

IVEA

NEWS

SPRING
2013

Representing Vocational Education Committees

The End of an Era

1902 to the
present day

IVEA hosts
meeting with

Minister Quinn

A time of change

Evolution and the march of time

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EVOLUTION and the MARCH OF TIME

Michael Moriarty, General Secretary, IVEA

The long awaited reform of the FET sector in Ireland is imminent, with the January publication of the Further Education and Training Bill 2013. The Bill provides for the establishment of SOLAS, the new Further Education and Training Authority, under the aegis of the Department of Education and Skills. SOLAS will be responsible for co-ordinating and funding further education and training programmes, most of which will be delivered by the Education and Training Boards (ETBs). Key to the success of the reformed Further Education and Training (FET) sector will be the synergy that is created between the ETBs and SOLAS and the working relationships that will be underpinned by service level agreements (SLAs). The Further Education and Training Bill will also provide for the disbanding of FÁS and the transfer of the sixteen FÁS Training Centres to the newly established ETBs. There will be a renewed focus on the training needs of jobseekers, in line with the objectives in the Government's *Pathways to Work Strategy*.

In the context of this restructuring and realignment of Further Education and Training, the Budget decision to remove up to 200 teaching posts from PLCs by raising the pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) to 19:1 has no educational validity. Because of the specific nature of many of their training programmes, PLC colleges are not comparable to second level schools.

Indeed this decision by Government to raise the PLC PTR to 19:1 certainly compares most unfavourably with the nearest comparator, FÁS, where most training programmes have a pupil-teacher ratio of 14:1. At a time of greatest challenge in terms of training needs, it makes little sense to reduce our capacity to meet the operational and strategic demands set out in the Government's policy to get people back to work. The ambitious reform programme envisioned by the overhaul of Further Education and Training will certainly not be helped by cutting the capacity of PLC Colleges to deliver. The PLC sector wants to face the future with confidence, but needs the capacity to deliver on the skills training needs of jobseekers and other learners. This unexpected development is not a good start.

As the Education and Training Boards Bill passes through the Oireachtas, the establishment date for the ETBs fast approaches. There has been little real appreciation in the media and elsewhere of how historically profound this restructuring of the education sector will be. After 83 years of dedicated service to the education and training needs of the State, the 33 VECs will quietly pass into history, as did their predecessors,

the Technical Instruction Committees, in the 1920s. Their passing will be commemorated locally, and their proud record of service will stand the test of time. But evolutionary progress heralds the dawning of a new era, with the establishment of the sixteen Education and Training Boards from the amalgamation of the VECs and the FÁS Training Centres. This new educational infrastructure will be the framework for delivering an expanded range of services and educational programmes intended to meet the needs of both learners and providers in a constantly changing and increasingly demanding education sector. As the VECs served the needs of the twentieth century, the new ETBs will serve the education and training needs of twenty-first century Ireland.

IVEA must also evolve. The present name has been in place since 1944. In February, a Special Congress of the Association agreed to re-name the national representative body for ETBs, and from the establishment date for the ETBs, the IVEA will evolve into ETBI, Education and Training Boards Ireland. This edition of IVEA NEWS will likely be the last under that title, but the newsletter will re-emerge as ETBI NEWS later this year. We cannot stop the march of time. Such is progress.

"After 83 years of dedicated service to the education and training needs of the State, the 33 VECs will quietly pass into history, as did their predecessors, the Technical Instruction Committees."

IVEA Extraordinary Congress

The first IVEA Extraordinary Congress since 2003 took place in Killashee House Hotel, Naas, Co. Kildare on Friday, 8 February 2013. Congress was convened to vote on a change to the Association's name from the Irish Vocational Education Association (An Cumann Gairmoideachais in Éirinn) to Education and Training Boards Ireland (Boird Oideachais agus Oiliúna Éireann).

The name change was approved and the Association will be known as ETBI – Education and Training Boards Ireland from enactment day of the Education and Training Boards Bill.



Left to right: Bernard Devlin, Co. Louth VEC, Martin O'Brien CEO, Co. Monaghan VEC, Joe McGrath, Chairman, Co. Monaghan VEC and Bernard Murnaghan, Co. Louth VEC at the recent IVEA Extraordinary Congress.



