

etbi

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news

Education and Training Boards Ireland

Education and
Training Boards –

Transforming

the landscape

Highlights from the
ETBI Congress

The Role of VET

in Ireland's
Economic Recovery



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Education and Training
Boards Ireland
Bord Oideachais agus
Oiliúna Éireann

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The information contained in *ETBI News* is, to the best of our knowledge, accurate at the time of publication. The views expressed in this magazine do not necessarily reflect those of ETBI.

Welcome

This Winter edition of ETBI News is published and circulated widely across much of the public and private sectors at a time when we have seen the re-emergence of some trade union industrial action. ASTI has rejected the Haddington Road Agreement (HRA) and members are under union directives which prohibit meetings outside school time as well as impacting on post of responsibility duties and junior cycle in-service training.

In the ETB sector it is the dual-union schools which are experiencing the greatest threat of disruption but hopefully we can shortly see a resolution to the current troubles as government and union now seek to engage in open constructive dialogue.

ETBI has no wish to become embroiled in this industrial relations matter but we would exhort the ASTI to re-establish the common salary scale and conditions of service by joining other teacher unions in the HRA. From a union perspective this makes sense as there seems to be little future in the continuance of the current action.

ETBI believes that school managers and teacher unions could, and should, work together to make the best of a difficult operational environment which has been imposed as a result of on-going cuts to services and resources. In these difficult times we can all benefit from much greater cooperation between management bodies and teacher unions. For example the current post of responsibility structure, while depleted, is not fit for purpose and needs to be restructured and redefined. Draft proposals could be agreed and presented to the Department of Education and Skills for consideration.

Reform is an evolutionary process and creating a more efficient and effective middle management structure, fit for

"We need to acknowledge the professional commitment of our school management and staff which continue to prioritise learning outcomes as an unwavering priority in these difficult times."

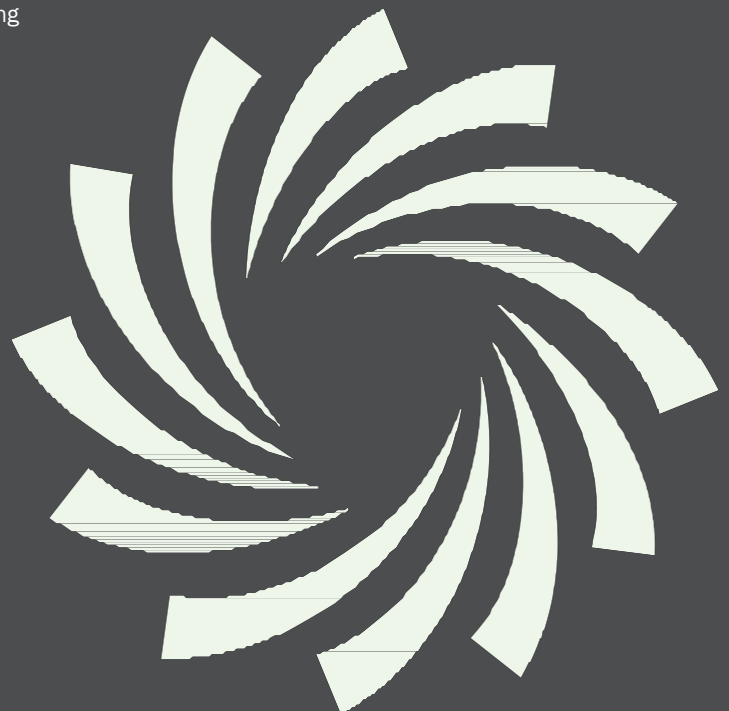
a modern educational operational environment, could well enhance our schools' capabilities and effectiveness. The dynamic that can be generated from open, honest and flexible bilateral talks between both sides could have the potential to drive much needed reform which can benefit all concerned.

The entire IR structure in the education sector was created by a different generation for a different time. These structures have never evolved and are not particularly efficient and effective. There is a need here also to look creatively at these structures in the context of operational efficiencies and purpose.

The education sector has endured very considerable pain over the last five years as the country tries to cope with near economic collapse. Salary cuts with increases in taxes and levies allied to increases in pupil teacher ratio, along with cuts to staffing and budgets make for a very different working environment than

5 years ago. We need to acknowledge the professional commitment of our school management and staff which continue to prioritise learning outcomes as an unwavering priority in these difficult times. Perhaps therefore, at national level, both union and school management bodies should be working closer together by reviewing and adopting best national and international practices which could impact positively on schools and their operational environment.

In such circumstances can sacred cows be left outside the door? Could we work collaboratively to make a difference to the schools that both school managerial authorities and teacher unions see as central to their existence? Exploring change as a process which can make a real difference locally and nationally is worth consideration. Time will tell if we can make that new leap of faith.



What now for ETBI?

Paddy Lavelle CEO, Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB, and President CEEOA



Jim Cooke wrote a fine account for the centenary of IVEA describing the life journey of the association. Over the hundred-year history, common themes emerge regularly. The Secretary General in the Department addressing Congress in 1979 spoke of IVEA's long and honoured history and its role in helping develop educational policy. This was when the association established a permanent secretariat for the first time. Now at this historic juncture, we need to ask again what the association's purpose is. What is the role that we need to define for ourselves as we go forward? There is no doubt that the recent mergers and the imminent arrival of the FÁS training services into ETBs have altered the landscape. The association has served us well in the past and will do so into the future. Much as the advent of a permanent secretariat enabled huge new work to be done on behalf of VECs from 1980, so at this point we need to establish what needs to be done.

Significant statements have been made in the past year that help clarify the Department of Education and Skills vision for the way ETBs will operate.

"There is no doubt that the recent mergers and the imminent arrival of the FÁS training services into ETBs have altered the landscape. The association has served us well in the past and will do so into the future."

The Minister, in his speech to ETBI Congress, has explicitly counselled ETBs to work through ETBI so that there is a single point of contact and coherence in our sector. He has been clear before in referring to the ETB Act and his power to request ETBI to carry out specific roles and functions to support ETBs. Suffice it to say that his expectation is that ETBI will respond to his requests. He said: "I look forward to working closely with ETBI as an enabler supporting the 16 new Education and Training Boards both individually and collectively". Clearly there will need to be a re-envisioning in our sector to match these expectations.

Our old habits of dealing with policy formation, consultation and debate have to change with the media at our disposal. Naturally, there will be resistance to change. We need to remember that our society has been revolutionised by digital connections. When we focus ETBI's purpose, it will be about prioritising meagre resources on the support of the main functions of ETBs. ETBI will develop the capacity to address the major challenges facing ETBs in a collaborative way. Already

we have, for example, HR and IR policies being collected and interpreted through the cooperative efforts of the HR professionals of ETBs. In each area of ETB operation, the support of collaborative action can become the driving force behind the ETBI. Great work is being done using online forums, email etc. to ensure that there are thoughtful and expedient responses to current issues. The education and training world expects fast response times, insightful initiatives and clarity.

The role of IVEA was to represent the members and for ETBI that role remains. Each of the 16 ETBs is a member. We are now being encouraged to use ETBI to articulate a vision for the sector. In a recent discussion with CEOs, Mr Seán Ó Foghlú, Secretary-General in the Department of Education and Skills, urged us to come together as CEOs in ETBI to discuss, develop and agree approaches that make sense for the future of the sector. In many ways, this is to be expected. As we move into the training area formerly occupied by FÁS, it is inevitable that a centralised structure for the management of training activity will have to be mirrored in the reporting and policy environment.

There are historical tensions in any relationship and the relationship between the representative body and its members is bound to have had such a story. Rather than replay those



writes about productive organisations. He has studied the research and also the practice in successful workplaces. Among the studies he has conducted is a challenging one on the nature of work. He looked at motivation among public service workers and found that when workers became personally familiar with cases that their work supported, their productivity improved greatly. When as ETBs we seek to improve productivity, it should be with that insight in mind. We need to link the work we do to the ultimate beneficiaries, the learners. Rather than using the learner as an explanation, we need to introduce a closer connection, so that our action and inaction is more intimate. In this way, what are perceived as obstacles may be overcome, what are viewed as chores may be seen as creators of opportunity and what are seen as acceptable work flows may be seen as unacceptable.

tensions or seek to ignore them, it is probably more realistic to focus on the future. As separate VECs in the past, we have had some great strengths. They have been attested to very well in the last couple of years as we defended the existence of VECs. Equally, those strengths exposed us to acting separately and such separate action limited our ability as a sector to display coherence. On the other hand, FÁS training has had an ability to respond to national government priorities quickly through its centralised administration. We need to build a capacity to respond now so we will be seen as efficient in our operations. The Minister's exhortation resounds as a warning too. We need to be alert to the danger of failure to achieve.

WHAT OUGHT ETBS DO NOW?

A clear role has been identified for us in the Education and Training

Boards Act 2013. The role gives us distinct work to do. It will be other agents who decide whether we are achieving our outcomes – among them the Department and SOLAS. Through ETBI, we need to develop a vision for our sector. The process of strategy formation expected from ETBs is progressive. The first phase will be our involvement in the creation by SOLAS of a new Further Education and Training Strategy. That process has already begun. Next, each ETB will be devising its own strategy. It will be a more meaningful strategy if we move together in a coherent way. Ultimately, we will be measured together.

Adam Grant is an organisational psychologist in the United States who

We have some way to go to fully capitalise on the mergers that have taken place and the one to come with FÁS training. The history of merging organisations is littered with failed enterprises. As in all human activity, perspective is hugely important. Holding out a vision that is attainable and will guide future action is critical. We need to form that vision together, plan the actions that will allow us move towards it and evaluate ourselves as we proceed. If we keep the connection with the learner, we will ensure that we do not get waylaid. It will keep us motivated to do the right thing as we go on. We can depend upon the culture we have developed as VECs that valued personal service, relationships and accountability.

"Through ETBI, we need to develop a vision for our sector. The process of strategy formation expected from ETBs is progressive."

Education and Training Boards – TRANSFORMING THE LANDSCAPE

By Dalton Tattan, Programme Manager, ETB/SOLAS Project Office,
Department of Education and Skill



INTRODUCTION

On 1 July 2013 the 33 Vocational Education Committees (VECs) were dissolved and replaced with 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs). It is expected that SOLAS will be established shortly to replace FÁS and, before the end of 2013, 7 training centres will be transferred from it to ETBs. These training centres are located in Ballyfermot, Finglas, Baldoyle, Tallaght, Loughlinstown, Tralee and Cork. The remainder of the training centres will be transferred in 2014.

These changes mark the most significant structural reform of the education and training sector in the history of the State. The rationale for restructuring ETBs was to address the low scale and size of operations in VECs and to better position the sector for future development. The new Education and Training Boards Act 2013 provides for the establishment of these newly configured bodies, reforms and modernises their governance, removes outdated terminology and articulates a new set of functions for ETBs which better reflects the current and emerging roles in the education and training sector. The SOLAS reforms, provided for under the Further Education and Training Act 2013, envisage a key role

for ETBs in relation to the future delivery of further education and training in an integrated manner.

ETB/SOLAS PROGRAMME BOARD

Undoubtedly the scale of change now underway gives rise to many challenges. In recognising this, the Department of Education and Skills (DES) has established the ETB/SOLAS Programme Board. The Programme Board is chaired by Seán Ó Foghlú, Secretary General of the DES, and is composed of members of the Department's senior management team as well as two CEOs of ETBs – Paddy Lavelle (Dublin and Dún Laoghaire ETB) and David Leahy (Galway and Roscommon ETB) – Michael Moriarty, General Secretary of ETBI and Paul O'Toole, Director General of FÁS. The role of the Board is to actively support and enable the sector to implement the reform programme. Through this approach the many strands of that

programme will be approached in a coordinated way.

