their wages.

Employers fund apprenticeship through their payment of wages to apprentices during periods of on-the-job training, and through the costs of supervision and raw materials used by apprentices during these phases. No calculations of these costs are available. It is generally assumed that they are roughly equal to the value of net output generated by apprentices while on-the-job, so that the net cost to employers of on-the-job training is approximately nil.

Equally, apprentices can be thought to fund their own apprenticeship by accepting lower wages during training. Some would argue that the lower level of apprentice wage rates reflects their lower level of productivity. Others believe that it is an investment by apprentices to secure higher wages when qualified. The actual situation is probably a mixture of these two views. No estimates have been made in Ireland.

10.3 Funding for Continuing Education and Training for Adults

In general, 'normal' continuing education and training for adults is funded directly by the individuals. There is no comprehensive system, as in some countries, of paid education/training leave. Adults attending part-time or evening courses normally pay the full cost. The main exceptions to this are where the employer pays the cost (see 10.4 below) or if the trainee is unemployed or from a recognised disadvantaged group (section 10.5 below).

Support for persons attending part-time courses at third-level is provided through tax relief under the taxation system.

The Dept. of Education and Science provides funding for a range of adult literacy programmes, with support from the European Social Fund. All programmes are provided free of charge.

10.4 Funding for enterprise continuing education and training

Enterprise-based CVT is purely voluntary. However, the State provides financial supports to encourage training in companies. Until the end of 2002 FÁS ran the Training Support Scheme for small and medium-sized companies in certain sectors of industry. This provided a financial subsidy towards the cost of attendance at approved training centres. The scale of subsidy varied, depending upon the size of the company, from 70% for small companies to 50% for companies in the 51-150 size category. A similar scheme was also operated by FÁS in the Construction industry. These Schemes have now been terminated and will be replaced in 2003 by a new Competency Development Programme to support the training of employees in a range of sectors. (see Section 5.3)

Enterprise Ireland provides funding to support training, as part of company development, in approved firms within the manufacturing and internationally-traded services sectors. The level of support depends upon a number of factors including region, size of company and stage of development.

The third main source of public support is through the Skills Net programme. This is an industry-led programme providing training support for a variety of sectoral or regional initiatives.

The CVTS 2 survey in Ireland found that companies spent €364 million on training courses in 1999. This represented 2.4% of their labour costs. Average expenditure on training courses per employee was €600. The major components of costs were fees to external training providers (€118m), the labour costs of employers while on

training courses (€145m) and the labour costs of company staff involved with training (€85m). Companies also paid €5 million in levies to FÁS, and received €9 million in grants and subsidies. (The levy system is no longer in operation.)

10.5 Funding for VET of unemployed people and other socially-excluded

In general, unemployed persons and those from other socially-excluded groups are provided with financial assistance to undertake education and training programmes. The Back to Education Allowance Scheme provides a financial allowance to certain persons following full-time third-level or Post-Leaving Certificate courses. (Persons receiving unemployment benefits, lone parent's allowance or disability benefit from the Dept. of Social and Family Affairs for over 6 months). The basic allowance is increased if the person has adult or child dependants instead. In addition, they receive an amount to cover the additional costs of studying. In addition, courses for this group are nearly always provided at no charge.

The VTOS Scheme provides financial support for unemployed and other socially-disadvantaged groups to attend second-level or further education courses. VTOS participants must be aged 21 or more and in receipt of social welfare payments for at least six months. Unemployed persons receive a training allowance equivalent to the maximum rate of unemployment benefit. Other social welfare categories continue to receive their payment. There is an additional bonus payment for persons who have been in receipt of social welfare payments for over one year.

FÁS provides training allowances to all non-employed persons attending its full-time training courses. These allowances are set at approximately the same level as unemployment payments and provide extra payments for persons with adult or child dependants. Training Courses are also provided free of charge. A 'training bonus' is paid to long-term unemployed persons. A contribution to approved childcare costs is also made and trainees can receive travel and accommodation support where necessary. The CERT suite of training courses for unemployed persons follow the same principles of free tuition and an allowance for trainees linked to unemployment benefit rates.

Funding of these payments is made through the standard route from the Dept. of Finance to the relevant Government Dept. and then to the implementing agency.

In terms of trends over the last few years, there has been an expansion of provision of programmes paying allowances to try to encourage a greater take-up or return to education of disadvantaged persons. Another trend has been the increased recognition of childcare costs as a potential barrier to participation, and hence a willingness to provide public funding to meet them.