Left to right: Cllr Mary Sweeney, Co. Laois VEC, Susan Meagher, South Tipperary VEC and Catherine Quinlan, Co. Waterford VEC at the IVEA Extraordinary Congress



Tomás MacPhaidín CEO, City of Galway VEC and Edward McEvoy CEO, Co. Offaly VEC at the IVEA Extraordinary Congress

Reflections on a Time of Change for VECs

By Paddy Lavelle, CEO Co Waterford VEC and President CEEOA



Historians writing about earlier periods tend to present a picture of golden eras where changes did not happen for extended periods. This sense of time passing slowly is rooted perhaps in our distance from it. These days in VECs, we tend to believe that we inhabit times of great change, when it feels like nothing is remaining as it was. The examples on which we can draw are legion. We have the amalgamations, the banking crisis, the collapse in public revenue, the winding down of FÁS, and the huge growth in unemployment, all weighing on our declining budgets.

I am reminded of a story by Carl Sandberg – “The white man drew a small circle in the sand and told the red man, “This is what the Indian knows”. Then he drew a big circle around the small one and said, ‘This is what the white man knows’. The

Indian took the stick and swept an immense ring around both circles. “This is where the white man and the red man know nothing”.

At the heart of education is the search for knowledge. This story shows that knowledge is not only about “what” we know, but also “how” we know, “where” we know, and ultimately, but not cynically, “who” we know. When knowledge is reduced to only “what” – the amount, the number of things, heights, widths, depths – then all of that is available on Wikipedia, the internet. The how, where and who of knowledge is about reflecting on what we know so as to change our world, to improve our way of living, to be mindful of others, to be an effective person – and also to be an “uncertain” person. The more we learn, the more we know, as the red man did, how much we don’t know – that is a thought that

roots us, harnesses us to the ground, while allowing us to gaze at the stars. “Uncertainty”, and not knowing, means an acceptance that there is always another way, another option, another possibility. It does not mean indecisiveness. It means planning based on reasonable alternatives, and action based on current evidence.

This Association is at a very critical point in its history. The reforming of VECs into ETBs is in process. In these times of reform, we need to look beyond where we are. We need to attempt to anticipate the place we need to reach as organisations, and as people animating organisations.

That broader perspective is often lost in the heat of the moment. When emotion drives us to distraction, when we lose focus and fall into unproductive patterns of behaviour, it’s time to stand back.

My own reflections have helped me to see that there is a good clear purpose to the amalgamation of VECs. The broader community can be better served if we set them up well. We have, in the midst of flux, the opportunity to reorder things, to do better what we do

“The how, where and who of knowledge is about reflecting on what we know so as to change our world, to improve our way of living, to be mindful of others, to be an effective person – and also to be an “uncertain” person.”

"With our purpose clear, we need to prove, to ourselves and the wider community, what we can do. We need to go about our business in a professional and sensitive way."

well, and to reform things that need to be reformed. As people, we are caught between the comfort of knowing what we do every day and the challenge to improve systems, processes and service. Seeking comfort is not always wrong, but we know that opportunities for radical change do not present often, and we need to seize them.

We are caught, in that we know so little of the full picture and can predict so little accurately. As people, we are generally optimistic about the future. If we harness our collective optimism, it can grease the wheels of change for us. What helps is clarity of purpose.

For ETBs, the purpose is to build better quality education and training organisations. There are stages to achieving this purpose. Mapping out the way and prioritising the new, while keeping the day job going, is essential.

As a theme in his poetry, W.B. Yeats uses the image of the winding stair to symbolise ideas of growth, experience and change. Our passage through life is not in a straight line, but rather up a spiral staircase. At various points, there is a feeling of being here before, of déjà vu.

As education professionals, we know through the wisdom that comes from experience that we will move on from here, that we will create anew from the wreckage of the present; sometimes through scavenging, sometimes through reworking, sometimes through discovery, sometimes through passion.

In a time of change, we may easily be distracted about the purpose of the

change. From a government policy viewpoint, VECs becoming ETBs has an efficiency focus – "doing more with less" – as well as a reforming focus – "doing things better." Translating these into the operations of each ETB means describing clearly what should happen to make it happen. We need purpose and vision.