A Project Management Office (PMO) has been established which reports to that Programme Board. I have been appointed to that office as Programme Manager. Frank Fox, Peter Collins and Lynn McQuaid have also been appointed to the PMO. In addition, Nessa Doyle from ETBI has been assigned to work full-time on supporting the reform programme for ETBs, with specific responsibility in the areas of HR/IR and communications.

The PMO will not substitute for the work of ETB staff in managing the change agenda in each ETB and across the sector. The office will assist in putting in place the necessary plans, governance, and project structures and processes to assist the sector in delivering on that agenda.

The PMO has identified five strategic

"The role of the Board is to actively support and enable the sector to implement the reform programme. Through this approach the many strands of that programme will be approached in a coordinated way."

priorities for the sector which form part of the programme of reform. They are:

- f ETB/SOLAS Governance and organisational structure
- f HR/IR
- f Projects
- f Communications
- f Operations

ETB/SOLAS GOVERNANCE AND ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

The Department has recently engaged consultants to assist it in developing a new organisation design for ETBs. This will be informed by the new role and functions which ETBs are being mandated to perform. Rather than seeing ETBs as simply bigger VECs, they need to be viewed as something much more powerful. This fact is reflected in their new governing legislation which includes references to training functions, delivering services outside their immediate geographic area and partnering with, and providing support services to, other education and training providers.

Getting to a newly configured organisational structure is likely to

"While ETBs are not all the same, there is potential to come together to discuss, develop and reach a consensus on many common issues."

take some time and our approach both in seeking to devise such a structure, and moving towards it, will be taken in stages. A transition plan will need to be developed which will recognise the competing realities of the restrictions currently in the public sector regarding recruitment and promotions while also having regard to the work ETBs are being tasked with.

To help to progress this work the PMO has been gathering and updating information on organisation and staffing, functions and accountability in each ETB and FÁS training centre. The office very much appreciates the support it has received on this from ETBs and FÁS.

HR/IR

ETB management, ETBI, FÁS and the Department are engaging with the unions representing FÁS staff who are in training centres and who will be transferring to ETBs. The transfer

of at least six training centres from FÁS to ETBs before the end of this year is a Troika commitment. Those discussions will continue to progress for the remainder of this year and a timetable for resolution of issues and a transitional mechanism for those moving by year end has been set out.

PROJECTS

The Public Service Reform Plan identifies the use of shared services as one element in new ways of working in the delivery of services. In February 2012, a strategic mandate was given by Government to advance shared services for the public service which is being advanced by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. Work on preparing a shared services plan for the education and training sector is now underway.

In the ETB/SOLAS sector, it has been decided to prioritise the consideration of a shared payroll service for the 16 ETBs. The Department recently issued a Request for Tender for expert assistance in relation to the development of a Cost Benefit Analysis and a Payroll Shared Services Implementation Roadmap within the ETB sector. We are also establishing a dedicated, full-time Project Team drawn from the ETB/SOLAS sector who will be tasked initially with implementing the Roadmap, including any required procurement processes. At times the Project Team will need support from the sector and may need to be supplemented with additional members with specialised skills or expertise.

COMMUNICATIONS

A communications plan is being published which will provide for the use of a wide variety of communication channels in order to support people in the sector



who are involved in, and impacted by, the programme of reform. It is important that we have a shared understanding as to what the reform means and how each person can contribute towards it if ETBs are to be best positioned to deliver for their students and learners. The PMO will, through ETBI and FÁS, publish regular bulletins on progress on the project which will be readily available to all people working in the sector. It will also, through different means, provide opportunities for people working in the sector to engage with the change agenda.

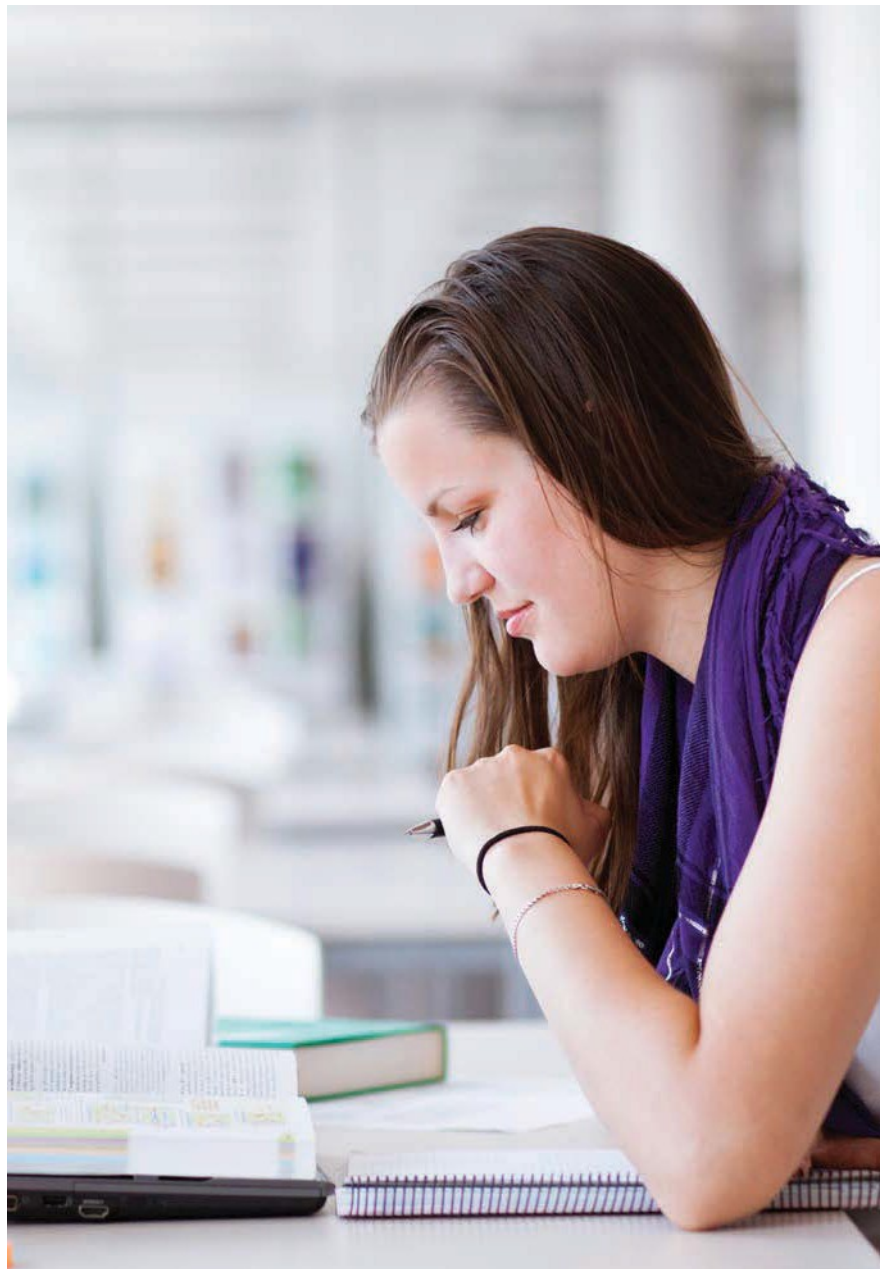
OPERATIONS

ETBs face immediate operational issues that must be addressed. Payroll and financial management functions, in particular, and the systems on which they rely, are desperately in need of improvement. We have already started that work and, in a number of ETBs, payroll mergers are now happening. In other cases, IT infrastructure is posing very significant problems. The PMO is working closely with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to resolve these issues. Progress is also being made on connectivity to ensure that a future-proofed, cost-effective and appropriate solution is offered to ETBs.

Engagement with ETBs on Revenue issues and with the Comptroller and Auditor General on accounting matters is ongoing. It is important that the Project Management Office continues to support a mix of both immediate, operational matters arising from the mergers as well as the longer-term strategic objectives.

CONCLUSION

The task ahead for the sector is considerable. It comes at a time of very constrained resources within the public service and where the further education and training agenda is a Government priority. It is vital that the sector meets the challenge presented by this restructuring and that it ensures that the delivery of services in education and training is optimised to the benefit of all students and learners.



The importance of a collective voice and vision on the issues – big and small – cannot be overstated. Each ETB is a separate statutory organisation with its own challenges, priorities and responsibilities. However, there is a wider collective challenge for the new bodies. In order to make the progress we need to on this programme of reform there must be a shared plan across the sector on a range of issues. While ETBs are not all the same, there is potential to come together to discuss, develop and reach a consensus on many common

issues. The PMO is working very closely with ETBI to assist in engendering this collaborative approach and realising that potential.

Significant progress has already been made in establishing and embedding the new organisations since 1 July. The sector has a long and proud tradition of adaptability, responsiveness, innovation and openness to change. The reform now underway is a ringing endorsement of the sector and of those values which will be instrumental in creating the opportunities that lie ahead.

SUSTAINABLE REFORMS TO EDUCATION AND TRAINING DEPEND ON HOW THEY ARE IMPLEMENTED

The President of Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI), Noel O'Connor, in his address to the inaugural congress of ETBI said that while ETBI fully supported the government's reforms to education and training the real challenge would lie in their implementation.



According to Noel O'Connor...

REVIEW OF APPRENTICESHIPS TIMELY IN CONTEXT OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ETBS...

- f The reform of apprenticeship must provide a seamless progression route from pre-apprenticeship right up to tertiary studies – thus allowing participants to exit the route with worthwhile skills, qualifications and progression routes - at the end of each stage.
- f 'Once FÁS Training Services are integrated into the ETBs ... ETBs will be well placed to provide cost-effective off-the-job training to apprentices in their local communities, thus reducing the cost to both the State and the apprentices.
- f The strong economies of Northern Europe recognise how apprenticeships can smooth the transition from education to work, and how they can accommodate males and females with a wide range of abilities and aptitudes in a wide range of career areas – from child care and health care, to construction, engineering, hospitality and office work.
- f In Germany (with 340 apprenticeships) apprenticeship is the route into work for nearly two-thirds of all young people.
- f Ireland can learn from these countries about building an apprenticeship model capable of driving social and economic progress and, in reforming our Further Education and Training system, we can construct an apprenticeship model that:

- ./ encompasses all areas of work;
- ./ involves an alignment between the curriculum in IoTs and that for apprenticeships, eliminating a disincentive to young people opting for the vocational route;
- ./ incorporates a pre-apprenticeship programme to provide an alternative route to apprenticeship for those not meeting minimum standards for entry to apprenticeship; and
- ./ accredits each apprenticeship phase so those exiting it at the conclusion of any phase have a progression route to further education and training.
- f 'We have been seduced by the promise of what a third-level education has to offer school leavers. Yet we know that a significant proportion of school leavers are unsuited to third-level studies at the time they leave school'.
- f A reformed apprenticeship programme would allow these to enter an apprenticeship, on leaving school, while retaining the option of progressing to a related course in further or higher education – at a later date.

INTEGRATION OF FÁS TRAINING SERVICES AND VECs TO FORM EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARDS (ETBS) AN IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS COME...

