



Structures of Education,
Vocational Training
and Adult Education
Systems in Europe

IRELAND

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If you wish to have more detailed information on education systems in Europe, we warmly recommend that you consult the EURYBASE database (<http://www.eurydice.org/>) and the CEDEFOP monographs (<http://www.cedefop.eu.int/>)

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INTRODUCTION

Europe is characterised by a very wide variety of education and training systems. In order that this diversity should be fully appreciated, EURYDICE, the information network on education in Europe, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) and the European Training Foundation (ETF) regularly update a set of national monographs entitled *Structures of Education, Vocational Training and Adult Education Systems in Europe*.

Descriptions relating to individual countries in turn include basic information on the administration and structure of their systems of education and initial vocational training at all levels (from pre-primary to tertiary). Also included are descriptions of initial vocational education and training in alternance and adult education and training within provision for lifelong learning. The initial and in-service training of teachers and their status are also considered.

The information is set out in accordance with a common structure to facilitate inter-country comparisons while ensuring that special features peculiar to each system are duly emphasised.

The description for each country is preceded by a diagram of its education system. Here again, the way the diagrams are presented has, as far as possible, been standardised so that common – and differing – features of the various systems can be more easily identified and compared.

The first chapter within each country section is devoted to a short presentation of the country concerned, together with the basic principles governing its education and training, the division of responsibilities and then more specific information (relating to administration, inspection, financing, private schooling and advisory bodies). The major reforms of education systems are also considered.

The other chapters deal in turn with pre-primary education, compulsory and post-compulsory education (general, technical and vocational provision entirely within schools). The way these chapters are structured depends on each national context. Where pre-primary education is not in reality separate from primary education, or where compulsory education spans different levels, no artificial division has been created. In the case of all countries, a brief description of the aims and structure of the level of education concerned is followed by further headings devoted to the curriculum, assessment, teachers and statistics.

Initial vocational education and training in alternance is the subject of a chapter in its own right. It includes all education and training for young people that is not essentially school-based, and thus covers for example apprenticeships based on the 'dual system' pattern, sandwich course training and any other initiatives and experiments with major elements of 'on-the-job' experience.

This is followed by a chapter on tertiary education, in which a summary description is supplemented by sections on admission, tuition fees, the academic year, courses, qualifications and assessment. The chapter includes any initiatives implemented as part of the Bologna process.

The last chapter deals with continuing education and training for adults (whether in or outside the labour market, employed or unemployed). It provides information on the political, legislative and financial framework of this kind of education, on the authorities concerned and their responsibilities, as well as on the general organisation of training for adults (types of institution, access requirements, programme objectives, the curriculum and quality assurance). There is also a brief description of guidance/counselling services, as well as of questions relating to assessment and accreditation including the recognition of non-formal kinds of learning.

The situation regarding teachers is dealt with in a specific section for each level of education discussed. Also provided are national statistics on the number of pupils, students, teachers and educational institutions and, where figures are available, on pupil or student/teacher ratios, attendance and attainment rates or, yet again, on the choice of branches of study or areas of specialisation.

The National Units in the EURYDICE Network have drafted the descriptions for their countries, each using the same proposed outline of content as a common framework. The information on initial vocational education and training in alternance, and on adult education has been prepared in close collaboration with members of the CEDEFOP REFER Network (in the case of the European Union and EFTA/EEA countries) and the National Observatories of the European Training Foundation (ETF) in the case of the 12 candidate countries. We are extremely grateful to them and to all those who were involved in this project in the EURYDICE European Unit in Brussels, CEDEFOP in Thessaloniki, and the ETF in Turin for their invaluable contribution to this fundamental source of information which is vital to a better understanding of education and training systems in Europe.

Given the number of countries now covered ⁽¹⁾ and the amount of data available, the description of each system of education and training may be consulted solely electronically on the website of the EURYDICE Network (<http://www.eurydice.org>), which brings it to the attention of the largest possible number of people and enables it to be updated on a more regular basis.

Patricia Wastiau-Schlüter
Head of the EURYDICE
European Unit

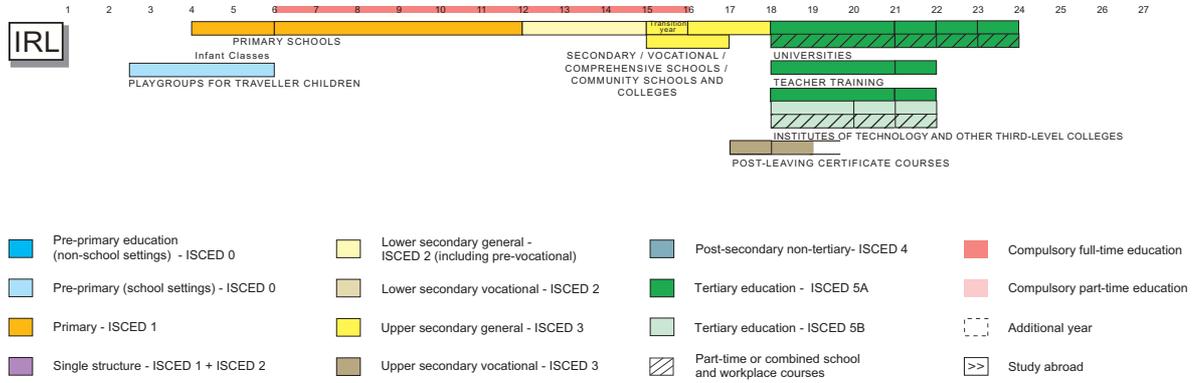
Johan van Rens
Director of CEDEFOP

Peter de Roij
Director of the ETF

June 2003

⁽¹⁾ The 30 European countries taking part in the EU Education Programme, Socrates.

Organisation of the education system in Ireland, 2003/04



Source: Eurydice.

1. RESPONSABILITIES AND ADMINISTRATION

1.1 Background

Ireland is a parliamentary democracy. The National Parliament (*Oireachtas*) consists of the President (*Uachtaran*) and a House of Representatives (*Dail Eireann*) and a Senate (*Seanad*). The Prime Minister (*Taoiseach*) is the Head of the Government. As of June 2002 the Government comprises a coalition of Fianna Fail and the Progressive Democrats. At the local level, the elected authorities are the county councils (29), city councils, borough councils (5), and town councils (75) Under the Constitution (*Bunreacht na hEireann*) freedom of conscience and freedom to profess and practise religion is guaranteed, subject to public order and morality. The majority of the Irish people are Roman Catholic (91.5% according to the 1991 census). The Constitution states that the Irish language (*Gaeilge*), the national language, is the first official language, and recognises English, the mother tongue of the majority of the population, as second official language. Irish is spoken in the Gaeltacht areas.

1.2 Basis of the education system: principles -- legislation

The State, through its involvement in education, seeks to achieve a range of aims, in particular those concerned with economic prosperity, social well being and a good quality of life for all citizens, within a democratically structured society. The State's role in education is underpinned by the principles of pluralism and diversity of individual need for education, of equality and the elimination of educational disadvantage, and of partnership between all the interests in the development of new policies.

The education system in Ireland is undergoing a sustained process of rapid change at all levels, in response to changing circumstances and demands throughout our society. The momentum of the change process continues to be driven by increasing demands for, and expectations from education at all levels.

The education system operates in a constitutional and legal environment which in part reflects the environment in society generally. That environment is characterised by specific, and often conflicting, constitutional rights and duties for parents, children, denominational owners of schools and the State.

In order to place the rights and duties of all the partners in education on a clear statutory basis, the Government is currently providing for extensive legislation in the area of education.