So far, most ETB areas have gone a long way towards ensuring that operational functions will continue to be provided, post-establishment. In the medium term, the challenges are greater and more complex. Nonetheless, the impulse, which has worked so far, to do as much as possible in a collective way, can become a very big strength for new ETBs. We need to continue to develop collective solutions to common issues and build up shared practice.

Michael Fullan, an education writer, writes about system-wide reform. He stresses that governments have to rely on the strength of a middle tier to drive the changes. National decisions need a mediating authority that both encourages implementation and monitors it effectively. Schools alone, no matter how good, have limited impact in changing the whole system. Perhaps this is a role for Ireland's ETBs. We are close enough to the action to appreciate effort, initiative and drive. We are also able to fill the accountability void that hampers a centralised decision-making model from being effective.

With our purpose clear, we need to prove, to ourselves and the wider community, what we can do. We need to go about our business in a professional and sensitive way. We need to respect and protect the loyalty of our staff.

Beyond what we know now is the great unknown, as Sandberg's red man illustrated. Our openness to change, our courage in moving things on, and our clarity of purpose will help us through this difficult but necessary period.

To finish, in the last verse of "The Winding Stair," Yeats proclaims a sentiment which can help move us on from here:

*I am content to follow to its source
Every event in action or in thought;
Measure the lot; forgive myself the lot!
When such as I cast out remorse
So great a sweetness flows into
the breast*

*We must laugh and we must sing,
We are blest by everything,
Everything we look upon is blest.*



The key to change management

In this difficult economic climate, organisations are frequently forced to change the way they operate in order to achieve the greatest economic and operational efficiencies possible. When there are changes to the way an organisation is run, the objectives and expectations of the personnel will be impacted. Here Emily Chambers, Head of Legal and Company Secretary at IPB Insurance, explains how best to address this to avoid problems.

Change management entails thoughtful planning, considerate consultation and sensitive implementation. The first step in the change management process is identifying SMART objectives, i.e. objectives which are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely. The parties involved in the process should assess what they want to achieve, how they will know that they have achieved what they want, who will be affected by the change and how

they will react to it, how much change can be achieved without needing to seek help from external parties and if the help of external parties is needed how can the external party be expected to assist the organisation in achieving their goals.

The way the organisation decides to inform employees about the need for change will shape the employees' attitudes towards it. 'Selling' change to people is not a sustainable strategy for success, it won't accelerate their agreement with it and it can make them feel that the idea is being imposed on them. The thought of change can have an unsettling effect on people; so they have to be told about it in a way that ensures it is accepted as something they can adjust to.

In order to effectively communicate the need for change, the parties responsible for implementing it should ascertain whether the employees

who will be affected by it agree with, or at least understand, the need for the change. The employees should be given the opportunity to assess how the change will affect them and to say how comfortable they are with the proposed change. They should also be included in the planning and implementation of the process. It is essential that sensitive aspects of organisational change management are communicated to people face-to-face. If you rely on written communications there is the risk that people will not fully understand the situation as individuals may feel reluctant to explore matters in sufficient detail if they're not given a clear communication channel.

The timeline involved in the implementation of a process of change is equally as important as the need for appropriate communication. A hurried approach to implementing change will reduce opportunities for consultation with and involvement of the people who will be affected by the change and this may lead to difficulties that could



delay the whole process. Complex changes will require consultation with the people in the organisation in order to explain the rationale behind the change and gain agreement and support. By informing people and involving them in the process there is an opportunity to get their input. It also gives them a sense of ownership which will ensure their participation and ultimately enhance the overall level of acceptance of the process of change within the organisation.

It is vital to appreciate that while employees should be engaged throughout the change process, it is not their responsibility to manage it. Their responsibility is only to engage with it as best they can, according to their individual experience and attitude. The responsibility for managing the change rests with the organisations' management and they are responsible for the extent of employees' adaption to it. Management must facilitate and enable change and assess the situation objectively, i.e. step back, be non-judgemental and help employees respond positively to the process. The manager's role is one of interpreting and enabling rather than just imposing instructions on individuals.