- f It 'provides the State with the capacity to modernise and update the competences of our workforce, at a time when workforce competence is crucial to both economic and social progress'...

- f It brings 'much needed coherence to further education and training'...
- f It 'provides us with a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for reforming further education and training that we must fully exploit, or the opportunity for real reform will be lost for decades to come'.
- f 'There is a palpable appetite and commitment in ETBs to ...create and sustain a world class further education and training service'.

BUT

- f 'There is a limit to the capacity of ETBs to do more with less' and 'more resources must be allocated to ETBs – if they are going to enable the 1,000s unemployed, with little prospect of employment unless they acquire new skills, to rebuild their lives'.
- f ETBs will need 'resources to employ more tutors to deliver more programmes to more people'....

ALSO

- f 'There is urgent need to review the adequacy of the resources being devoted towards the Adult Guidance Service with a view to significantly expanding its capacity to meet the needs of the 1,000s requiring information and guidance in order to make the most of the education and training opportunities available to them.
- f 'The time has come to review the adequacy of investment in the adult education guidance service and the way the service links to, and with,

"ETBs are committed to delivering 'the changes essential to our young people becoming lifelong independent learners.'"

the DSP's Intreo service, as it is absolutely crucial that these two services complement one another'.

f 'The provision of information and guidance needs to be seen as a front line service'.

f 'There are real costs to the State and to learners when people enrol in unsuitable courses, and then drop out, or complete courses that do not provide them with a progression route to either further education and training, or work suited to their aptitudes.

f 'If we want value for money, we must ensure that adults have access to the information and guidance essential to enrolling in the courses that match their aptitudes and dispositions ... we are simply arguing for the efficient and effective use of scarce resources, as such investment will generate financial savings to the State'.

REFORMING TEACHING AND LEARNING...

f ETBs are committed to delivering 'the changes essential to our young people becoming lifelong independent learners'. But they have 'serious concerns about the capacity of schools, given the cutbacks of recent years, to deliver the necessary changes, unless they have the structures and resources appropriate to the task'.

f If principals and deputy principals are to lead these reforms, we must provide them with the middle management structures and supports essential to doing so.

f Without fit-for-purpose middle management, our schools will not be able to deliver sustainable reform.

f Currently, the number of post of responsibility holders in a school is a matter of chance: a lot of retirements, disaster; few retirements, just about tolerable.

f We need a system where each post holder has responsibility for specific functions and is held accountable for the way these functions are performed. In other words, we must have real public service reform.

f 'Congress asks that your officials meet immediately with the management bodies to devise a solution to ensure that all second-level schools have the supports essential to both their effective management and the successful implementation of reform programmes ... so that real improvements can be in place before Congress 2014'.

f 'If we further avoid this issue, we put the management of our schools and the implementation educational reforms at risk'.

Myriad (500+) of DES circulars, forms, guidelines, procedures, legislation and strategy documents that ETBs, board of management members, principals, deputy principals need to be conversant with to do their job effectively.

f 'There is urgent need to bring rationality to this mountain of documentation and reduce the workload on those who manage our schools, giving them time and space to undertake their more important functions'.

f We need to establish 'a small working group (led by the DES), comprising representatives from school management bodies, the NAPD and the DES to develop a well-laid-out, easily searchable, easy to follow and understand, and continuously updated handbook for the management of schools.

f 'Those who govern and manage our schools should be able to locate easily all relevant circulars and guidance on any matter – confident in the knowledge that the information is

always up-to-date.

f Its development would ... make the day-to-day governance and management of schools more effective and it would hugely facilitate the implementation of vital reforms to our school system.

f Educational reforms will not be implemented successfully, 'unless we enable school leaders to manage and lead without spending an inordinate amount of time finding out what they need to do to solve the day-to-day issues that arise in schools'.

INCREASING PTR WOULD SET SCHOOL BACK A GENERATION...

f 'Congress 'implores you not to increase the PTR for second-level schools' in the coming budget'.

f 'The consequences would be disastrous for subject choice and for those with some form of special education need'.

f 'It would also undermine the viability of many small schools. Indeed, it would ring their death knell'.

f We fully realise the budgetary pressures but, in our opinion, a further increase would set second-level education back a generation.

IN CONCLUDING HIS ADDRESS, NOEL O'CONNOR NOTED THAT...

f 'On the first of July 2013 our sector closed one chapter in its 111-year history, and we have just begun to write an exciting new chapter.

f The establishment of the ETBs and SOLAS provides us with unprecedented opportunities to influence the future of our country, and I have no doubt that we will grasp those opportunities.

f In a sense, we are in uncharted waters.

f But, working together, we can write our own script.

f As Henry Ford noted: 'when everything seems to be going against you, remember that the airplane takes off against the wind, not with it'.

Highlights from the Address to ETBI Congress

by Ruairi Quinn, TD Minister for Education & Skills

ETBI has a central role to play in supporting ETBs in this transformation.

The Education and Training Boards Act, 2013 gives statutory recognition to ETBI as “*the association established to collectively represent education and training boards and promote their interests*”.

The Act goes on to empower me, as Minister, to request Education and Training Boards Ireland to carry out specific roles and functions to support ETBs.

I look forward to working closely with ETBI as an enabler supporting the 16 new Education and Training Boards, both individually and collectively.

Another important governance structure which will support this significant change agenda is the ETB/SOLAS Programme Board which has been established by the Department.

This Programme Board is tasked with enabling the sector to manage the transition from VECs to ETBs, and to take on the training services currently delivered through FÁS.

The Board is supported by a Project Management Office which is working to assist ETBs to put in place the necessary structures and processes to assist in delivering the reform of the sector.

The Project Office has identified five strategic priority areas for the sector, including governance, communications

and human resource matters, and is actively working to progress these.

It is important that the Project Management Office, the Programme Board, ETBI and individual ETBs, have effective communication channels through which problems and successes can be shared and resolved. Today is an important part of this communications process.

So are the regular meetings, between senior officials in my Department, Chief Executives of ETBs and the General Secretary of ETBI.

MEMBERSHIP OF BOARDS

After the local elections, each ETB will comprise 21 members, composed of 12 local authority representatives, 2 staff representatives, 2 parents’

representatives and 5 community representatives.

The 5 community representatives will be elected by the local authority, staff and parent members –

- f* At least one of whom represents employers or business,
- f* At least one of whom represents learners, and
- f* At least one of whom represents school management or leadership.

As an example of how this will operate, the nominating bodies for employers – IBEC, ISME and Chambers – will each nominate a man and a woman.

From those nominees, the local authority, parents and staff members will be required to elect at least one person to the board.



Ruairi Quinn TD, Minister for Education and Skills

Similar type panels will exist for learners and for school management / patron bodies at both primary and post-primary level.

These changes will ensure

- f that smaller counties are adequately represented,
- f the importance of ensuring equity across all education and training boards,
- f an appropriate balance between local authority members and community representatives, and
- f most importantly, that the membership of the new boards is big enough to allow stakeholders' voices to be heard but small enough to be effective.

This new structured form of representation will ensure a more inclusive engagement with all education providers in the area of the ETB. Further education and training Steps which can be taken by ETBs to progress this vital area of work include:

- f ongoing close co-operation with local enterprise and existing public employment services in the development of relevant local courses
- f and enhancing the workplace learning element of programme provision.

SOLAS

The creation of SOLAS will facilitate a coherent integrated strategic national response, across the further education and training sectors.

The SOLAS mandate will be to ensure the provision of 21st century high-quality further education and training programmes to jobseekers and other learners.

THE SKILLS AGENDA

The creation of SOLAS, as you know, is part of a wider range of Government reforms in the areas of Further Education and Training, and the activation of the unemployed.



A theme running through these initiatives is the link between Industry and training provision, to ensure the continued alignment of programmes with the evolving skills needs of the economy.

In doing this we also need to recognise that the further education and training sector has a major contribution to make to driving economic growth. The Action Plan for Jobs contained a commitment to initiate a review of the Irish Apprenticeship training model. The aim of this review is to provide an updated model of training that delivers the necessary skilled workforce to service the needs of a rapidly changing economy.

The review will be cognisant of existing education and training policy and, in particular, national targets relating to second-level education and participation in higher education. It will focus on apprenticeship as a

progression route from second-level provision and will also explore the potential for connections between work-based learning and other further education and training provision.

TACKLING UNEMPLOYMENT

A new integrated employment and support service entitled 'Intreo' has been introduced, which is being managed by the Department of Social Protection.

Effective working arrangements between Intreo and ETBs will be critical to delivering for the unemployed.

That will allow us to ensure education and training opportunities are closely aligned with the needs of the unemployed in each area.

Bodies such as ETBI also provide an important forum for communication within the sector and between the sector and the Department.

The Role of VET in Ireland's Economic Recovery

By Michael Moriarty, ETBI General Secretary



THE ETB CHALLENGE

Vocational Education and Training (VET) is now central to Europe's strategy to reposition itself in the global economy, and VET is the sector closest to the labour market.

A key challenge for ETBs will be to deliver on the knowledge, skills and competencies that the labour market needs. The current review of both PLCs and apprenticeship training is designed to establish how effective education and training is in meeting the skills needs of industry.

The broad mission of education and training encompasses objectives such as active citizenship, and personal development and wellbeing, and these go hand-in-hand with the need to upgrade skills for employability. ETBs, through their second-level schools and further education colleges, are well placed to develop transversal generic skills while also delivering on the industry-specific skills through further education programmes.

The Government's stated intention to build a world-class FET (Further Education and Training) system is in line with the EU objective to develop a high performing vocational

education and training system across EU member states. The EU sees education and skills enhancement as a core strategic asset for growth. The European Commission has urged Member States to target investment in vocational education and training to address skills shortages and support growth in such sectors as ICT, green economy, health, marine economy, etc. Therefore, instead of cutting back on PLC resources by raising the pupil-teacher ratio, the focus must be on enhancing and growing this sector in line with EU policy.

A world-class VET system is now seen as crucial to the reduction in skills shortages. A recent example is the 3,500 ICT jobs in Ireland that remain unfilled because of lack of skilled personnel. ETB Further Education colleges can deliver on the skills needs and competences but they need the capacity to do so – and that has not been a feature of recent government policy, where cuts have diminished the capacity to meet the growing and

varying demands for reskilling and upskilling.

The focus now is on Learning Outcomes (LOs) (EQF and NQF). We need to tap into the potential of ICT and open educational resources for learning. The digital revolution brings important opportunities for education, but investment in education and training, especially in ICT-based educational tools and content, must be a priority. Investment in education and training is key to both productivity and economic growth potential. Any under-spending today will have serious consequences in the medium- to short-term for Ireland's skills base. In this time of severe financial constraints, we need to focus on smart specialisation. We need to focus on identified skills shortages— ICT, green economy, healthcare, and such like.

PARTNERSHIPS

ETBs generally have well-established links with industry, but this partnership between education, business and

"ETBs generally have well-established links with industry, but this partnership between education, business and research needs to be enhanced, not just at local ETB level, but also at national level."

research needs to be enhanced, not just at local ETB level, but also at national level. Knowledge alliances and sector skills alliances are features of the third-level sector's links with the world of business and research.

ETBI is now more actively engaged with the world of industry and business. This year we initiated a series of Business Education Fora which brings together senior management personnel from education, training, and business communities, to debate such topics as "Is Education and Training meeting the needs of industry?".