Particular elements of this programme include the Universities Act and the Scientific and Technological (Investment) Act, both enacted during 1997. The Education Act, enacted in 1998 provides a statutory basis for the operation of the education system at first and second levels. The Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999 provides for a national qualifications framework while The Education (Welfare) Act 2000 provides a means through which issues relating to the educational welfare of children, including the cause and effects of truancy and school attendance problems generally can be addressed effectively. The recent Teaching Council Act provides for the establishment of a self-regulating teaching council; The Youth Work Act provides a legal framework for the provision of youth work programmes and services by the Minister and VEC's, and the Vocational Education (Amendment) Act modernises certain aspects of the existing legislation relating to VECs. Work is ongoing on an Education for Persons with Disabilities Bill which is intended to provide a statutory structure within which the education of people with special educational needs can be guaranteed.

1.3 Distribution of responsibilities for the organisation and administration of the education and training system

The overall responsibility for education in Ireland lies with the Minister for Education and Science who is a member of the Irish Government and responsible to the National Parliament. In practice, the administration of education in Ireland is conducted from the

Department of Education and Science. Thus, the system of administration is a centralised one, although there are elements of localized management at first and second levels. Higher education institutions are autonomous statutory bodies.

Despite its centralised nature, a very large number of decisions are taken locally, that is, at school or college level.

Central level

The Minister for Education is responsible for the introduction of legislation relating to education and legislation is implemented by the Department of Education and Science. Up until 10 years ago very little legislation existed in the area of education. The system largely operated under Ministerial regulations, which reflect the provisions of the Constitution relating to education. However, the Education Act which was enacted in December 1998 has placed the education system at first and second levels on a statutory basis for the first time.

The Department of Education and Science sets the general regulations for the recognition of schools, effectively controls the curriculum and the public examination system and establishes rules and regulations for the management, resourcing and staffing of schools, and negotiates teachers' salary scales. The Department of Education and Science also exercises a detailed control function, particularly in budgetary matters, within the vocational sector (Vocational Education Committees). In addition, it has an overview function in relation to certain higher level institutions and is directly responsible for negotiating overall funding levels for designated institutions under the Higher Education Authority.

The Higher Education Authority has statutory responsibility for furthering the development of higher education and assisting in the co-ordination of state investment in higher education and preparing proposals for such investment.

In addition the Authority advises the Minister for Education and Science on the need or otherwise for the establishment of institutions and on the legislative measures required in relation to their establishment or in relation to any existing institutions of higher education. It is also required to maintain a continuous review of the demand and need for higher education.

Local and Institutional Level

At primary level, Boards of Management are responsible for the day-to-day government of the schools subject to the regulations laid down by the Department of Education and Science. The Patron (e.g. bishop, moderator, chief rabbi

or a committee in multi-denominational schools) of the school is responsible for initiating the steps necessary to establish the Board of Management, appointing the elected representatives to the Board and for nominating the Chairperson of the Board.

The Chairperson has specific functions for ensuring that the Rules for National Schools are being adhered to for schools having a recognised staff of more than one teacher, the Board comprises two members appointed by the Patron, two parents elected by the general body of parents of children enrolled in the school, the Principal Teacher, one other teacher on the staff of the school, elected by vote of the teaching staff, and two extra members proposed by the aforementioned nominees – a total of eight.

Boards of schools with a recognised staff of one teacher have four members including the school Principal.

There are private Secondary Schools and public Community, Comprehensive and Vocational Schools and Community Colleges.

Most Secondary Schools are owned and managed by Catholic religious orders and congregations and diocesan authorities. A small number of Secondary Schools are under Protestant management. Due to a decline in religious vocations, there has been an increase in the number of lay people assuming the post of school principal and in some areas, religious orders have surrendered control and, indeed, ownership of schools.

Secondary Schools are managed by Boards representative of the owners or trustees; parents and teachers are appointed to Boards and the teachers are appointed to Boards and the head teacher or principal is also a member of the Board. The Association of Management of Catholic Secondary Schools (AMCSS) represents the management of all Secondary Schools, whether religious, clerical or lay at regional level. At national level, there is the Council of Management of Catholic Secondary Schools (CMCSS).

Community Colleges and Community and Comprehensive Schools are owned and funded by the State but are locally managed. The Boards of Management of Comprehensive Schools include at least one nominee of the Minister for Education and Science (an Inspector), the local Vocational Education Committee (VEC) and the diocesan authority.

The Boards of Management of Community Schools consists of three nominees of the VEC, three of the relevant religious order or congregation, two elected parent representatives, two elected teacher representatives and the school principal.

Vocational schools are managed either directly by the Vocational Education Committee (VEC) of the area in which each school is located or by a subcommittee of the VEC. All Community Colleges have management Boards which are subcommittees of the local VEC. Typically, the composition of the Board is similar to that for a community school.

There are Vocational Education Committees, each of which has responsibility for continuing and technical education in its area. Each VEC appoints a chief Executive Officer (CEO) who directs the organisation and administration of the system in its area. Vocational teachers are appointed to a VEC area and may, in principle, be assigned to serve anywhere within the geographical area under the control of the VEC.

Universities and other higher education institutions are autonomous statutory bodies.

1.4 Inspection

The Inspectorate, which is part of the Department of Education and Science, is composed of three integrated sections:

- Primary [with responsibility for first level and special education];
- Post-Primary [with responsibility for second-level education];
- The psychological service.

The National Educational Psychological Service has been established by the Department to support the personal, social and educational development of all children through the application of psychological theory and practice in education, having particular regard for children with special educational needs.

The management structure of the Inspectorate is lead by the Chief Inspector, assisted by two Deputy Chief Inspectors and ten Assistant Chief Inspectors. The work of the Inspectorate is organised on a regional basis under the Regional Assistant Chief Inspectors. Inspectors working at primary level and those in the Psychological service generally work in schools within their assigned region while at second level some inspectors may be assigned duties outside their region, depending on subject specialisms.

At national level, inspectors currently have the main responsibility for quality assurance in both primary and post-primary schools. They engage in a wide variety of activities including inspecting, evaluating and reporting on the work of individual teachers and whole schools.

Psychologists work with individual students, parents, teachers and in school management administering tests and providing professional guidance and counselling. Inspectors at post-primary level are actively involved in the operation and management of the national Certificate Examinations. The Inspectorate also acts as liaison with the Colleges of Education, monitors the quality of in-career development programmes for teachers, participants in interview panels for some teaching posts and in partnership with other interested groups, engages in the work of curriculum renewal and development. The Inspectorate represents the Department of Education and Science professionally in schools and also offers advice to the Minister on matters of educational policy formulation.

1.5 Financing

The State meets the entire cost of sites for new schools. The local contribution to the cost of new schools has recently been reduced to 5% and capped at £50,000 and the cost of renovations reduced to 10% and capped at £25,000. Per Capita grants are paid to Boards of Management to help with running costs, and the State pays the salaries of teachers in full. A local per capita contribution is paid for each child attending the National School.

Many National School Boards of Management find it necessary to raise additional funds for the effective running of the schools, and seek 'voluntary contributions' from parents.

95% of Secondary Schools participate in a scheme of free education, which seeks to ensure equality of educational opportunity for all young people regardless of family circumstances.

1.6 Advisory and consultative bodies

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) advises the Minister for Education and Science on all aspects of the curriculum, assessment and on transition arrangements from primary to post-primary schools. The Education Act (1998) makes provision for the establishment of the NCCA on a statutory basis.

The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland was set up under the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999 to establish and maintain a framework of qualifications, to act as

the overall guarantor of the quality of awards and to facilitate and promote access, transfer and progression. A Further Education and Training Awards Council and a Higher Education and Training Awards Council are also established to provide certification within the framework of qualifications. Any service provider may apply to the relevant council for validation of a programme. Equally, a learner may apply to a council for an award or recognition of an award.