THEME 11 - European and International dimension, towards an open area of Lifelong Learning

11.1 National Strategy Related to Policy, Programme and Initiatives at EU Level

The EU plays a major role in VET in Ireland. The EU is both a major funder of VET in Ireland (Section 10.1) and also a major contributor to VET policy. This takes the form of discussion, agreement and monitoring with the Irish Government in relation to programmes for Structural Fund support, and the support for innovation and best practice through various EU-programmes such as Leonardo and its predecessors. EU VET policy, as developed by the European Commission and agreed in Council policy documents, also strongly influences Irish policy makers.

Much of Ireland's economic and social development investment is set within the framework of the National Development Plan 2000-2006. This sets out the Government strategy for development and in particular that part which is supported by European Union funds. Education and training activities are covered in the Employment and Human Resources Development Operational Programme 2000-2006 (EHRDOP). This programme was strongly influenced by the European Employment Strategy and the annual Employment Guidelines. The four pillar framework of the Guidelines was used as the basis for the EHRDOP (Employability, Entrepreneurship, Adaptability and Equality).

The EHRDOP contains 51 measures/sub-measures including most of the activity of the public education and training systems with the exception of primary and second level schooling and Universities. The total expenditure under the EHRDOP over the seven years was forecast at €14,199m of which the EU will contribute €901m. (see Section 10.1 for actual expenditure). This figure shows the continued significant funding contribution of the EU to the Irish education and training sector. The management and monitoring of the EHRDOP also enables the EU to influence the direction of policy and programmes in this important area.

Irish education and training policy has been informed by the annual Employment Guidelines agreed by the Council of Ministers. The Irish response is presented in the annual Employment Action Plan (EAP) for Ireland. For example, the EAPs for the last two years have made stronger provision for the training of employed people in response to European Commission recommendations. Following the European Council's agreement on quality in work indicators, the EAP now addresses this area.

In June 1999, the Education Ministers of Europe meeting in Bologna signed up to a programme to establish a European Area for Higher Education by the year 2010. There has been much progress since Bologna in developing a two-cycle system of higher education, introducing a system of easily-readable and comparable degrees, introducing the Diploma Supplement, developing a credit system, promoting quality assurance, promoting mobility and encouraging a European dimension to higher education.

Steps are underway in Ireland to support these objectives and to input into further

co-operation in the Bologna process. A parallel process of Europe-wide co-operation in vocational education and training is envisaged in the Copenhagen Declaration (2002). This involves work on transparency, guidance, the recognition of competences and qualifications, credit, quality assurance and the development of a European dimension in vocational education and training. Ireland is contributing to work in these areas, notably on credit and on quality. The Department of Education & Science, in co-operation with the relevant institutions in Ireland, are actively progressing these important international processes.

The European Commission's Memorandum on Lifelong Learning has also strongly influenced Irish policy makers. An extensive consultative process was undertaken in Ireland in respect of the Memorandum and the Memorandum provided a focus for the Task Force on Lifelong Learning.

11.2 Impact of Europeanisation/internationalisation on Education and Training

In general Irish education and training follows nationally devised curricula. However, there have been a large number of relatively small-scale initiatives involving partnership with other EU countries. Many of these were developed within the framework of EU funded initiatives such as Leonardo, Socrates and Adapt. In relation to language learning in higher education, students are encouraged and financially supported to spend one year overseas. Some Transition Year students are also facilitated by their schools to spend up to a month in a European country to improve their language skills. Some FÁS programmes provide language training including up to a three month period of placement overseas.

There are a number of programmes run which involve work experience abroad as a form of further development. Typically these programmes are provided for persons who have acquired an initial vocational education qualification e.g. marketing, engineering. They involve placing graduates in jobs overseas where their work will help them to develop their language skills and give them valuable overseas business experience. The employers association (IBEC) and FÁS are both involved in such initiatives.

The Wider Horizon Programme is a training and work experience programme aimed at disadvantaged young people aged 18 to 28 years. This is primarily aimed at fostering inter-communal relationships within Northern Ireland and with the Republic of Ireland. The programme involves mixed groups of trainees who undergo pre-departure training and overseas training/work experience. In 2001 there were 54 projects involving 1130 young people. The overseas locations were the USA, Canada and Australia. Another cross-border initiative in this area is the Interact Programme aimed at severely disadvantaged 16 and 17 year olds. The focus is generic and foundation training and lasts 30 days.

The European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) has become the standard qualification for people doing computer applications courses. FÁS provides an option for all training centre trainees to acquire ECDL qualifications either as part of their normal course work or through the internet-based Fasnet college.