At international level, ETBI is now a key partner in a Leonardo da Vinci-funded project—EDISON, which aims to transfer successful experiences and strategies from Austria, Spain and Italy to national VET association in Ireland and the UK, in the realm of Entrepreneurial Learning Pathways in VET. These are designed to encourage the entrepreneurial capability of students to meet the current needs of industry.

CHALLENGES

The challenges ahead for ETBs and ETBI are significant in the delivery of further education programmes. Aside from the difficult and time-consuming HR/IR issues, there will now be a need to ensure:

- f Flexibility in the delivery times and modes
- f Capacity to deliver programmes to meet the changing demands of industry
- f Capacity to change, modify and deliver programmes through both contract and direct provision: contracting training for services will represent a significant cultural challenge for ETBs, where traditionally, the vast majority of programmes were delivered by ETB staff
- f The building of a coherent and unified staff within a culturally coherent ETB
- f New ways of work: more extensive and diverse training programmes

responding directly to labour market demands

- f Working with SOLAS in building a world-class FET system, ensuring that the vocational education tradition is not lost in the SOLAS strategic planning

HUMAN CAPITAL

Education plays a critical role in determining life chances, and is a strong predictor of adult life chances. Countries which invest heavily in education benefit socially, culturally and economically. The opportunity costs will be significant and we will pay the price for hitting educational outcomes as is bound to happen if year-on-year cuts to funding the sector continue.

The challenge of globalisation, modernisation and rapid technological change means that we must increase the level of educational standards of knowledge workers, as knowledge is the key to our future. Knowledge workers require higher levels of education, and a highly educated workforce in Ireland is a prerequisite for inward investment, especially in the

area of new technology. To continue to attract the high level technological industries, we need a suitably educated workforce, and that workforce has to have the benefit of the best educational experience possible.

Current educational reform processes, such as Junior Cert reform, recognise the transformation required to re-orientate education to provide young people with critical skills. So we are moving in the right direction. Similarly, the structural reform of Further Education and Training, in an attempt to bring focus and coherence into the delivery of skills training, is also welcomed as a timely and important initiative.

However, such reforms must be backed by adequate resources to ensure that there are outcomes which raise the education and training standards of our students to a significant degree. We must move therefore from managing outputs to enabling outcomes which match the targets and deliverables we have set. These are constantly challenging times.



etbi CONGRESS 2013







PIAAC Puts Competencies of Irish Adults Under Microscope

Pat O'Mahony, ETBI Education Research Officer

For the first time since the International Adult Literacy Survey¹ (IALS) report in 1995, we have reliable information on the skills and competencies of Irish people between the ages of 16 and 65. The OECD's Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) report² launched on 8 October not only gives us a clear assessment of our core skills and competencies but it also allows us to see how we perform on these skills and competencies in relation to 24 other countries, most of them OECD members.

WHAT IS PIAAC?

PIAAC is the most comprehensive international survey ever undertaken of those adult skills (literacy, numeracy and problem solving in technology-rich environments) which are considered to

underlie the success of the individual, and in turn to contribute to the overall success of society. It builds on the concepts and methodology of previous international studies, the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) and the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (ALL), but is unprecedented in the broad range of its analysis objectives and the large number of countries (24) that participated.

PIAAC went beyond conventional measurements of literacy and measured the capacity of participants

to solve problems and to use key skills in their jobs, in the community and in the family. It also looked at the extent to which adults have acquired a generic set of skills and competencies and at whether people with low literacy levels have the basic building blocks that they need to read effectively.

The survey was administered in Ireland between August 2011 and March 2012 by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills (DES). The sample of respondents was representative of

"Governments and others have, for decades, had a growing interest in the international assessment of adult skills as a means to monitoring how well prepared populations are for the challenges of a knowledge-based society."

¹ See: http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/surveysandmethodologies/surveys/education/piaac/documents/ials_report.pdf

² See: http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/surveysandmethodologies/surveys/education/piaac/documents/ials_report.pdf

the geographical distribution and socio-demographic characteristics of the population and 5,963 persons aged 16-65 responded to the survey in Ireland. Surveys were conducted face-to-face by CSO interviewers in respondents' homes using a mix of laptop computers and paper test booklets.

In analysing the survey results, participant scores were categorised into a six-level scale (depending on performance) for literacy and numeracy, and into a four-level scale for problem solving in technology-rich environments. In each case, the lowest level on the scale is termed: 'below level 1'.

WHY ASSESS ADULT SKILLS?

Governments and others have, for decades, had a growing interest in the international assessment of adult skills as a means to monitoring how well prepared populations are for the challenges of a knowledge-based society. In the past, however, the tendency has been to see educational qualifications as a proxy for skills and competencies. More recently, there is a growing realisation that an educational qualification does not guarantee that the holder has a particular competence, even at the time it is awarded, and it certainly does not provide such a guarantee many years afterwards. If we wish to assess the skills and competencies of an individual or a population at any particular point in time, we have no option but to test the specific skill or competency. While in the pre-information-age core competencies acquired in school substantially remained relevant throughout life, in a world where change is literally the only constant, competencies atrophy and the specifics of the required competency change. For example, workers today inevitably need to be able to communicate and engage with perpetually evolving information

"There is a growing realisation that an educational qualification does not guarantee that the holder has a particular competence, even at the time it is awarded, and it certainly does not provide such a guarantee many years afterwards."

technologies. In this kind of world the key role of front-ended education is to provide learners with the capacity and inclination to be effective lifelong and life-wide learners.

WHAT WERE THE RESULTS FOR PARTICIPANTS IN IRELAND IN PIAAC?

Literacy Scores

Irish adults aged 16-65 scored 266 on the literacy scale, below the survey average score of 270, placing Ireland 17th out of 24 participating countries, in a group with Germany (267), Poland (267), Austria (266), Flanders (Belgium) (266) and Northern Ireland (265). The scores for England and Denmark lie just above this group at 270, while the scores of the United States (262), France (261) Spain (251) and Italy (249) are significantly lower than that of Ireland.

At or below Level 1 on Literacy Scale

On average, 16.7% of adults across all countries scored at or below Level 1 for literacy proficiency while Ireland has 17.9% of adults at this level ranking us 15th out of 24 countries, and in line with the study average. The proportion of Irish adults at or below Level 1 is not statistically different from nine other countries, including England (17.8%), Poland (18.8%), Germany (19.0%) and Northern Ireland (19.6%). Japan (6.1%) and Finland (10.6%) had the lowest proportions of adults at or below Level 1.

In 1994 (IALS) 22%³ of Irish adults were at or below Level 1 for literacy

proficiency, indicating improvement in the intervening years.

Literacy – Levels 3, 4 and 5

At the upper end of the literacy scale, on average 50.0% scored at Levels 3, 4 or 5, compared to 44.5% in Ireland. Ireland has statistically the same proportion at the upper levels of literacy proficiency as Northern Ireland (44.2%), Poland (44.7%), Austria (45.7%) and the United States (45.7%). Japan (71.1%) and Finland (62.9%) had the highest proportion.

Numeracy Scores

On the numeracy scale Irish adults aged 16-65 achieved a mean score of 255 which, in statistical terms, is significantly below the PIAAC country average score of 266, and placed Ireland 19th out of 24 countries. The mean score for Ireland is not significantly different from those of Northern Ireland (255) and France (253), but is significantly higher than those of Italy (246), the United States (246) and Spain (245). Japan and Finland scored the highest with 286 and 282 respectively.

At or below Level 1

25% of Irish adults score at or below Level 1 for numeracy compared to just over 20% (20.2%) on average across participating countries, placing Ireland 18th out of 24 countries, in the same statistical range as Poland (23.5%), England (25.5%) and Northern Ireland (26.6%), but better than France, Spain, Italy and the United States. Japan is the only country to have less than 10%

³ This is based on the rescaled IALS data produced by ETS (OECD) for PIAAC.

"The highest problem solving in technology-rich environment mean score in Ireland is achieved by those in the 20-24 age group (288) while the lowest is achieved by those aged 60-65 (247)."

of adults at or below Level 1 on the numeracy scale.

Numeracy - Levels 3, 4 and 5

36.3% of Irish adults are at Levels 3, 4 and 5 compared to 46.8% on average across all countries. This is the same as that of Northern Ireland (37.5%), France (37.3%) and the United States (34.4%) but better than that for Italy (28.9%) and Spain (28.5%).

PROBLEM SOLVING IN A TECHNOLOGY-RICH ENVIRONMENT

At or below Level 1 in Problem Solving

in Technology-rich Environments Just over two-fifths (42.0%) of Irish adults score at or below Level 1 (29.5% at Level 1 and 12.6% below Level 1) on the problem solving scale, which is the same as the country average (41.7%). Ireland is in a group with six other countries with a similar proportion at this level, including Finland (39.9%), Estonia (42.8%) and Sweden (43.9%). Of the 20 countries who implemented the problem solving assessment, 14 had between 40% and 50% at or below Level 1 on this scale. The country that performed highest on problem solving, Japan, had 27.3% of adults at or below Level 1 on problem solving scale.

At Levels 2 and 3 of Problem Solving in Technology-rich Environments

At the top end of problem solving proficiency 25.3% of Irish adults are at Levels 2 and 3 compared to 34% on average internationally. This is significantly more than Poland (19.2%) but not statistically different from

Northern Ireland (28.7%), Estonia (27.6%) or the Slovak Republic (27.6%).

HOW SIGNIFICANT ARE THE DIFFERENCES IN PERFORMANCE BETWEEN PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES?

The OECD notes that:

"...the variation in proficiency between the adult populations in participating countries is relatively small. Most countries (19 out of 21) have [literacy] mean scores which differ by 21 score points or less and fourteen countries have scores within the range 267 to 276 (9 score points)" (OECD, 2013a).

While there are differences in mean scores between countries, the overall spread of scores is not that wide and there are far larger differences between various subgroups within countries. Statistical differences may not therefore necessarily be meaningful when drawing conclusions from small score point differences between countries.

WHAT DO THE LEVELS MEAN IN TERMS OF PARTICIPANTS' ABILITIES?

A particular issue with surveys of this type has been the common misconception that those at the lowest levels of literacy proficiency, typically Level 1 or below, have little or no literacy skills or are 'illiterate'. In fact, the reading component tests administered as part of the PIAAC survey show that even at the lowest levels of literacy proficiency there are significant levels of reading skill.

ACHIEVEMENT IN PIAAC BY GENDER AND AGE

f There is no statistical difference between the mean score of Irish males (268) and females (265) on the literacy scale, and this is the case for the majority of countries. Similarly, there are no substantial differences between proportions of Irish males and females across the levels of the literacy scale, with Level 2 showing the only noticeable variation where the percentage of females performing at this level is 4% higher than males (40% versus 36%).

f There is a statistically significant 12-point difference in the mean scores for males (262) and females (250) on the numeracy scale. This is consistent with the results for all participating countries. Also, (21.9%) of males are at Level 1 or below compared with 28.5% of females, while 10.4% of males and 4.8% of females are at Level 4/5.

f There is a statistically significant six-point gap between the scores of males (280) and females (274) on the problem solving scale. There is also a significant difference in the proportion of males (41.0%) proficient at Level 2 and 3 on the problem solving in technology-rich environment scale in comparison to females (34.4%). The international data contains a similar trend for problem solving with 36% of males compared to 32% of females at Levels 2 and 3.

f Adults aged 25-34 have the highest literacy mean score in Ireland (276), while adults aged 55-65 have the lowest literacy mean score (251), mirroring the pattern across participating countries. Across all countries, there is a 28 point scale score difference between those aged 25-34 (284) and those aged 55-65 (256). Also, 27.8% of Irish adults

⁴ See http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/surveysandmethodologies/surveys/education/piaac/documents/ials_report.pdf

aged 55-65 are at or below Level 1 compared to 12.9% of those aged 16-24. This compares to 24.5% of adults aged 55-65 who are at or below Level 1 internationally and 10.9% of those aged 16-24.

f The relationship between age and numeracy is very similar to that of literacy.