The Partners in Education

The Department of Education and Science is probably unique among Ireland's Departments of State in the number and heterogeneous nature of its interest groups. Some of the partners are concerned with policy formulation and the provision and practice of education in a direct and continuous way. Others have a more broadly-based interest and participation through their involvement in the social, cultural, economic and political fabric of society. All have varying rights and responsibilities, roles and functions. Some groups are long established, with activities woven into the country's historical and social development, while others are of more recent origin. The Department has identified over 120 organised groups with an active interest in the education service. The demands or requests of these groups may, at times, be at odds with one another. Where differences arise, the Department aims to respond to the various needs in a way which is balanced, equitable, transparent and non-discriminatory. The Department also strives to provide the best quality of service possible with the financial and human resources available to us. The groups which interact with the Department of Education and Science may be considered under the following headings:

- parents, represented locally by parents' associations and, nationally, by national parents' councils;
- students, represented by the Union of Students in Ireland and by individual student unions and associations;
- school owners, heads of institutions, patrons, governors, including boards of management and management of third level institutions, represented by managerial representative organisations and various professional groups;
- principals, teachers, instructors and support staff across the system, represented by trade unions, staff associations and a number of professional associations and groups;
- organisations engaged in out-of-school education and training activity, such as voluntary youth organisations, adult education bodies and other interested groups including community organisations;
 - organisations focusing on the educational needs and interests of particular groups in our society such as people with disabilities, people who are unemployed, members of the travelling community and others;
- Irish language organisations;
- Business and industry, represented by employer organisations and associations;
- Government Departments and statutory and non-statutory agencies, in particular those with responsibilities in the fields of education and training and industrial development;
- The institutions and other Member States of the European Union;
- Other international bodies which are involved in the analysis and provision of education and training.

The Department also has ongoing contacts with other groups and individuals, such as public representatives, the social partners, private sector organisations, the press and other media.

This reflects the general public concern about the operation of the education system and the effectiveness of educational outcomes.

1.7 Private Schools

Private, non-aided education is not significantly developed in Ireland at primary level. The existing private primary schools are autonomous in ownership and administration. Normally, teachers in such schools are fully qualified. There is no public funding for these schools. The schools are funded by parents' fees, donations, fund raising or other private means.

Legally all voluntary Secondary Schools are private in ownership, but they receive considerable financial assistance from the Department of Education and Science. In fee paying schools the State pays almost all the salaries of recognised teachers. In non-fee paying schools the State pays, in addition, capitation grants and certain other grants. To ensure State recognition, all Secondary Schools must operate in accordance with the Rules and Programmes for Secondary Schools, set by the Department.

2. Pre-primary Education

There is no national system of pre-primary institutions or nurseries in Ireland. The largest provider of pre-primary services is the Department of Education and Science through the primary school system.

In practice, most children start primary school on 1st September following their fourth birthday and consequently half of all four-year-olds and almost all five-year-olds attend primary school, where quality early education is provided by trained teachers in infant classes free of charge.

In addition to the provision for children in the infant classes in primary school, the Department of Education and Science funds some specific pre-primary services. These are:

- the Early Start programme, a pilot pre-primary education initiative for children who are most at risk of not succeeding in education;
- A programme in a Dublin inner city community, The Rutland Street Project;
- Special programmes for children of traveller families.

The remaining pre-primary educational services which do exist have developed mainly on a voluntary basis. Provision of this kind is not normally aided by the Department of Education and Science, and is not part of the formal education system. These include playgroups, Irish medium playgroups (*naíonraí*) and day care centres. The latter usually receive financial assistance from the Department of Health and Children.

2.1 Organisation

All forms of pre-primary education are optional, compulsory education begins at age 6.

Infant classes operate on the same days as the other classes in National Schools, and last for the duration of 4 hours and 40 minutes per day, between the hours of 9.00 a.m. and 2.00 p.m. Playgroups are generally open four or five days a week from 9.30 a.m. to noon. The *naíonraí* functions for two to three hours daily and cater for children aged 3 to 4 years. All the play activities are conducted through Irish.

Attendance in the infant classes is free of charge. Parents are required to contribute

towards the cost of sending their children to playgroups and day care centres.

In National Schools, children in the infant section are divided into classes by age. In playgroups, children are not necessarily grouped by ages, but may be encouraged to play together in mixed-age groups.

2.2 Curriculum/Assessment

The recommended programme of instruction in the two years of the infant section is part of an integrated programme extending over the eight years to the end of primary schooling. The role of infant classes is to initiate children in formal learning. Teachers monitor pupils' progress through continuous observation.

2.3 Teachers

The teachers of infant classes are primary teachers, with the same training and the same status and pay and are allocated by class. Pre-primary units for travellers' children are staffed jointly by teachers and child care workers. In the case of Early Start, each class of 15 is staffed by a teacher and a childcare worker.

Playgroup staffs do not usually have any special training. In the *naíonraí*, a *Comhchoiste Reamhscolaiochta* (Joint Pre-school Committee) provides training courses. Staff in day care centres hold either a national certificate awarded after two years of training or have other kinds of private training.

2.4 Statistics

The pupil teacher ratio in national schools 2000/2001 ISCED 0-2 = 19.2

Total enrolment in ordinary classes: 423,344

Teaching teachers of ordinary classes: 17,280

Average class size (ordinary class) = old ISCED 0-1 24.5 = new ISCED 1

3. Compulsory Education/Training

The period of compulsory education is governed by the School Attendance Act, 1926. The law requires that children attend school between the ages of 6 and 16 years. Full-time compulsory education is therefore of ten years' duration. Compulsory school age is six years. Primary education covers a period of eight years (from 4 years – see chapter 2), after which the majority of pupils transfer to secondary schools at approximately 12 years of age. The last three years of compulsory education are usually spent in the Junior Cycle of second-level education.

The legal age at which young people may leave school is sixteen years. There is no compulsion on anyone over the age of sixteen years to participate in any of the education and training programmes available. However, every effort is made by the various providing agencies to ensure that as many young people as possible are aware of the education and training opportunities available to them.

3A Primary Education

The vast majority of primary schools (also known as National Schools) are, in effect, state-aided parish schools established under diocesan patronage, and the State gives explicit recognition to their denominational character. In 2000 the state financed twenty four multi-denominational schools and four inter-denominational schools on the same basis as other primary schools. These were established in response to parental demand. Schools may also be established where parents wish their children to be educated through the medium of the Irish language.

Outside of the Gaeltacht (Irish speaking area), there are 119 such schools providing primary education.

The State provides for free first-level education in National Schools, which are attended by over 99% of children to age 12+. Private primary schools charging fees are not entitled to receive state support, but they offer a broadly similar type of education. Normally, no defined catchment area is imposed on parents in the National School system. School transport services give accessibility where needed.

Of the 3161 ordinary National Schools throughout the country in 2000/01, 284 are single sex boys' schools and 284 are single sex girls' schools. The remainder are co-educational. Over half (54%) of all National Schools have fewer than 100 pupils (and hence 4 or fewer teachers). 99% of schools have less than 700 pupils.

3A.1 Organisation of the school

In the main, school buildings are used for one set of pupils per day. The typical National School divides pupils by age into eight -year groups. More than half the classes 58% in National Schools are single grade classes. Some are multi-grade classes and over a quarter (26%) are consecutive grade classes or classes where two standard groups are combined.

The Department of Education and Science regulations require that primary schools should be open not later than 9.30 a.m. but in practice, especially in urban areas, schools tend to begin classes at 9.00 a.m. and finish at 3.00 p.m. In addition to 30 minutes of religious instruction, primary classes are required to provide 4hours 10 minutes of secular instruction each day. National schools are required to be open Monday to Friday, for 183 days each year, spread over three terms from 1 September to 30 June. There are no prescribed textbooks.