When developing a change strategy, expressions such as 'changing mind-sets' should be avoided. They imply that employees have the 'wrong' mind-set, when it would be more appropriate to say that if change is required it is the organisation that has the 'wrong' mind-set. The development of new structures, policies and procedures creates new systems which should be explained to employees as early as possible so they can validate and refine them as necessary. Conducting staff surveys are a useful way to give employees the opportunity to articulate their views. It is crucial that management have an enabling approach towards policy implementation to ensure that

Emily Chambers

Head of Legal & Company Secretary

Emily Chambers is the Head of Legal and Company Secretary at IPB Insurance. As a practicing solicitor, she is responsible for providing professional and strategic advice to the Chief Executive, Board and Senior Management, managing the Company's approach to protecting the interests of its policyholders in litigating proceedings to which they might be a party and managing relationships with external providers of legal services.

Emily's responsibilities as Company Secretary of IPB Insurance include ensuring compliance by the Board with relevant legislative and regulatory requirements and advising the Board on corporate governance issues enabling the application of best practice in corporate governance and the effective implementation of the corporate governance framework identified in the Combined Code.

Emily joined IPB Insurance from Ecclesiastical Insurance Group where she held the role of Head of Legal with responsibility for the Group's Irish legal and commercial operations. Prior to this, Emily worked with Quinn Insurance and Ivor Fitzpatrick & Company Solicitors where she developed significant experience in commercial dispute resolution and insurance defence litigation.

Emily is a member of the formidable Lahinch Golf Club in County Clare where she enjoys balancing the challenges of links golf with the calming influence of the sea air and post-game refreshments.



employees feel supported. Unless both management and employees embrace a collective, consistent approach to change, it will be disjointed.

One popular approach to managing change was devised by Harvard professor, John Kotter. In his book 'Leading Change' (Harvard Business Review Press, 1st ed., 1996), he set out eight steps which should be followed to ensure change is successful:

1. Increase urgency in order to inspire individuals to make objectives relevant.
2. Build a guiding team who have the

right emotional commitment and mix of skills.

3. Get the team to establish a simple vision and strategy.
4. Communicate for buy-in by appealing and responding to individuals' needs.
5. Empower action by removing obstacles and enabling constructive feedback.
6. Create short-term wins by setting attainable goals.
7. Foster and encourage determination and persistence.
8. Reinforce the value of successful change via recruitment and promotion.

IVEA hosts meeting with Minister Quinn

A special meeting of Standing Council and the chairpersons and CEOs of VECs was convened on Friday, 14 December to meet with the Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairi Quinn. The meeting was held in IVEA headquarters at Piper's Hill, Naas, Co Kildare.

The Minister covered a range of topics in his address including the establishment of both ETBs and SOLAS. He was accompanied by DES Secretary General, Seán Ó Foghlú and Assistant Secretary, Martin Haney, both of whom also participated in the discussion that followed the Minister's address.

This meeting presented IVEA with an opportunity to engage with Minister Quinn and senior officials, to address significant areas of concern such as; cuts to education resources, establishment of ETBs and the establishment of a distinct Further Education sector under SOLAS.



Left to right: Seán Ó Foghlú, Secretary General, DES, Ruairi Quinn T.D., Minister for Education and Skills, Cllr Noel O'Connor, IVEA President and Martin Haney, Assistant Secretary, DES



EUproVET –

“Put practice into policy and policy into practice”

René van Schalkwijk, General Secretary of EUproVET



Some five years ago, a group of people met in Amsterdam. They saw a growing influence on education coming from the EU. The Bologna Declaration had resulted in spreading a common bachelor-master system across Europe. The Copenhagen Declaration set the stage for all kinds of EU instruments like the European Qualification Framework and EQAVET, a pan-European quality framework for Vocational Education and Training (VET). Skills Councils were announced, promising EU-wide development of qualification schemes. Although the EU has no formal say on educational issues in member states, the formal meetings of education ministers from the member states were producing directives and informal results that had led to political commitment to develop such instruments in the individual countries.

The group of people meeting in Amsterdam, amongst them Michael Moriarty from IVEA, also saw that, in the process of EU policy development, there was no real voice for VET providers. Trying to protest and/or contribute at national level, when the national

governments had already committed themselves at EU level, did not promise to be very effective. It was decided that a new policy-oriented organisation was needed, to voice what was being done and what was needed at college and school level. This organisation would lobby to have the contribution of providers of VET recognised in the EU policy development process. So representatives from Ireland, the Netherlands, the UK, Finland, Spain, Denmark and Lithuania formed EUproVET as an association of VET associations; that is, associations with a relative distributed authority on VET education within their country. They also had a strong history in organising VET schools and/or VET principals in their own country. EUproVET had the aim of realising this mission:

“The mission of the association is to voice the interests of providers of vocational education and training and adult education within the European Union, and to reach common European goals on the European policy level, in the member states of the European Union and European countries which do not form part of the European Union.”