UË/...iË...).iÄIË«ÄœLi“ËÄœÛ“ËËË technology-rich environment mean score in Ireland is achieved by those in the 20-24 age group (288) while the lowest is achieved by those aged 60-65 (247). Mean scores for those aged between 16 and 34 are quite similar but gradually decrease for older age groups. Those aged under 34 in Ireland have the highest proportions at Level 2 and Level 3 on the proficiency scale for problem solving in technology-rich environments. Almost 50% of those aged 20-24 are at Level 2 or 3. This mirrors the average for participating countries where 50.7% of people aged 16-24 score at Level 2 or 3 but just 24.0% aged 55-65 score at the same level. At the other end of the scale those aged 55-59 (82.9%) and aged 60-65 (88.3%) have the highest percentages at Level 1 and below.

HOW DOES IRELAND'S PERFORMANCE IN PIAAC COMPARE WITH THE PERFORMANCE IN IALS⁴?

Proportion of population at particular levels of literacy scale

In six of the countries that participated in both IALS and PIAAC there has been an increase in the percentage of their adult populations who scored at the lowest levels (at or below Level 1): Denmark (+8.6%), Germany (+8.2%), Norway (+5.0%) and Sweden (+3.1%). On the other hand, in eight countries the percentage of adults 16-65 at or below Level 1 has fallen, including Ireland (-4.2%). Poland had the largest

reduction in the percentage of adults at the lowest levels of literacy, a drop of 22.4% from 41.1% in IALS to 18.8% in PIAAC.

At the top of the scale, 12 of the 15 countries who participated in both surveys had a drop in the percentage of adults at Levels 3, 4 and 5. Norway (-16.3%), Denmark (-16.3%) and Sweden (-10.6%) had the largest reductions, while Ireland had a very small reduction of just over 1%. Only two countries, Poland (+20.7%) and Australia (+5.6%), recorded a significant increase in the proportion of adults at the top end of the literacy scale.

Overall mean score comparison and distribution across levels

While the difference between the overall literacy mean score of PIAAC (267) and IALS (264) is not statistically significant, the percentage of adults at or below Level 1 has fallen by 4%, from 22% in 1994 to 18% in 2012. There are also no statistical differences between the scores of males (264 versus 268) and females (265 versus 265) across the two surveys.

IALS found 32.2% to be at Level 2 while PIAAC found 37.6%. At the upper levels of the literacy scales (3, 4 and 5) the proportions of adults were quite similar, if slightly higher in PIAAC (IALS: 44.7% and PIAAC: 45.9%).

Overall, this indicates that there has been a general improvement in the literacy proficiency of the Irish adult population, with proportionally fewer at the lower levels of proficiency and a greater percentage at levels 2 and 3.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO COMPARE IRELAND'S PERFORMANCE IN PIAAC WITH OUR PERFORMANCE IN PISA⁵?

Firstly, it is important to point out that PISA is an OECD international survey that assesses how well 15-year-olds are prepared to meet the challenges of education and life by assessing their competencies in mathematics, reading and science. The most recent assessment (2012)⁶ also assessed their competency in cross-curricular problem solving.



⁵ <http://www.erc.ie/?p=229>

⁶ The results of the 2012 assessment are scheduled to be published in December 2013.

Secondly, while it might be expected that PISA results would broadly predict performance on PIAAC, this is not the case in many countries, including Ireland, where the level of PIAAC performance in literacy and numeracy is different to that found on PISA.

CONCLUDING COMMENT Until relatively recent times our leaders regularly asserted that our education system was a model of best practice. This report should enable us to reassess the accuracy of such assertions more objectively. That said, we need to be careful not to come to overly hasty conclusions as we did when the 2009 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)⁷ report appeared to show that we had dropped down the international ladder on literacy and numeracy. Remember, the great economic powerhouse of Europe, Germany, has literally the same average literacy score as Ireland (Germany 267 versus Ireland 266). Does this mean that there is something seriously remiss with Germany's internationally envied education and training system?

PIAAC simply provides us with useful information on which we should reflect in reviewing and revising policy and practice. Here PIAAC should certainly help us to explore how our education and training system can develop and nurture those skills and competencies that it is generally acknowledged are essential for individuals to participate

"Remember, the great economic powerhouse of Europe, Germany, has literally the same average literacy score as Ireland."



fully in a democratic society and for communities and economies to prosper.

We are about to embark on a major reform of Junior Cycle education and again the evidence provided by PIAAC should feed into the implementation of this reform. For too long educational policy and practice has been driven by other than research-based evidence. More than anything else, PIAAC provides us with that evidence in an international comparison context. PIAAC however does not tell us anything about the extent to which the competencies researched in the study impact on either individual or national prosperity. These are matters that remain to be explored.

This report is one in series of reports documenting what the PIAAC survey has discovered about the skills and

competencies of Irish people between the ages of 16 and 65. There will be further reports over the course of the next two years that will drill down into survey results on a thematic basis. Once we have access to all these reports we will be in a better position to make informed policy decisions about how our education and training system might better deliver the competencies deemed critical to maximising prosperity and social cohesion.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

This article draws heavily on a briefing note prepared by the DES and the author is deeply indebted to the DES for this assistance. Nevertheless, it is acknowledged that any errors or omissions are solely the responsibility of the author.

⁷ See: <http://www.erc.ie/?p=229>

NCGE –

Supporting quality Guidance provision in the education sector

In this article, Jennifer McKenzie, Director NCGE outlines some of the key supports for guidance counselling provision in the education sector.

WHO ARE WE?

The National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) is an agency of the Department of Education and Skills (DES), established under the aegis of Léargas in the late 1990s, in accordance with the Education Act 1998, to support guidance provision in the education sector.

The Chair and membership of the NCGE Management of Guidance Committee are nominated by the Minister for Education and Skills, and the Committee reports ultimately to the Department of Education and Skills. There are representatives on the Committee from the DES, Department of Social Protection (DSP), Higher Education Authority, the Institute of Guidance Counsellors, FÁS (i.e. soon to be SOLAS), the Adult Education Guidance Association of Ireland and the Directors of Studies of Guidance Counselling, (i.e. those Universities who provide initial training for guidance counsellors). The outgoing Chair of NCGE 2010-2013 was Mr Barra O'Bráin, previously of Co Cork VEC, who worked tirelessly in support of NCGE during his term of office. Our new Chair is Mr Paul King of Dublin City University.

Based now in the Dublin 2 area, NCGE currently has five fulltime staff.

WHAT DO WE DO?

The role of the NCGE is to develop and support quality guidance provision in the education sector as part of lifelong learning in accordance with national and international best practice. Our remit includes the promotion and implementation of best practice in guidance counselling in schools, centres

for education, and adult education settings in accordance with the requirements of the Education Act 1998.

NCGE chairs various national committees on behalf of the DES, including the Advisory Committee on Psychometric Testing. This committee reviews and updates the list of psychometric tests and assessments, approved by the DES, for use by guidance and learning support in post-primary schools. We also convene the Committee of the Directors of Studies of Guidance Counselling to ensure collaboration and cooperation in the training of guidance counsellors to work in the education sector.

NCGE co-ordinates the development of the Adult Educational Guidance Initiative (AEGI), which consists of 39 services based within the ETBs and WIT. We provide DES-funded Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for the staff of the AEGI. Additionally, NCGE maintains the Adult Guidance Management system, which is the online database used to monitor AEGI services on behalf of the DES. Twice yearly qualitative and quantitative reports from the 39 AEGI services provide up-to-date, relevant information on the issues facing the AEGI services and how they are working to address the clients' needs in an ever changing environment.

EU ROLE

We host the Euroguidance Centre for Ireland (www.euroguidance.ie), part of a network of Guidance Centres across Europe, which supports mobility and promotes learning opportunities across the EU Member States. NCGE is the



designated representative of the DES at the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN); a European Commission funded programme to bring Member States together to focus on guidance policy development.

To contribute to the work of the ELGPN, NCGE is co-ordinating the *Testing of the European Resource Kit* in Ireland. NCGE also act as the lead country in the working group for Quality Assurance and Evidence-based Practice in Guidance, and we are an active member of the working group on Career Management Skills. Through the National Forum on Guidance, co-ordinated by NCGE, we disseminate information from ELGPN at national level and in turn bring information about the guidance provision in Ireland to Europe so that we can inform the development of policy at European level.

SUPPORTING GUIDANCE PROVISION IN SCHOOLS

NCGE is a member of the DES Steering Group for supervision of guidance counsellors, hosted and managed by Monaghan Education Centre in association with the IGC. We provide CPD opportunities for guidance counsellors in schools, and to date we have provided a HETAC accredited course on Whole School Guidance Planning, at NFQ level 8.

RECENT RESEARCH

Following Budget 2012, the ex-quota allocation for guidance in schools was removed from September 2012. DES now requires that schools provide access to guidance provision from within the schools' teacher allocation. Section

4 of DES Circular CL 009/2012, states and clarifies the established policy that 'guidance is a whole school activity and under existing arrangements each school develops collaboratively a school guidance plan as a means of supporting the needs of its students. While the school's guidance planning should involve the guidance counsellor(s) in the first instance, other members of school staff and Management also have key roles to play'.

In 2012 - 2013, NCGE carried out the Review of Guidance Counselling provision in second-level schools to inform plans for the support of guidance provision in schools following the removal of the ex-quota entitlement. School Principals and Guidance counsellors were asked to complete the survey detailing the hours allocated to guidance, pre and post, the removal of the ex-quota entitlement. Information on the allocation of hours for guidance in Post Leaving Certificate colleges and schools was also requested.

The report findings indicate that schools' management continued to provide guidance within their schools; however there is, on average, a 25% reduction in guidance counsellor hours in schools nationally.

The report details the allocation of guidance hours across Voluntary-Secondary, Vocational and Community/Comprehensive schools. Data was gathered on areas such as time spent providing guidance to Junior Cycle, Senior Cycle and Post Leaving Certificate, provision of class based guidance and 1-1 provision. Data was also requested on the additional hours worked by guidance counsellors in the management and coordination of the whole school guidance programme.

Statistics for ETB schools suggest that there has been a 28% decrease in

guidance hours in this sector. Most notably, the minimum hours have decreased from 5 to 0.5 hours and the average has decreased from 23 to 16 hours in vocational schools (including PLCs).

Key findings and recommendations of the report highlight that the ex-quota allocation should be restored when resources become available. The findings also indicate a requirement for on-going monitoring and review of guidance provision in schools, and the development of an ICT system for documenting and analysing this information. The need for school management and guidance counsellors to attend CPD together to support the development the whole school guidance plan was also indicated.

The NCGE Management of Guidance Committee considered the report findings and issued recommendations for the NCGE's continued support of guidance provision in second level schools.