Schools are free to choose textbooks and teaching materials.

3A.2 Curriculum

The revised primary school curriculum was launched by the Minister of Education and Science on September 9th, 1999. The revised curriculum is presented in six key curriculum areas some of which are subdivided into subjects and are as follows:

- Language: Irish and English;
- Mathematics;

- Social Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE): History, Geography, Science;
- Physical Education;
- Arts Education: Visual Arts, Music, Drama;
- Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE).

The different Church authorities have responsibility for the Religious Education curriculum.

The Department of Education and Science, working with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment and the partners in education through the Primary Curriculum Support Programme (PCSP), is guided by the following principles in approaching the phased implementation of the Primary School Curriculum (1999):

- Focusing support and implementation strategies at individual school level
- Targeting whole school staffs for in-career development programmes
- Enabling schools to plan for implementation in parallel with the system of national and regional in-career development support
- Presenting an integrated and coherent curriculum
- Focusing on curriculum areas rather than subjects
- Integrating assessment into the teaching and learning process.

Source: Primary School Curriculum Planning for Implementation Poster (Funded by the Irish Government under the National Development Plan 2000-2006).

Update with information from the PCSP website: www.pcsp.ie

A full school day comprises a period of not less than five hours and forty minutes. The school day allows for time to be devoted to assembly, supervision, preparation, roll call, secular instruction, religious instruction and recreational intervals. However, schools are permitted to reduce the school day by one hour for children in infants and first class and the time required for a half attendance may be reduced by one half hour. The decision to apply this concession rests with the Board of Management. Such decisions should be dictated by the educational interests of the children.

The Primary School Curriculum constitutes a detailed interpretation of the recommendations of the Review Body on the Primary Curriculum (1990). It encompasses the philosophical thrust of the 1971 Curaclam na Bunscoile and reflects the thinking and aspirations of the National

Convention on Education (1994), the White Paper on Education, Charting our Education Future (1995) and the Education Act (1998).

The revised curriculum incorporates the most advanced educational theory and practice and is designed to enable children to acquire knowledge and skills that are relevant to their lives both as children and adults. As we prepare for the 21st century it is important that the curriculum children experience in primary school is relevant and imaginative and appropriate to their needs.

The general aims of primary education are:

- To enable the child to live a full life as a child and to realise his or her potential as a unique individual
- To enable the child to develop as a social being through living and co-operating with others and so contribute to the good of society
- To prepare the child for further education and lifelong learning.

The same subjects are taught to all pupils, however, there are exemptions from the teaching of Irish to pupils with special educational needs. All subjects (including social environmental, and scientific education (SESE)) are introduced to all students from their first year in the Primary School. In general, subjects are taught at the same level to most pupils, with due allowance made in teaching content and in methodology for pupils who have special educational needs.

There are no transition or guidance periods/arrangements within compulsory primary education. The curriculum encourages a diversity of teaching methodologies and approaches which are designed to accommodate a wide range of pupil-learning styles and ability levels and active involvement of pupils in the learning process. Methodologies include whole class teaching, co-operative group learning, individual teaching, guided discovery learning, use of concrete materials, discussion work and extensive use of school environment.

In November 2002, the Minister launched the NCCA's Draft Guidelines for Teachers of Students with General Learning Disabilities. The guidelines represent the first national initiative in addressing the learning needs of the full range of students with general learning disabilities. At present these students are placed in a range of settings including special schools, special classes and mainstream classes in primary and post-primary schools. The guidelines, issued in initially as consultative drafts, are designed to provide support to teachers in addressing the needs of students with severe and profound, moderate and mild general learning disabilities

at primary level and post-primary junior cycle level. They provide appropriate access to mainstream curricula and support a broad and balanced range of learning experiences with particular emphasis on the learning needs of each student.

The guidelines were developed by the NCCA in close co-operation with a variety of bodies concerned with the education of students with special educational needs and will be issued to schools and others involved with the education of these students for an extensive process of consultation and piloting.

These curriculum guidelines, which have drawn on the most recent research and the best of current practice in Ireland and abroad, are intended to support the planning and implementation of the curriculum for students with severe/profound, moderate and mild general learning disabilities. They can be used in mainstream and special primary and post-primary schools, and all other settings in which these students receive their education.

They are intended for use by all teachers involved in the education of the student, and should also be accessible to parents and other non-teaching personnel directly involved with the student's education. They should be used in conjunction with the mainstream curriculum where possible and should be a valuable resource for schools in developing and revising their school plan.

3A.3 Assessment/certification/guidance

Decisions in relation to the nature and frequency of assessment of pupils' rests with each individual primary school. In the majority of schools, it is standard practice for pupils to be assessed by their teachers on a regular basis in key curricular areas. Tests most frequently administered are teacher –designed and criterion-referenced. Testing is designed to track individual pupil's attainment in specific subject areas. Tests are oral or written depending on the subject. Tests of attainment in Mathematics and English may be administered mid-year in many schools. Results of classroom assessment carried out during the school year, generally, feed into the overall assessment at the end of year. The issue of whether school based tests are compulsory or not rests with each individual school.

In addition to school and classroom based pupil assessment, the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science also evaluate pupils' attainment as part of inspection reports. Grading systems for teacher designed tests, at

school and classroom level, are selected by schools themselves. Assessment practices vary across schools. The results of assessment are used to tailor teaching programmes to individual pupils' needs and also provide schools with information on how individual pupils are progressing and how pupils in general are performing in the school.

Most pupils move automatically up to the next class at the end of the school year. However, occasionally, pupils repeat a year in the primary school. This is decided by the class teacher in consultation with the child's parents and other support teachers in the school, and is usually linked to mild learning disabilities or social immaturity. Pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools receive additional support from a Resource Teacher or Special Needs Assistant. The concept of an 'unsuccessful' primary school pupil does not exist in Ireland. There is no compulsory leaving examination at the end of primary schooling.

The transition of pupils from primary to post-primary is organised at local level.

Some post-primary schools seek a written assessment report on incoming pupils and others collate information on new pupils by means of an 'open day' during which teachers and parents have an opportunity to discuss important educational details pertaining to new entrants. Some second-level schools request in coming pupils to submit to aptitude tests.

Pupils progress to post primary when they have completed sixth class normally at the age of 12 years.

3A.4 Teachers

Staffing levels for primary schools are governed by the number of pupils in the schools and the manner in which these numbers fall within the enrolment ranges specified by the Department of Education and Science in the schedule of enrolments for the appointment and retention of teachers.

The initial training of teachers for national schools takes place in five Colleges of Education. Courses are normally of three years' duration. For colleges affiliated to the University of Dublin, however, pass degree courses last three years while honours courses are of four years' duration. The study of the theory and methodology of education is combined with periods of teaching practise in all years. Students also take two or three academic subjects in the first year and one academic subject in subsequent years. On successful

completion of the courses, students are awarded the degree of Bachelor of Education by the relevant university.

Graduates may also study fulltime in the Colleagues of Education for a professional diploma designed to allow individuals, already having graduate status, to qualify to teach in primary and elementary schools. The course consists of 14 taught modules over 3 semesters. Each semester is of 15 weeks duration.

Following graduation, students may apply for teaching posts, which are normally advertised in the national press by the Boards of Management. In-service training is optional.

3A.5 Statistics

NUMBER OF TEACHERS IN SECOND LEVEL SCHOOLS

OLD ISCED 2+3= NEW ISCED 2+3+4

1998/99

School Type	FULL-TIME			Full-time Equivalent of part-time	Overall Full-time Equivalent
	Male	Female	Total		
Secondary	4,921	7,555	12,476	1,361	13,837
Vocational	2,591	3,197	5,788	1,381	7,169
Community	1,232	1,421	2,653	364	3,017
Comprehensive	223	295	518	70	588
TOTAL	8,967	12,468	21,435	3,176	24,611

Note: Only teachers paid from funds by the Department of Education and Science are included in the above table. Part-time teaching staff, include job-sharers, eligible part-time teachers and other part-time teachers. The data in respect of Vocational schools relate to day courses only (Junior Certificate, Leaving Certificate and Post-Leaving Certificate courses).