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The founding group realised that this would be a tough job to fulfil. I do not want the reader to feel sorry for us, but if you looked in the mirror, this endeavour was bound to meet some problems into the future.

- a. Its members would always be working on issues that would have an effect many, many years ahead. So its work would not always be politically interesting, and for everybody with their day-to-day chores, it could soon look like a waste of time;
- b. Vested interests in the EU arena would not welcome another player with inside knowledge and contributions;
- c. It would be hard to try to get increased membership because of the immensely different VET systems in Europe.

The “what’s in it for me”/ “instant gratification” society, we somehow seem to live in, would not make it any easier. But as my mother used to say, “Some jobs have to be done even if the job does not smile at you.”

We had also some things in our favour.

- a. The founding group showed stamina; and the core of them are still together in the venture;
- b. Gradually, the importance of VET has dawned on Europe. The knowledge economy that the EU set out to create could not work without VET. Also Europe had, and has, millions that for their employment

will depend not on knowledge work but on skilled work.

- c. The civil servants within the European Commission could make use of a stakeholders' representation from the providers' side.
- d. We could use our network to join forces with other VET associations.

So, five years on and looking back, what has this association achieved?

1. We managed to formulate a joint policy document on VET with three other VET associations, all from different backgrounds and objective (EVBB, EFVET, EVTA);
2. The four organisations were invited to address the meeting of ministers of education in Bruges;
3. The Bruges declaration 2010, which sets the EU agenda for this decade, explicitly mentions the contributions of VET providers as relevant for the first time. Before that, it was only social partners that were mentioned;
4. We organized three conferences on policy measures in the EU arena;
5. EUproVET is now a formally recognised lobby organisation by the European Commission;
6. We are represented together with the other four associations in six policy-developing working groups of the European Commission, on issues ranging from quality assurance to the positions of trainers in VET;
7. We actively participated in the lobby process to get Erasmus For All/Yes Europe more versed towards VET. A joint approaching of MEPs from the different EUproVET countries promises more for the future;
8. We started a project on mobility for students and ECVET.
9. We participate in the European policy network, Leadership Network in Education.
10. Together with EFEE (European Federation of Education Employers), of which IVEA is also a member, we are involved in a project that tries to define future skills need in public services.

"Success breeds success, to the point where it might drown you. Since achieving the recognition we fought for, EUproVET has opened doors to contributing on the development of VET at EU level."

11. We are in a project Equal Class that aims to heighten the EQF classification for non-university-trained engineers;
12. We have a regular yearly meeting with the Directorate of the European Commission and other associations in both secondary and higher VET education, as well as a yearly meeting with the presidents of the other VET associations in a joint policy committee;
13. We have started a new project on leadership and management in VET, highlighting the specific requirements needed for working with an often difficult group of students and a challenging relation with employers/companies.

We can proudly say that we have put ourselves in the EU spotlight. From a stereotypical Dutch point of view, I might add "and all this only for a contribution of about 1000 Euros a year!" But even more than that, I guess I should mention the active participation from the core group of people from the founding countries like Ireland as contributing hugely to our success. But we realise that in these times of crisis, everybody is still going to be careful about where to spend in terms of time and money. As indicated earlier, like on the national level, these influencing games are difficult to measure as to their effect. Professor ten Heuvelhof of the Delft University of Technology once compared the process with a group of people around a table trying to push the table to a point in the room where each individual would want it. Nobody entirely gets his or her way, but for sure if you are not there to push, you will probably be pushed around by the results of the process!

In all our activities at European level, we are trying to get across many things that you will also recognise at national level.