The Report is available to download on the NCGE website at: http://www.ncge.ie/uploads/Review_of_Guidance_Counselling_provision_in_second_level_schools_2012-2013.FINAL.pdf¹

WORKING IN COLLABORATION

NCGE supports the provision of guidance in schools within a Whole-School Guidance planning approach. With allocated hours reduced in many schools, it is vital that guidance counsellors and other school staff work in collaboration to ensure that the guidance needs of students are prioritised and met. In this case the role of the school principal, and indeed management of the ETBs, is key. It is essential to ensure that a qualified guidance counsellor develops and delivers the guidance programme with agreed collaboration and the support of management and his or her colleagues.

Within the requirement for guidance provision, NCGE encourages a clarification of roles, responsibilities and practice within the whole-school guidance planning approach.

NCGE was very pleased to collaborate with IVEA (now ETBI), NAPD, JMB and ACCS on the *Framework for Considering Provision of Guidance in Post Primary Schools – September 2012* to provide support for schools in this regard.

NCGE recently re-launched the *Guidance Counsellors Handbook* as an online resource for schools, aimed at the guidance counsellor and school management, to ensure the provision of appropriate guidelines and supports for whole school guidance provision. This can be viewed and articles downloaded at: www.schoolguidancehandbook.ncge.ie

IN CONCLUSION

Our remit covers support for the wide spectrum of guidance provision across the education sector. It is in working across all sectors that we recognise the vital role for quality provision of guidance that is accountable and appropriate to the needs of its own target groups, clients and students. Hence provision can be different from one service to the next and from one school to the next. NCGE is aware that the removal of the ex-quota allocation for guidance has created difficulties for schools' management. However we would encourage schools to ensure an allocation for guidance hours within the school as this will ultimately be more beneficial in the long term to all concerned, i.e. students, staff and parents.

If you have any queries about guidance provision in schools and PLCs about AEGI services, please contact NCGE on ncgeinfo@ncge.ie.

¹ Editor's note: The recommendations made in this report are included on page 25

SmartVET Conference on Using Interactive Whiteboards Effectively

SmartVET is the transfer of innovation project funded under the EU's Lifelong Learning Programme, whose goal is to transfer good practice in using Interactive Whiteboards (IWBs) from the project's European partners to those delivering further education and training in what was Co Wicklow VEC, is nearing its conclusion.

On 10 October a national conference was held in ETBI headquarters in Piper's Hill to showcase the projects outcomes.

- f A 'road-tested' model for training teachers/tutors in the use of IWBs – indeed a model for implementing other technologies as they come on stream.
- f A web-based resource to support the building of capacity in the effective use of IWBs and an online Community of Practice to facilitate

teachers sharing best practice and collaborating around such use.

- f Training Programmes, Learning Manuals and CPD materials on the effective use of IWBs to enhance teaching and learning.
- f A needs analysis of teachers regarding the training they feel they need to become competent in the use of IWBs.

All these outcomes are now available on the project website:
<http://www.smartvetproject.eu/>

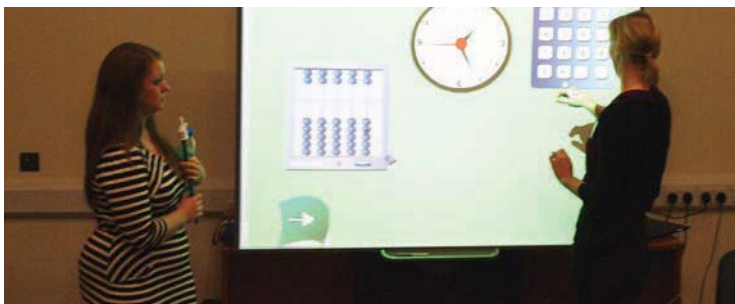
It is intended to maintain this site, after the project has been concluded, to support the continuing use of what has been learned in the course of the project to improve teaching and learning using interactive technologies. The conference, which was very widely promoted right across the

education and training sector, was fully subscribed and all European partners shared their expertise with participants – mostly in an interactive manner. If the views of conference participants reflect those of teachers and tutors generally, there is a real need for a coherent national strategy to build the capacity of education and training staff to use all kinds of interactive technology effectively. In this regard, it would be nice to think that the SmartVET project has started something that can be sustained into the future to improve learning outcomes.

The next phase of the project is now being implemented. This involves five workshops (bootcamps) aimed at providing beginners or those with a limited capacity to use Interactive technologies with the practical skills to begin using the Interactive Whiteboard (IWBs) to enhance teaching and learning. The workshops were scheduled for Limerick (21 October), Portlaoise (24 October), Kildare (31 October), Drumcondra (7 November) and Dublin West (9 November). Further details of the workshops are available at www.etbi.ie.



Phil Ackroyd and Harry Greiner of City College Norwich (UK) take a peek at the laptop of Dr Ton Koenraad of TELLConsult (NL) prior to the conference



Gillian Clarges and Michelle Keating of Bray YouthReach demonstrate Maths on the IWB

Kerry Future Skills Strategy

By Sharon Browne, Adult Education Officer, Kerry ETB

Kerry ETB has taken an innovative step by developing a future skills strategy for the county that will feed into planning and course development for the period ahead. While the Expert Group on Future Skill Needs provides excellent information, what suits the national picture may not always be as relevant for the county of Kerry.

This work is being carried out with the key statutory education and training providers – Institute of Technology Tralee, FÁS, and other partners such as the local County Enterprise Board, both local development companies operating in the county, Enterprise Ireland, Udarás and DSP in Kerry. The logic was to involve some of the agencies with a core remit around education and training, referral, entrepreneurship and business and community development. All these organisations shared the relevant information and statistics that they collect which were then fed into the Future Skills document.

In the interest of being strategic and getting results quickly the group decided to prioritise six key sectors for the next two to three years. They are:

1. Tourism, Leisure and Hospitality Sector
2. Food and Beverage Sector
3. ICT and Finance Sector
4. Media and Creative Arts Sector
5. Manufacturing Sector
6. Green Energy Economy Sector

Some areas overlap, for example the Agri sector is important in its own right but also links to Food & Beverage, Tourism, Hospitality & Leisure; Engineering & Manufacturing, etc. The Marine sector relates to Food Production, Energy and the Green Economy, as well as the Tourism sector.

For any ETB getting local information is very useful. In some ways the report tells

us things already perceived – but now this is no longer anecdotal. For example, 75% of the population of Kerry live outside the main towns. Educational attainment levels are very low in certain districts, so this helps to focus our basic skills delivery. The rural nature of the county brings its own challenges: very long driving time between some towns and the cost of petrol affects learners; broadband is an issue for the county; the Kerry ETB adult education centres in small towns need to be bolstered to address these issues as they are a life line to communities. An interagency team is now planning for this, giving the agencies involved a much better chance of arriving at sustainable solutions by working together and sharing facilities/resources.

Central to the concept was contact with employers, an area that Kerry ETB wants to develop more. Many of the partners in the future skills research are involved with networks of employers that can be tapped into rather than setting up yet another structure. Part of the research involved contact with some 200 employers to find out about their skill needs, growth areas and to see who has been or will be hiring or firing in the last / next 12 months. An analysis by the Local Employment Services in both North and South Kerry points to where the vacancies are and in what sectors. The types of vacancies that arise are different for North and South Kerry. Now Kerry ETB know who the biggest employers are and in what sectors, what qualification levels they require from their staff and what skill sets matter to them most. Interestingly for some, such as the Tourism, Leisure and Hospitality Sector, soft skills such as initiative,

communication skills and work ethic matter much more than qualifications.

Based on the employer feedback and an analysis of education and training provision in the county the ETB is getting clear information on local skill shortages and gaps in provision. The timing of this is helpful as we can use it to feed into our SOLAS Service Plan.

For each of the sectors a working group will map out education and training courses in Kerry under each of the themes. In each area the curriculum will be mapped, the progression routes, exit points to employment and career paths will be identified. This information will be brought to the relevant employer groups / networks for their comment and input. With employers and others we will explore new models of education and training delivery, as well as work experience (e.g. linking traineeships / JobBridge to courses and employer needs).

The group will be using the EU Core competencies framework in designing courses – (Communication in the mother tongue; Communication in foreign languages; Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology; Digital competence; Learning to learn; Social and civic competences; Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship; Cultural awareness and expression).

The strategy document is not yet ready for publication. A working group has been established to look at a summary report with an action plan that will be available to the public.

"Interestingly for some, such as the Tourism, Leisure and Hospitality Sector, soft skills such as initiative, communication skills and work ethic matter much more than qualifications."

Second Business Education Forum hosted by ETBI and North Kildare Chamber

ETBI and North Kildare Chamber recently hosted their second Business Education Forum in ETBI Headquarters in Piper's Hill, Naas. The theme of the forum being:

Education and training meeting the needs of industry

Speaking on behalf of business were Des Kavanagh, MD of Jungheinrich Ireland and Eileen O'Riordan, HR Director at Pfizer Pharmaceuticals.

Paul O'Toole, Director of FÁS and Professor Bernard Mahon, Vice President for Research at NUI Maynooth spoke from an education and training standpoint.

All speakers delivered their message in a clear, concise manner. There was plenty of constructive debate between the speakers and the audience during the Q&A session, which bodes well for the next Business Education Forum.



Speakers at the Business Education Forum (l to r): Des Kavanagh, MD of Jungheinrich Ireland, Eileen O'Riordan, HR Director at Pfizer Pharmaceuticals, Paul O'Toole, Director of FÁS, Professor Bernard Mahon Vice President for Research at NUI Maynooth and Clem Ryan, CEO of KFM Radio, who moderated the discussion.

Recommendations from the Review of Guidance Counselling provision in second-level schools

The recommendations from the report are listed on pages 67 to 69 of the following document: http://www.ncge.ie/uploads/Review_of_Guidance_Counselling_provision_in_second_level_schools_2012-2013.FINAL.pdf

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LMETB recognises academic achievement in this year's Leaving Certificate in its schools in Louth and Meath

Louth and Meath Education and Training Board recently presented special awards for Academic Achievement at this year's Leaving Certificate examination to students from each of its schools and centres. The success of the 43 students was

celebrated on Friday 20th September 2013 at St. Oliver's Community School, Drogheda. They were joined and congratulated by Mr. Peter Kierans, Chief Executive LMETB and also by their school principal/co-ordinator. Over 200 people attended the ceremony as parents, family