3B Compulsory Secondary Education (Junior Cycle)

The last three years of compulsory education (for pupils aged 12 to 15 years) usually take place in the Junior Cycle of one of the main types of second-level schools: Secondary,

Vocational, Comprehensive, Community, Schools or Community Colleges. Parents are free to choose the second-level school.

In 2000/01 57% of ISCED 2+3+4 pupils attend Secondary Schools, 28% attend Vocational Schools, 15% attend Community and Comprehensive Schools.

Education is free of charge in the latter two types of schools and also in those Secondary Schools participating in the scheme of free education mentioned above. The remaining Secondary Schools (about 5%) charge fees.

The Secondary School (sometimes referred to as Voluntary Secondary School) is the largest category, comprising 56% of all second-level schools. A small proportion of these schools caters for boarders. Traditionally, these schools provided an academic (or grammar school) type of education. In recent years, however, they have been increasingly influenced by the practical and technical content of vocational education, the innovatory thrust of an extensive range of development projects, and the example and outcomes of major initiatives in the area of transition to adult and working life. In the same period, a broad consensus has emerged that every second-level school should attempt to offer a comprehensive curriculum, providing a broad balance between academic and vocational subjects.

Initially, the main thrust of the Vocational Schools was the inculcation of manual skills and the preparation of young people for trades. Nowadays, however, the full range of second-level courses is available in these schools.

Comprehensive Schools were first established in 1966 in areas where existing second-level provision was inadequate or non-existent. Fifteen such schools were established between 1966 and 1972. They combine academic and vocational subjects in a wide curriculum.

Community Schools and Community Colleges are similar in many ways to Comprehensive Schools but differ in management structure. The first such schools were established in 1972/73. As in the Comprehensive Schools, these schools provide a broad curriculum, embracing both practical and academic subjects for all second-level children in their catchment areas.

Many Community Schools and Community Colleges had their origins in the amalgamation of Secondary and Vocational Schools due for replacement or renovation. They also meet the schooling demands in newly developed urban areas formerly supplied through separate Secondary and Vocational Schools. Apart from the provision of comprehensive facilities to cater for the varying aptitudes and abilities of all children irrespective of family means, it was envisaged that these schools and colleges would

achieve the optimum utilisation of teachers, buildings and equipment, and would also be the focal point for community activities.

With a few exceptions, Vocational, Comprehensive and Community Schools and Community Colleges are coeducational. Many secondary schools are, however, single sex. Of the 424 secondary schools in the country in 1999/2000 116 are single sex boys' schools, 152 are single sex girls' schools and 156 are coeducational.

Almost half (46%) of all second-level schools have an enrolment of between 300 and 600.

The model school size is 300-400 students, the median school size is 400-500 students and the mean school size is approximately 450

3B.1 Organisation of the school

School buildings are used for one set of pupils per day and pupils in each year of Junior Cycle are grouped by standard, though the prevalence of mixed ability grouping is on the increase. Almost all second-level schools are open for five days and operate for 30 hours per week, or six hours per day, usually between 9.00 a.m. and 3.30 or 4.00 p.m. Class periods tend to be 35 to 40 minutes' duration.

Teachers are free to choose texts, or not to choose them.

3B.2 Curriculum

The Junior Certificate Programme and the Junior Certificate School Programme provide a single unified programme for students' aged broadly between twelve and fifteen years. It is a three-year programme culminating in the Junior Certificate Examination. Students must follow a number of core subjects which includes Irish, English, Mathematics, History, Geography, Civic, Social and Political Education and two other subjects from a list which includes languages, Science, Business Studies, Home Economics, Art, Music and Craft Design.

In addition Physical Education should form part of the curriculum in all schools and each school must have an agreed school policy and suitable Relationships and Sexuality Education programme in place.

A new course in Social, Personal and Health education (SPHE) at Junior Cycle is being

introduced to schools on a phased basis over three years with effect from September 2000. All second level schools must have SPHE as part of the Junior Cycle core curriculum from September 2003.

In September 1996, the new Junior Certificate School Programme was introduced to cater for a small number of students whose learning needs are not adequately met by the Junior Certificate. This programme can be described as a curriculum intervention in the general Junior Certificate Programme.

3B.3 Assessment/certification/guidance

The Junior Certificate examination is taken at the end of the third year of second-level education, wherein individual attainment is assessed. Each subject is examined individually by means of a written examination and, in a small number of subjects a project element e.g. Materials Technology (Wood). Apart from specified options, oral examinations are not a feature of the Irish Education system at this level. Account is not taken of assessments carried out during the year. Grades are awarded, based on the candidate's performance, ranging from A (over 85%) to F (10-15%), and NG (less than 10%).

In addition, teachers assess their students' work on a daily basis as part of the ongoing teaching and learning process. All schools organise tests, usually pre-Christmas and in May and towards the end of the school year. These school-based examinations are usually formal and set by the subject teachers. Reports are normally sent to parents. Many teachers also give regular tests within class periods to stimulate the learning process. The majority of schools also organise formal tests a few months prior to the Junior and Leaving Certificate examinations to assess the performance levels of pupils.

3B.4 Teachers

Second-level teachers are subject specialists trained in a university postgraduate course of one-year leading to the Higher Diploma in Education. They generally already have a BA, BSc or BComm. The teacher-training course is devoted to professional studies and includes at least 100 hours' teaching practice. Teachers of practical subjects, such as home economics, woodwork, metalwork, rural science and art,

follow four-year concurrent programmes of academic studies and professional training leading to the award of a degree.

All teachers are employed by their individual school management but are classified as public servants. In-service training is not compulsory but teachers are expected to attend as part of their ongoing training. In practice, attendance at most courses is voluntary, but certain courses, such as those supporting curriculum reform at national level, particularly when organised during the school day, do have obligatory status.

3B.5 Statistics

99.6 13-15 year olds are in full-time education

Compulsory Schooling ends at 1691.4 of 16 year olds are in full-time education

* Pupil teacher ratio is 16.1: 1

345,000 pupils are in second-level schooling

* Figures shown are for full-time teachers only and do not include full-time equivalent of part-time teachers for ratio calculations.

4. Post-Compulsory Secondary Education (Senior Cycle)

The three-year junior cycle is followed by a two or three-year senior cycle. Participation in post – compulsory education is high in Ireland with 92 per cent of 16 year olds, 81 per cent of 17 year olds and 63 per cent of 18 year olds in full-time education. In senior cycle there is an optional one-year Transition Year Programme followed by a choice of three two-year Leaving Certificate programmes (the Leaving Certificate established, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and the Leaving Certificate Applied). The Leaving Certificate examination is held at the end of the Senior Cycle in post-primary schools. Students normally sit for the examination at the age of 17 or 18.

Post-compulsory vocational education is described in Chapter 5.

4.1 Organisation of the school

(see chapter 3B)

4.1.A Transition Year

From the beginning of the 1994/95 school year, a Transition Year was recognised as the first year of a three-year Senior Cycle. The Transition Year offers pupils a broad educational experience with a view to the attainment of increased maturity before proceeding to further study and/or vocational preparation.

Pupils participate in learning strategies which are active and experimental and which help them develop a range of transferable critical thinking and creative problem-solving skills. At present, 40% of students take the Transition Year Programme.