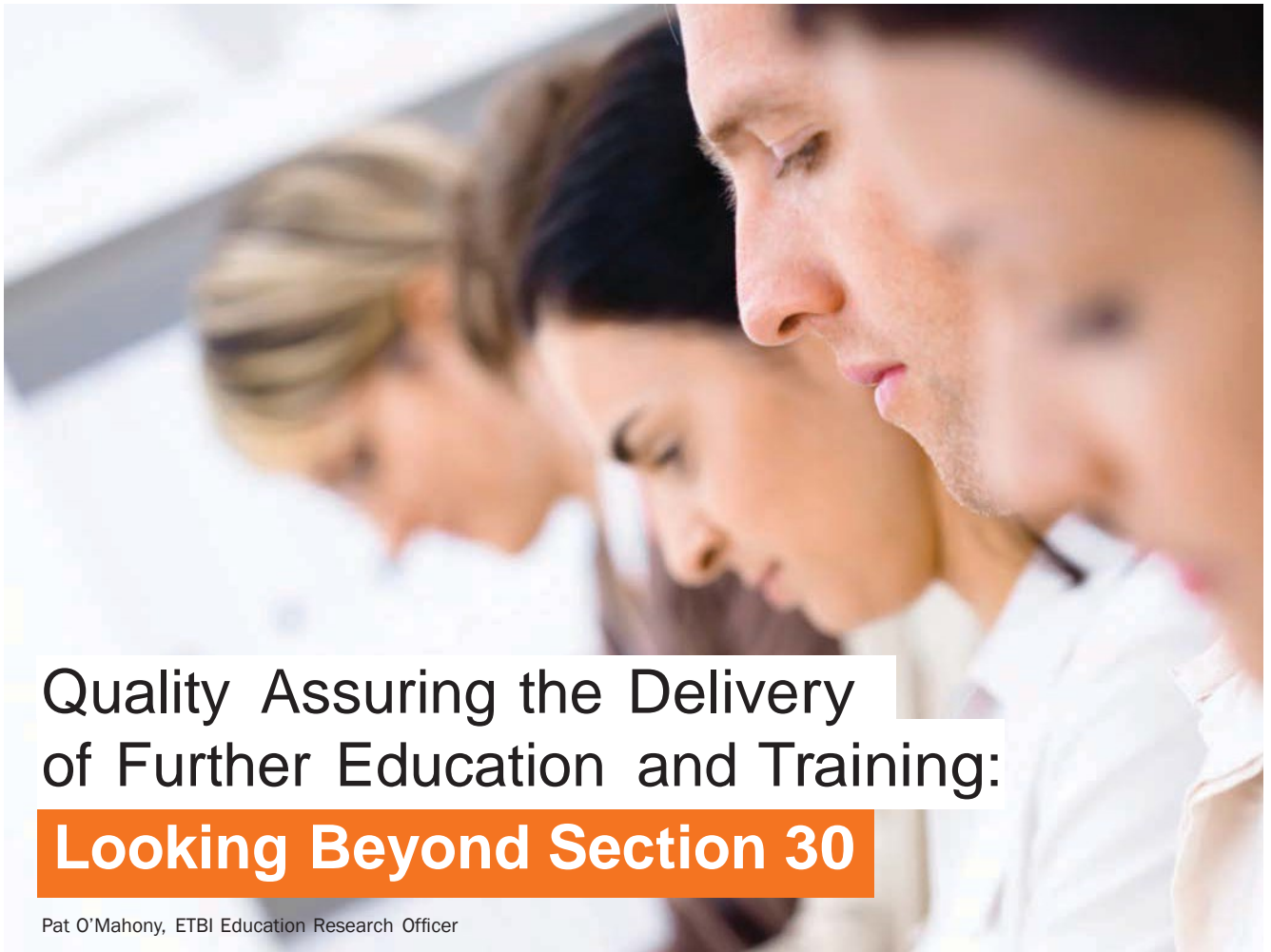
and friends watched with pride as students received their awards. The Principals and Co-ordinators from all of LMETB's schools and centres in Louth and Meath presented each of the highest achievers with a crystal bowl.



Margaret Grogan, Regional Director, NEPS, Michael Moriarty, ETBI General Secretary and Jennifer McKenzie, Director, NCGE at the launch of Breathe. Breathe is a programme developed to raise awareness around positive mental health for young people



ETBI at the North Kildare Chamber Conference. Pictured above are, from left to right: Niamh Ginnell, ETBI, Richard Bruton, TD, Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Eilis Quinlan, North Kildare Chamber President, Paul Mahon, ETBI and Michael Moriarty, ETBI General Secretary



Quality Assuring the Delivery of Further Education and Training:

Looking Beyond Section 30

Pat O'Mahony, ETBI Education Research Officer

CRITICAL ROLE OF FURTHER EDUCATION & TRAINING (FET) IN UPSKILLING WORKFORCE

Though future prosperity and social cohesion will depend significantly on facilitating smart and sustainable economic growth, the big skills challenge for Ireland is in the area of low and medium skills and qualifications – in further education and training (FET).

In this regard, US studies show that, even in a high tech world, some two-thirds of all jobs will be in the mid to low skills range – 44% mid-range and 22% low skills¹. For Europe, Cedefop² concludes that in 2020, those with medium to low skills will still amount

to 65% of those employed – 50% with medium skills and 15% with low skills.

Preoccupation with getting as many of our young people as possible into third level, irrespective of their capacity to benefit from a third-level education in their late teens, obscures the reality that failure to address appropriately skill enhancement on the middle to lower rungs of the qualifications ladder could result in large sections of the population failing to benefit from the economic growth that those with high-level skills might generate in the future.

Despite the importance of skill development at the mid to lower levels of the qualifications' framework,

the qualification and continuous professional development of those who deliver FET has been significantly ignored in this jurisdiction. That is until the imminent commencement of Section 30 of the Teaching Council Act (2001) surreally brought it into sharp focus.

THOSE DELIVERING FET REQUIRE BOTH VOCATIONAL AND PEDAGOGICAL COMPETENCE

On the one hand, we have an obligation to ensure that all who deliver FET should be qualified to do so. But, on the other hand, we have the reality that a significant minority of those who currently deliver Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses are not

¹ America's Forgotten Middle-Skill Jobs – see: http://www.urban.org/UploadedPdf/411633_forgettenjobs.pdf

² See http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/etv/Upload/Information_resources/Bookshop/546/4086_en.pdf - p.13

qualified teachers in the sense that they do not have a third-level degree or a teaching qualification, though they may be registered with the Teaching Council on a legacy basis.

Recently, a former principal of a large further education college alluded to this apparent paradox when he opined that it would not have been possible to develop the college to the point it is at today, if it had only been possible to employ qualified teachers, or indeed third-level graduates, to deliver its innovative programmes. This college has built an excellent reputation for providing excellent workplace relevant skills in vocational fields that few qualified teachers would be competent to teach.

So we have a dilemma. We need staff with current vocational skills in fields relevant to current and future skills' needs to deliver FET programmes. But a significant number of those with the requisite vocational skills are unlikely to be qualified teachers. For example, the person suited to delivering an FET module on network cabling is most likely to be a person with a trade background and industry standard certification in computer networking. Similarly, the person most suited to delivering a module on horsemanship would probably be someone with an internationally recognised qualification from the British Horse Society rather than a degree and/or teacher qualification.

There are two dimensions to qualifying and upskilling FET tutors³ – subject specific (vocational) competence and pedagogical (andragogical) competence. A further complication here is that, while teachers at every level need to have their pedagogical competence regularly updated via appropriate continuous professional development (CPD) programmes, FET

tutors very particularly need to have their vocational competence regularly refreshed, as it is their responsibility to prepare learners so they may 'hit the ground running' in the workplace.

The 2010 OECD Review of Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Ireland highlighted the need to ensure that FET tutors and instructors have appropriate pedagogical competences. Then, in 2011, the Teaching Council established Programme Requirements for the Accreditation of Teacher Qualifications [Further Education] and now several third-level colleges offer post graduate qualifications in teaching that meet the requirements for registration as a further education teacher with the Teaching Council. However, only those with a degree are eligible to enrol in those courses.

COMMENCEMENT OF SECTION 30 LEAVES US IN NO-MAN'S LAND

The commencement of Section 30 of the Teaching Council Act (2001), while motivated by a wish to improve the quality of educational outcomes, has the unintended consequence of constraining the development of FET programmes to provide skills required in the workplace unless they can be delivered by registered teachers.

In the past, the DES published circular letters (32/92, 47/00, and 04/04) setting out the qualifications that those delivering FET required for Teaching Council registration. But these circulars focussed on the entitlement to permanent employment rather than on the competence to provide a quality assured FET service to learners.

In any case, meeting the requirements of these circulars no longer entitles one to registration with the Teaching

Council. The Teaching Council requirements for teacher registration, which took effect on 1 April 2013, require an ordinary degree and a Council- approved teacher education qualification and, once Section 30 of the Teaching Council Act is commenced, Teaching Council registration is an absolute condition for being paid out of State funds if one is working in a school recognised by the Minister for Education and Skills, in accordance with Section 10 of the Education Act (1998).

Our failure to put in place a coherent national strategy and system for qualifying and upskilling those who deliver FET (FET) services has left us in no-man's land and, unless we begin to think strategically, we run the risk of undermining the most innovative and workplace responsive element in our whole education and training system – our PLC programme. And, in putting such a strategy in place we must concede that those with the vocational competence relevant to delivering FET programmes may not necessarily have a third-level degree, nor may a third-level degree be relevant to delivering such programmes effectively.

LOOKING NORTH OF THE BORDER

Qualifying those who deliver FET is a problem common to FET worldwide and most developed countries have tackled it successfully. Indeed, we need look no further than north of the border for a solution.

In 2009 the Northern Ireland (NI) Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) set out the competences required of teachers, tutors and trainers in the Lifelong Learning sector when it published *The Northern Ireland Professional Standards for Teachers, Tutors and Trainers in the Lifelong*

³ The term 'tutor' is used to describe those who deliver FET irrespective of their qualifications – without prejudice to how these tutors may be categorised in the future or the terms of employment they might enjoy. The DES has not established a tutor category; it simply emerged over time in ETBs for a variety of reasons.

Learning Sector⁴. These standards then informed the development of the Certificate in Teaching course currently offered exclusively by the University of Ulster.

Offered on a part-time basis over the course of a single academic year, the course is aimed at providing the 'beginner' with a base set of teaching competences. Furthermore, it is built around a work-based learning model of teacher education, with course participants being required to teach a minimum of four (4) hours per week. Thus, much of the learning that participants undertake and much of the assessment of that learning revolves around classroom practice. While the Certificate in Teaching is a standalone qualification in its own right, it also constitutes the first year of the Post Graduate Certificate in Education (Further Education) [PGCEFE], which is the qualification required for registration as an FE teacher with the General Teaching Council of Northern Ireland [GTC (NI)].

Subsequent to publishing 'professional standards' for the Lifelong Learning sector, DEL issued a department circular (FE12/09)⁵ which stipulated that, from November 2009, new entrants to teaching in Institutions of Further Education, whether part time or full time, who do not hold a Bachelor of Education Degree or a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) must successfully complete the Certificate in Teaching (see above) within a year of commencing teaching and the PGCEFE (see above) over the course of the next two years of teaching.

Drawing on both developments in Northern Ireland and the Teaching Council's Policy Paper on the Continuum of Teacher Education⁶, which



provides a coherent framework for the selection, qualification, registration, induction and career-long upskilling of teachers, the following strategy is proposed for the initial qualification and continuous professional development of all who deliver FET in this jurisdiction.

CORE ELEMENTS OF A DRAFT STRATEGY

1. The DES needs to document clearly the core competences that all who deliver FET should possess, as early as possible in their FET tutoring careers. The work already undertaken by the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) in NI is particularly relevant here.
2. The DES needs to issue a circular stipulating the qualifications required to deliver State-funded FET programmes, along the lines of what is comprehended in Northern
3. Ireland's FE12/09. There need not be just a single eligibility requirement; it might be appropriate to set different requirements for different FET programmes. The main thing would be to set out all requirements in a coherent form, in a single document, so that anyone seeking to discover what requirements are necessary may locate them easily.

⁴ <http://issuu.com/lifelonglearninguk/docs/northern-ireland-professional-standards-for-teachers?mode=embed&layout=http%3A%2F%25>

⁵ http://www.delni.gov.uk/qualifications_required_to_teach_in_institutions_of_further_higher_education.pdf

⁶ http://www.teachingcouncil.ie/_fileupload/TC_EdCtee/policypaper_brf_draft22dec2010_ck_56681186.pdf

to teach in the FE sector, where a third-level degree is, oftentimes, not appropriate to determining such suitability.

Many vocational skills relevant to FET are not covered by third-level degree programmes and those most suited to providing training in these skills are therefore unlikely to be third-level graduates. Consequently, the NI circular stipulates that, as an alternative to a third-level degree, 'three years relevant industrial, professional or business experience' and a 'qualification in the specialist area in which the applicant is to teach', provided such qualification is at 'Level 5 or above on the National Qualifications Framework' (roughly in line with a level 6 qualification on the Irish NFQ) is sufficient to meet the general education and subject specific qualifications. Meeting these requirements is also sufficient to gain admission to the University of Ulster's PGCEFE and successful completion of this course provides graduates with qualified teacher status, subject to successful registration with the General Teaching Council NI.

4. Extend the remit of the Teaching Council to give it responsibility for registering all FET tutors whose qualifications satisfy the conditions laid down in the DES circular being proposed at paragraph 2 above.

To ensure that FET tutors have both their pedagogical and vocational competences regularly refreshed and enhanced, there would need to be other interventions in place to incentivise and facilitate the career-long professional development of these tutors. One way of incentivising such continuous professional development would be to make the renewal

of Teaching Council registration contingent on the completion of specific CPD modules. And, given the importance of vocational competences, it might be necessary to incorporate a period of workplace placement into such CPD programmes.

5. The DES needs to establish an incremental salary scale for qualified FET tutors. This would incentivise unqualified and aspirant tutors to obtain the necessary qualifications at their own expense. If we want a quality FET service, we have no option but to pay appropriate salaries to those who deliver that service. Indeed, given that many FET learners suffer some kind of educational or other disadvantage, there are good grounds for holding that the task of the FET tutor is more challenging than that of the ordinary first- or second-level teacher.

6. The DES to enter into an agreement with the third-level colleges providing further education teacher training qualifications for the provision of an integrated suite of FET tutor training qualifications similar to those currently being provided in Northern Ireland by the University of Ulster – an entry level Certificate in Teaching (probably at level 6 on the Irish NFQ) to provide the tyro tutor with essential core competences, a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (Further Education) leading to registration with the Teaching Council, a Post Graduate Diploma in Education (Further Education) and a Master's in Education (Further Education). This suite of programmes, to be delivered via distance learning formats, wherever feasible, so as to ensure that tutors and aspirant tutors may access training without having to undertake unnecessary travel. At the two lower levels, in particular, it would be critical that these programmes would deliver the core pedagogical

competences referred to at paragraph 1 above. Remember, it is not qualified but competent tutors that are critical to guaranteeing the quality of FET services and, unless qualifications deliver the desired competences, they amount only to window dressing.

The recognition of prior learning should be integral to both gaining access to and attaining tutoring qualifications. For example, those with a primary or post primary teaching qualification might only be required to undertake some modules on andragogy. Similarly, those with appropriate experience in training, coaching or mentoring should receive academic credit for this experience. The whole focus of the tutor training programme should be to 'add value' to the tutor's or aspirant tutor's competence set.

The commencement of Section 30 of the Teaching Council Act, the integration of FÁS Training Services into ETBs, the establishment of SOLAS and the putting in place of a national further education strategy provide an opportunity for rethinking what we have been doing, or what we have not been doing, around the qualification and professional development of those who deliver FET.

The current difficulties around qualifying and professionally developing those who deliver FET will not be resolved by either the commencement of Section 30 of the Teaching Council Act and/or by designating courses that can be delivered by unregistered teachers, though such developments may overcome legal compliance issues and give the impression that the issue is being tackled.

If we truly aspire to putting in place a world-class FET service, we must put in place a strategy that will ensure that those who deliver FET are appropriately qualified and continuously upskilled. Is it not paradoxical that, while we are committed to upskilling the workforce generally, we have no clear plan for either qualifying or upskilling those charged with upskilling the workforce?

"If we truly aspire to putting in place a world-class FET service, we must put in place a strategy that will ensure that those who deliver FET are appropriately qualified and continuously upskilled."



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& CDETB Craft Unions (e.g. TEEU, INPDU, UCATT and BATU)

Support available through Mediation and Trained Contact Persons in your ETB ...under the new Bullying Prevention Policy and Harassment/Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy

By Deirdre Keogh, ETBI Assistant General Secretary

The revision of Education and Training Board (ETB) policy in the area of bullying and harassment/sexual harassment prevention has been carried out, on a partnership basis, and agreed by Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) and trade unions representing staff in the ETB sector. These include ASTI, IMPACT, SIPTU, TUI, UNITE and unions represented by the CDETB Trade Union Group.

Two new policies; the Bullying Prevention Policy - Complaint Procedure for ETB Staff and the Harassment & Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy - Complaint Procedure for ETB Staff issued with an implementation date of 1 September 2013.

Fundamental to the operation of both, is an emphasis on the use of informal means to seek to resolve matters of concern as early as possible, and to this end mediation is emphasised strongly as a means to securing a positive outcome to matters in dispute. The Consultative Forum at national level and signatory ETBs advocates the use of mediation as an effective method to resolving matters of conflict which is both impartial and confidential in its dealings.

Mediation is a voluntary and confidential process for resolving disputes wherein the parties agree to attempt to resolve the issue/s in dispute with the aid of an accredited professional mediator. In the event that this is to be used, a professional mediator is nominated by the

Head of HR in an ETB from the following sources:

- f The Workplace Mediation Service, Labour Relations' Commission http://www.lrc.ie/viewdoc.asp?m=d&fn=/documents/work/Workplace_Mediation_Service.htm
- f The Mediators' Institute of Ireland (MII) <http://www.themii.ie/find-a-mediator.jsp>
- f Mediation Forum Ireland (MFI) <http://mediationforumireland.com/index.php>

All matters related to the mediated process remain strictly confidential to the parties themselves. The mediator will advise the Head of HR of the date of conclusion of the mediation and the outcome to the mediation: namely whether an agreed outcome has been achieved or an agreed outcome has not been achieved.

Additionally, a national network of Contact Persons in the ETB sector has been established. These persons have received training from Ms Mary Rafferty of Consensus Mediation on their role under the said Prevention Policies. The Contact Person will play a key frontline role in the implementation of the Prevention Policies by providing information and support in a confidential, non-judgemental and off-the-record discussion to any employee in an ETB who may have concerns around bullying and harassment/sexual harassment issues that may arise in the ETB workplace.

To this end, the Contact Person will endeavour to:

- f Actively listen and provide support, allowing the concerned staff member to speak about their experience and thus help to clarify and organise their thoughts.
- f Explain the procedures, the various options available and help the person identify whether their complaint fits the definitions of the procedure.
- f Assist, through basic coaching questions, to help the employee explore the issue and come to a decision about what s/he wishes to do by way of a next step.

The Contact Person 'has a listening brief and is a reference point for the complainant...'; he/she does not get involved in any other way in the complaints procedure and is not an advocate for either party' (Code of Practice for Employers and Employees on the Prevention and Resolution of Bullying in the Workplace, HSA, 2007).

The Contact Person will treat all discussions with persons who seek their support, as completely confidential and will not be requested to disclose information to a third party. However, in a crisis situation of potential danger (concern for the person's own or another's health, safety or welfare) the Contact Person should seek support and assistance from Management or the HR Department.

Meetings between the Contact Person and the person seeking support should

normally take place during normal working hours. No home or personal mobile telephone numbers should be exchanged. Meetings should last no longer than 45 minutes to an hour and no more than 3-4 meetings with any one individual should ever be needed. The ETBI/Unions' Consultative Forum encourages persons who may have concerns about these issues to read

the policies available on www.etbi.ie or on your trade union website and to get in touch with a Contact Person in your local ETB office. A list of trained Contact Persons is available below. While it is a decision for the complainant as to whether s/he invokes the procedure or not, in most cases the informal route and specifically mediation, is

the preferred approach of the ETBs and unions representing staff in the sector. The support of ETBs executive management is particularly acknowledged for its willingness to provide Employee Assistance Service Support or counselling locally, on a case-by-case basis. The HR Manager in your local ETB should be contacted in this regard.

TRAINED CONTACT PERSONS IN ETBS

ETB	NAMES	Email	Landline No
Cavan Monaghan	Theresa Duggan	tduggan@cavanvec.ie	049 4331044
	Fiona Nugent	fnugent@monaghanvec.ie	047 30888
City of Dublin	Linda Smith	linda.smith@cdetb.ie	01-6319874
	Angela Leydon	angela.leydon@cdetb.ie	01-6319811
Cork ETB	Valerie Lucey	Valerie.lucey@corketb.ie	021 4273377
	Valerie Foley	Valerie.foley@corketb.ie	021 4273377
	Ted Forde	ted.forde@corketb.ie	021/665000
Donegal ETB	Marie Donnelly	mariedonnelly@donegaletb.ie	074 9161551
	Paula Crumlish	paulacrumlish@donegaletb.ie	074 9161509
Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB	Ken Smartt	ksmartt@ddletb.ie	01-4529600
	Jeni Gaynor	jgaynor@ddletb.ie	01 4529600
Galway and Roscommon ETB	Christina Somers	csomers@roscommonvec.ie	090 66 26151
	Phil Moylan	Phil.moylan@gretb.ie	091 875616
Kerry ETB	Elizabeth Forsyth	eforsyth@kerr yetb.ie	066 7121488
	Anne O'Connor	aconnor@kerr yetb.ie	066 7121488
Kildare and Wicklow ETB	Mary Dillon	marydillon@kwetb.ie	045 988000
	Carmel Whelan	carmelwhelan@kwetb.ie	0404 60532
Kilkenny and Carlow ETB	Christine McGrath	cmcgrath@kcetb.ie	056-7770966 (ext 208)
	Mary Whittle	mwhittle@kcetb.ie	059-9138572
Laois and Offaly ETB	Rebecca Bowell	rbowell@laoisof falyetb.ie	057 8621352
	Gemma Farrell	gfarrell@laoisof falyetb.ie	057 9349413
Limerick and Clare ETB	Aine Fennessy	afennessy@limerickvec.ie	061-442123
	Bernie Harrington	bharrington@clarevec.ie	065-6866748
Longford and Westmeath ETB	Patricia Ryan	pryan@westmeathvec.ie	044 9394009
	Patricia Feeney	Pfeeney@longfordvec.ie	043 3334007
Louth and Meath ETB	Shivaun O'Brien	Shivaun.obrien@louthvec.ie	086 8203944
Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim ETB	Mary McEllin	mmcellin@mayovec.ie	094 9024188
	Barbara Ronayne	barbararonayne@mayovec.com	086 2795440
Tipperary ETB	Sile McDonnell	s.mcdonnell@tippnor thvec.ie	067 40033
	Nuala Fraher	nfraher@tippsouthvec.ie	052 6134334
Waterford and Wexford ETB	Gina McGrath	ginamcgrath@wwetb.ie	058 41780
	Annemarie Hickey	annmariehickey@wwetb.ie	053 9123799
ETBI	Deirdre Keogh	deirdre.keogh@etbi.ie	045 901070
	Niamh Ginnell	niamh.ginnell@etbi.ie	045 901070
	Eileen D'Arcy	hr@etbi.ie	045 901070



Co Kildare
Ireland

Phone: +353 (0)45 901070
Fax: +353 (0)45 901711
Email: support@etbi.ie

www.etbi.ie