Curriculum

Schools are obliged to ensure that there is a clear distinction between the Transition Year Programme and the Leaving Certificate Ensuing programme. The content of the Transition Year programme may include elements of the following: social education, moral education,

education for living (including home crafts and education for parenthood, employment and leisure), philosophy and applied logic, music and the arts, Irish studies, European languages, Visual education, media education and communication skills.

Some 500) second level schools are now providing a Transition Year – approximately 66% of the total number of schools.

Assessment/Certification

The Department of Education and Science does not provide formal certification on completion of the Transition Year programme. However, schools continue to develop appropriate forms of certification to suit their pupils.

4.1.B Leaving Certificate

The Leaving Certificate is a two-year programme, which now has three separate orientations Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme, Leaving Certificate Applied. These options are intended to provide maximum flexibility in the senior cycle in catering for different aptitudes, abilities and needs of pupils.

Curriculum

The approved course for recognised senior pupils must include not less than five subjects of which one should be Irish. In the Rules for Secondary Schools of the Department of Education and Science, the subjects approved are grouped as follows:

Language Group: Irish, English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Latin, Greek, Hebrew Studies, Classical Studies, Russian, Arabic, Japanese.

Science Group: Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Physics and Chemistry, Biology, Applied Mathematics.

Business Studies Group: Accounting, Business, Economics, Economic History.

Applied Science Group: Engineering, Technical Drawing, Construction Studies, Physics and Chemistry, Agricultural Science, Agricultural

Economics, Home Economics (Scientific and Social), Home Economics (General).

Social Studies Group: History, Geography, Art (including Crafts), Music, Home Economics (General).

Assessment/Certification

It is recommended that each pupil should take at least three subjects from the group of subjects for which he/she is best fitted, and at least two subjects from outside that group.

Separate Ordinary Level and Higher Level Leaving Certificate papers are set in all subjects. Mathematics and Irish are offered at three levels Foundation, Ordinary and Higher. Basically assessment and certification are the same as for Junior Certificate Examinations, however, oral and practical modes of examining are more widely used.

The Established Leaving Certificate Examination

Its stated aim is to prepare pupils for immediate entry into open society or for proceeding to further education. It is used for a variety of purposes: for example, as an entry qualification for a range of third-level institutions, including the universities and as a selection test for entry to many kinds of employment.

4.2 Teachers

See chapter 3A.5

4.3 Statistics

RATE OF RETENTION TO LEAVING
CERTIFICATE

COMPLETION OF ISCED 3

Approximate year of completion

1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	1999	2000
20	33	47	52	64	70	78	80	81

5. Initial Vocational Education/Training

5.1 Organisation

Legislation is important in respect of vocational training in Ireland, through the creation of publicly funded organisations to manage, advise on or deliver vocational training; through providing a 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 educational system, the most important piece of legislation is the Vocational Education Act, 1930 and amendments. This led to the establishment of the Vocational Education Committees (VEC's).

In respect of other vocational training the most significant pieces of legislation relate to the establishment of a number of bodies in the 1960's and early 1970's 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 persons with a disability or with 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.

Notwithstanding the specific provision for vocational training in the current legislation there is in practice no clear distinction between education and training until second level schooling is reached. As a general rule those pupils who want to pursue a vocationally oriented course go to vocational schools and those who are more interested in an academic career attend secondary schools. However, this is by no means a definite distinction as many second level schools of both types provide a wide range of subjects both vocational and academic.

Vocational training linked to a career choice or occupation more specifically commences at the end of the Junior Cycle Secondary when, in theory, those who wish to pursue an apprenticeship may commence their training. In

practice, however, most people who enter apprenticeship training have completed the Leaving Certificate examination.

Non-education State Agencies responsible for training in various areas are given below:

- FAS – Industrial Apprenticeship
- Teagasc – Training in Farming and Agriculture.
- Failte Ireland – Training for the Hotel, catering and Tourism industries.
- Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) – Training for the fisheries industry.

Training courses and establishments

There are a number of training programmes, all designed to provide initial vocational training. These are:

- Apprenticeship
- Traineeship
- Full-time specific skills training.
- Integrated education and training courses.
- Vocational training courses for early school leavers.

Apprenticeship

This section covers two main forms of alternating training; the apprenticeship system and the new traineeship system developed by FAS. 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 1970's 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 of and consultation with the various interest groups, the Minister for Labour in 1991, introduced a new system of apprenticeship 'Standards Based System'. This was implemented fully in 1993. The system is managed by FAS with the support of the National apprenticeship Advisory Committee which consists of the social partners, FAS and the Department 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. On successful completion of training an apprentice receives the National Craft Certificate awarded by FETAC which is a compulsory requirement for craftsperson status.

The standards based apprenticeship system 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 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 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 small. There are 26 trades designated by FAS under the standards-based system. Recent years have shown a rapid expansion in apprentice registrations and consequently in Public expenditure on the apprenticeship system in 2002 was 159m € made up of 131 €m in FAS and 28m € in the education system.

About 10-15% of all school leavers follow 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 night time courses. The professional bodies set standards

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 body 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 Agriculture 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.

Traineeship

Traineeship involves employers and FAS 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 FAS 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 FAS Training Centre.

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

Full-time Training Courses

FAS 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 FAS. The majority of participants are young people although courses are open to all age groups.

Persons seeking training are interviewed by the local FAS Employment Service Officer and directed to the appropriate course. 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.

Failte Ireland (formerly CERT), the State Tourism Authority, provides full-time day/block release courses for craft and management trainees in 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.

Failte Ireland is heavily involved in facilitation 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. Failte Ireland 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 programmes available are 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 2001/02 academic year. TEAGASC also provides a comprehensive range of short courses for adult farmers. A total of 5907 participants took part in these in 2002.

Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) 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 a total of 2,581 persons attended training courses in this industry. In 2002 a total of 736 persons were trained of which 22 were in receipt of national certificates/diplomas.

Vocational Training Courses for Early School Leavers

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 – 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 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 200 locations throughout the country, in YOUTHREACH Centres run by the Vocational Education Committees (VEC's) and in Community Training Workshops funded by FAS. The programme is managed locally by the VEC's and FAS Regional Management. The 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 measures) 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 department of Education and Science, Enterprise Trade and Employment and FAS. A joint Education/FAS working group is active providing the back-up necessary to support the initiative.

The principle underpinning these alternatives programmes is to make them different from the formal structure within the school system and group size is kept deliberately small. There is strong emphasis on the 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 Euros 24.5m in centres run in the education system and 29.1m € in Community Training Workshops and other FAS 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 by FETAC (NCVA) Foundation Level and Level 1 and options in the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate Applied are also available. The Senior Traveller Training Centre operated on the same basis as YOUTHREACH, but there is no upper age limit. Particular efforts are made to encourage Traveller parents into centres because of the impact this can have on their children's 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.

5.2 Education and Training Establishments

Department of Education

The Vocational Education Committees (VECs) are the main providers of vocational training under this Department. There is a VEC for each county and county borough – 38 in Total. Formally these are statutory committees of County Councils and certain other local authorities with responsibility for the provision of

technical and continuing education and training. VECs have their own corporate status and do not come directly within the system of city and county management. In practice, they manage schools and community colleges and provide ordinary second level school courses, secretarial courses, Post-Leaving Certificate courses and Adult Education. They provide grants and scholarships and appoint Adult Education Organisers to draw up and administer Adult Education Programmes. They have a major role in providing the YOUTHREACH and VTOS programmes.

FAS The National Training and Employment Authority

FAS was established under the Labour Services Act, 1987, to provide training and employment and guidance services. Its primary activity related to unemployed people but it also has a responsibility for encouraging the training of employees. It comes under the Authority of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. The FAS Board members, who are appointed by the minister comprise of a chairman, and representatives of relevant government departments, the social partners and other interested groups. FAS is the major body involved in the training of unemployed people and has a network of twenty training centres throughout Ireland as well as many contracted training facilities. FAS is responsible for Apprenticeship and has recently developed a Traineeship Training programme which applies an apprenticeship style system of training to other occupations within industry and the services sector. FAS 's activities are funded by the Government, the National Training Fund and the European Social Fund.

Failte Ireland (Formerly CERT), founded in 1963 comes under the authority of the Minister for Arts Sports and Tourism and is governed by a council appointed by the Minister. The council also has representatives of the social partners and educational and governmental bodies concerned with its function. Failte Ireland provides its services through a network of seven regional offices, ten hotel and catering colleges and three training centres for the unemployed and provides and temporary centres when required. Failte Ireland is concerned with standards and apprenticeship training for the industry and also runs and funds relevant training courses for young persons, and both employed and the unemployed adults. FETAC provides the necessary certification for Failte Ireland courses.

TEAGASC

TEAGASC is the body responsible for training in the agriculture sector. It was established under the Agriculture (research, training and advice)

Act in 1988 and comes under the authority of the Department of Agriculture and Food. TEAGASC supports a network of agriculture colleges, four of which are directly managed by the organisation. It also manages forty local training centres. It runs programmes for new and existing farmers including a Certificate in Framing. This is done in co-operation with the Farm Apprenticeship Board under the Farm Apprenticeship Scheme. TEAGASC is managed by an eleven member authority appointed by the Minister for Agriculture. The organisation is state funded.

Training for persons with disabilities

The National Rehabilitation Board which was responsible for all matters involved in the rehabilitation and training of persons with disabilities was dissolved. FAS took over the responsibility for the provision of the employment and training services. Other aspects of the NRB's work were taken over by the National Disability Authority. Since June 2000 FAS has been gradually bringing services for persons with disabilities into the mainstream of its overall provision and now the entire range of FAS Training and employment services are available to all and may be accessed in the normal way through its network of Employment Services Offices. As part of its services for persons with disabilities FAS provides guidance services, arranges the appropriate vocational training courses and provides a job placement service. Employment related supports and employer's grants are now also accessed through FAS.

5.3 Financing

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 the two main Government Departments: the Department of Education and Science and the Department 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. The 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 ERHDOP which is part of the National Development Plan/Community Support Framework 2000-2006.

In relation to employed persons, Government is that the prime responsibility rests with the 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 under 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:

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

The National Training Fund is resourced by a levy on employers of 0.8% of reckonable earnings of employees. It is collected as part of the national Pay-Related Social Insurance scheme administered by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs. The National Training Fund is separate from Exchequer funding. In 2002 a total of Euros 204.5M 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. Enterprised schemes such as those operated by Skillsnet Ltd. are also supported from the NTF.

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

Specifically apprentices who are employees of the company in which they serve apprenticeship and receive a nationally agreed proportion of the full craft wage rate. The amount related to the year of apprenticeship as follows:

YEAR 1. 33.3% of Craft Rate.

YEAR 2. 50% of Craft Rate.

YEAR 3. 75% of Craft Rate.

YEAR 4. 90% of Craft Rate.

During the phases of on-the-job training their employers pay their wages and bear whatever other costs are incurred. During the periods of

off-the-job training and education the state through FAS pays an allowance equivalent to the wages they are entitled to.

Table 1. attached summarises the funding arrangements for the main types of training programmes.

Further information on expenditure is given under the heading Statistics.

5.4 Curriculum

The curriculum followed on training programmes is generally occupation specific. For apprenticeship it is based on uniform pre-specified standards which are agreed with industry. The curriculum is written by experts nominated by the Department of Education and Science and FAS. Core skills for each trade are covered and some generic skills such as health and safety and induction are also included. All modules on the curriculum are compulsory.

Further details of what is covered on the types of training courses including apprenticeship can be found at 5.1. under the course type heading.

5.5 Assessment/qualifications/guidance

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, skills 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 June 2001 the two awarding councils of the NQAI were established – the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) and the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC). These 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 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 recognised both nationally and internationally. The Councils also provide for the 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, FAS – Training and employment Authority; the National Tourism Certification Board; TEAGASC – Agriculture and Food Development Authority – and the Fisheries Board, thus bringing together former certification agencies under one banner.

5.6 Teachers/Trainers

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

Training of Trainers in VET establishments

There is no national system for the pre-training or in-service of teachers, trainers and tutors employed in vocational and education and training. The majority employed in this sector have been recruited on the basis of a second level teaching qualification or trade or business qualification. However, significant work has been undertaken in this area by FAS, the National Training Authority both in the training of their trainers; in the registration of approved trainers and in leading the establishment of trainer's 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 on YOUTHREACH, Senior Travelling Centres and Adult Literacy Services. The issues relating to the 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 programme for the sector.

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.

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.

6. Higher education

The third level education system in Ireland encompasses the university sector, the technological sector and the colleges of education – all of which are autonomous and self-governing but are substantially state funded. In addition, particularly in recent years, a number of independent private colleges have developed, offering a range of mainly business courses conferring professional qualifications and, in some instances, recognised diplomas and degrees.

6.1 Admission requirements

Applications for most full-time undergraduate courses are made through the Central Applications Office(CAO). The CAO provides an applications pack with a handbook which lists all the courses on offer and gives information on how to apply for courses. Full details are available from the CAO website at www.cao.ie. The closing date for applications for Irish and other EU nationals is normally 1st of February and the 15th December of the preceding year for non-EU nationals. Decisions on offers of places are normally taken in August and September following receipt of the results of the Leaving Certificate Examination. When a Leaving Certificate student meets the minimum academic requirements for a third level college and there are more applications than places on the course, the student's examination results (based on a single sitting of the Leaving Certificate) are reduced to a single points score. This is calculated by giving a set number of points for each grade and then adding the six best values to get a point total. Students are then ranked according to their points score. The points levels for any specific course is determined by the number of applications for the course, the points received by the applicants and the number of places available on the course.

In some instances colleges prefer overseas students to apply directly to the institution and prospective applicants should check this before forwarding their applications to the CAO.

Academic Entry Requirements

The minimum academic entry requirements for the majority of third-level courses are

determined at individual institution level and are generally based on national examination performance. The minimum academic requirements for entry to primary teacher training are specified by the Department of Education and Science. In addition to basic requirements, some courses require specific grades in certain subjects.

Details in relation to minimum academic entry requirements can be found on the Department of Education and Science website at www.education.ie under the category *Learners and Trainers*

Mature Students

Applicants may apply to be considered under mature student entry to full-time third level education where they are at least 23 years of age on the 1st January on the year of their intended entry into third level education. The CAO documentation gives details of the procedure for application to the different third level institutions; in some cases applications must be made through the CAO; in other cases, directly to the institution in question and in other cases through a combination of both procedures.

Overseas Students

Entry requirements for overseas students are determined individually by each institution and are generally based on national examination performance and an English Language proficiency test.

6.2 Fees/Financial support for students

Under the Free Fees Initiative the State meets the tuition fees of eligible students who are attending approved third level courses. Generally speaking, eligible students are those who are first-time undergraduates who hold EU Nationality or Official refugee Status and have been ordinarily resident in an EU Member State for at least three of the five years preceding their entry to an approved third level course.

The Higher education grants scheme provides a means tested grant to eligible students who are pursuing approved third level courses.

The students would generally purchase course materials.

6.3 Academic Year

The academic year generally runs from September to June and is divided into either two or three terms with holidays in December (Christmas) and April (Easter). In recent years, some institutions have introduced semesterisation and modularisation of courses, giving greater flexibility to students.

6.4 Courses

The third level education system in Ireland offers courses at Certificate, Diploma, Bachelor Degree, Masters Degree and Doctoral Degree levels in a variety of disciplines.

6.5 Assessment/qualification

As a general rule, assessment in higher education involves examinations. Many courses also include ongoing assessment of assignments, projects, extended essays, research work and field work.

Typical learning at undergraduate level is by way of a programme of lectures supplemented by tutorials and, where appropriate, practical demonstration and laboratory work. Masters degrees are usually taken by course work, research work or a combination of both. Doctoral degrees are awarded on the basis of research.

6.6 Teachers

Lecturers can either be permanent, temporary or part-time. They are employees of the institutions and are classified as public rather than civil servants. In service training is a matter for the employer.

In general, minimum qualification requirements for Lectures in Institutes of technology and universities are

- a) An appropriate degree or an equivalent relevant professional qualification;
- b) Not less than three years relevant post qualification experience;

A working knowledge of the Irish Language.

6.7 Statistics

ESTIMATED RATE OF TRANSFER TO THIRD LEVEL

YEAR	PERCENTAGE OF AGE-COHORT
1965	11
1975	19
1980	22
1985	28
1990	35
1995	50
1998	52
1999	56
2000	57

7. Adult Education

7.1 Legislation

Under the Vocational Education Act 1930, 38 Vocational Education Committees (now reduced to 33) were set up to 'establish and maintain a suitable system of continuous education' and to 'supply or aid the supply of suitable technical education in their respective regions. Other legislative provision that covers some aspect of Adult Education is contained in the following Acts,

- The Industrial Training Act, 1967
- Labour Services Act, 1987
- Education Act, 1998
- Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999.

There is no sharp distinction in Ireland between initial and continuing vocational education and 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 Department of Education and Science in 2000 and a report by the Taskforce 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 key principles as outlined in the White Paper can be summarised as follows:

- Access – programmes to be provided at a variety of levels and locations to meet the diverse needs of target groups;
- Recognition – a comprehensive national framework of certification to be established so that achievement will be recognised by participants, potential employers and providers of further education and training;
- Quality, Relevance and Partnership – National standard of achievement to be set, with the close involvement of industry, social partners, education and training interests in programme design and assessment.
- Learner Orientation – there is widespread acceptance that the learner is at the centre of education and training process;
- Lifelong Learning – a framework in which all education and training is set;
- Equality – training and education institutions will ensure that participation of both women and men is promoted and facilitated. This will be extended to further develop monitoring systems and gender proofing procedures. Flexible delivery systems, bridging programmes, guidance and advisory services, childcare support and staff development methods will be used to promote such participation.

7.2 Administration

The three main Government Departments responsible for Adult Education and Training in Ireland are the Department of Education and Science, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and the Department of Social Community and Family Affairs. Other Government Departments have an interest in their own special areas – for example in relation to Agriculture, fishing or tourism health and children.

The Department of Education and Science is responsible for educational activity in Ireland and on its behalf the 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.

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, mainly through its Agency FÁS, is responsible for Adult Training., which is based primarily on economic and labour market considerations. FÁS provides a comprehensive range of training courses for the continuing training of the unemployed. Companies themselves 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. 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 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.

7.3 Funding

Any clear distinction between education and training programmes for adults in Ireland is difficult to ascertain. Any programme, whether the focus is primarily education or training can

be seen as developmental. Consequently funding provision for adult education must also include arrangements for training as well.

The vast bulk of funding for the adults not in employment is provided by Government. This funding is channelled through two main Government Departments; the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. These Departments receive an annual budget allocated 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 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 ERHDOP which is part of the National Development Plan/Community Support Framework 2000-2006

In relation to employed persons, Government policy is that prime responsibility rests with employers. Consequently, employers pay most of the costs. The practice of employed individuals funding their own education or training is widespread. In some

7.4 Organisation

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 Euros 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.

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.

FAILTE IRELAND (formerly CERT) the organisation responsible for the training of people for the hospitality and tourism sector 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 Euros 8.7m on this programme.

7.5 Main providers of adult education and training

Vocational Education committees (VEC's)

Vocational Education Committees are centrally involved in adult education, often in partnership with the voluntary sector. Each VEC represents a cross section of educational, cultural, industrial and commercial interests. They appoint Adult Education Organisers, who are responsible for all adult education provision in their areas. Their specific functions include identifying the educational needs of adults, co-ordinating existing activities and liaising with schools and colleges and with community/economic interests in promoting adult education activity.

VEC's have also established Adult education Boards, who draw up and administer adult education programmes in their areas. VEC's co-operate with other organisations (e.g. FAS and the Area Based Partnerships) in delivering a wide range of education/training programmes.

Secondary Schools

Secondary Schools provide adult education under a Pilot Scheme, introduced in 1992. Under this scheme a certain amount of money is provided to 20 schools on a once-off basis, as seed capital to develop adult education

programmes. This has been extended to Community and Comprehensive schools, which currently provide leisure/hobby type courses; cultural and business courses and courses leading to accreditation or state examinations.

Third Level Colleges

An estimate 5% of intake into full-time courses in third level colleges is made up of mature students. With the growing emphasis on the importance of adult education, it is anticipated that this proportion will increase over the forthcoming years and it is hoped that the figure will reach 16% by the year 2010.

The National Universities in Cork, Dublin, Galway and Maynooth have separate adult education or extra-mural departments serving the needs of their respective areas and beyond. The Institute of Technology offer a range of day-time and night-time programmes for adults leading to certification.

As mature student participation increases third level colleges are beginning to invest, largely with the project or EU Initiative fixed term funding, in the development of innovative outreach strategies to provide programmes, counselling and mentoring systems, flexible accreditation and provision in community settings supported by childcare facilities.

FAS

FAS the National Training and Employment authority provides a wide range of full-time training programmes, work experience programmes and employment supports to ensure the supply of a highly skilled workforce to meet industry needs and to facilitate the re-integration of those who are socially excluded into the labour market. It has a network of employment service offices and training centres throughout the country as well as many contracted training facilities and community-based training locations. FAS provides three kinds of training and employment programmes: Development Courses, Apprenticeship Training and Community Employment.

Prison Education Service

The Prison Education Service consists of a partnership between the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and a range of educational agencies. The Department of Education and Science provides an allocation of 165 whole-time teacher equivalents (over 200 individual teachers) to the prisons through nine VEC's.

Education Co-ordinators in Area Based Partnerships

Thirty eight Area Based Partnership companies involving a partnership of statutory and voluntary agencies provide a range of education, training and support services in designated areas of disadvantage. The objective is to support community development and social inclusion. Funding for the EU aid programmes is co-ordinated by the Department of Tourism Sport and recreation. The Department of Education and Science funds a national co-ordinator and 25 whole-time equivalent posts which enable a local education co-ordinator to be provided in each of the partnership areas.

An **Bord Iascaigh Mhara** (BIM) the Irish Sea Fisheries Board is responsible for the industrial training and education of those entering and those already working in the fishing industry. It aims to provide a higher level of professional competence for existing sea-going personnel, a career structure for new entrants and practical training for fish farmers.

Coillte Teoranta: – The Irish Forestry Board provides a wide range of forestry and wood related training.

Teagasc – Training in Agriculture is the body providing education and training services to the agriculture industry, including Farm Management, Economics, Marketing of Agriculture Produce and Rural Development.

Uduras na Gaeltachta, is the state body responsible for the economic, social and linguistic development of the Gaeltacht (Irish Speaking) areas. Much of its training is concerned with management and work experience. It supports Gaeltacht candidates in gaining an apprenticeship in a craft, grant-aids industrial training and provides direct training for industry.

Professional Institutes provide courses at second and third level to prepare for membership. These include the Incorporated Law Society, the Institute of Professional Auctioneers and Valuers, the Society of Chartered Surveyors, the Institute of Accounting Technicians in Ireland and the Chartered Association of Certified Accountants. These courses are available in both public and private colleges.