- a. We stress the importance of VET in comparison with general education, especially when redistributing EU contributions through EU policies (e.g., Yes Europe);
- b. We emphasise that not only knowledge but, just as important, skills, competence, aptitude and ability pave the road to economic recovery;
- c. We try to avert EU policy developments that we know do not work at grass-roots college level;
- d. We try to avoid a build-up of EU requirements in addition to national requirements, for instance in quality assurance or qualifications requirements;
- e. We work towards downsizing EU institutionalisation in favour of funding for colleges; and
- f. We try to be very cost efficient in our own work.

Success breeds success, to the point where it might drown you. Since achieving the recognition we fought for, EUproVET has opened doors to contributing on the development of VET at EU level. With the other associations, we try to pool resources; but we would welcome anybody who would want to contribute to our efforts. We are building a network of experts and contributors. If you are not afraid of a challenge which will give you, not instant gratification, but the intrinsic knowledge that you have "moved a stone" on the EU path for VET, please let Michael Moriarty of IVEA know.

We all already appreciate the Irish contribution; but as I keep saying, we are relatively good, but we can always do absolutely better.

Education Experts

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we can help your
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Competency procedures – a missed opportunity

By Ian O’Herlihy, Mason Hayes & Curran Solicitors



When I first began to advise VECs on employment issues, over 20 years ago, I was advised to take account of a number of “realities”, including the following:

1. Almost every school had a teacher with competency issues;
2. You cannot get rid of a teacher! Difficulties in this regard were stated to be very significant in respect of teachers generally, but even greater in the case of vocational teachers, who were protected by the Vocational Education Acts;
3. The teacher unions were really strong and formidable opponents;
4. There were no procedures for addressing competency issues for teachers.
5. Teaching competency is a nebulous concept, impossible to define and therefore impossible to enforce.

It was in the shadow of these “realities” that I began my advisory work for VECs. I soon found that some of these “realities” were in fact real.

There were no adequate procedures for addressing competency issues for vocational teachers. Teacher unions were indeed very strong and the protections of the Vocational

Education Acts were very significant. In the intervening years I found that, as had been advised to me, the number of cases in which competency issues were raised with vocational teachers was small. There was a reluctance to set up a process when there were no agreed procedures and the outcome was likely to be unsuccessful. In these circumstances the question was very regularly asked: “why bother?”.

So when the “Towards 2016” Procedures were introduced, pursuant to Section 24(3) of the Education Act 1998, in 2008, it was perhaps reasonable to assume that matters would change. After all, there are several thousand vocational teachers in the country, so, even accepting, as I readily do, that “a significant majority of teachers discharge their duties in a competent and efficient way and provide a service in line with the best traditions of teaching”, on the basis of the norms in other professions and industries, there would at least be a reasonable number of cases in which professional competency issues would be addressed.

THE AGREED PROCEDURES

While the agreed procedures are cumbersome and certainly protracted,

they do set out the procedure by which vocational schools can address competency concerns with a teacher.

Stage 1:

Stage 1 provides for an informal stage: the Principal, who is correctly identified as the person “in the best position to identify when professional competency issues arise in a teacher’s work”, can raise his/her concerns orally with the teacher. The teacher is given a copy of the agreed Procedures. The Principal is required to explore with the teacher the underlying cause(s) and agree steps to be taken to address the matter. In addition the Principal will advise the teacher of available internal or external supports. There is provision for an escalation of the process to the formal process where the teacher has failed to engage positively with the informal process and the Principal continues to have concerns about the teacher’s competency.

Stage 2:

The formal process is initiated at Stage 2: the Principal advises the CEO/EO of the VEC and provides a written report which is also copied to the teacher, who is entitled to provide a written response. Where the teacher believes that the formal process should not have been commenced and the Principal’s concerns are without foundation, he/she is entitled to require an External Review by the Department’s Chief Inspector (see below). The CEO/EO considers the

“a significant majority of teachers discharge their duties in a competent and efficient way and provide a service in line with the best traditions of teaching”

"Some have suggested that the Procedures are so unusually complicated, and the timescales so protracted, that vocational Principals have little enthusiasm for entering into a lengthy process which could take more than a school year to complete."

Principal's report and the teacher's response and, subject to a possible meeting between the teacher and the CEO/EO, the CEO/EO will make a decision either that there are insufficient grounds for the Principal's concerns, or that a formal process be initiated (in which case the Principal prepares an Improvement Plan). The Procedures set out what should be contained in an Improvement Plan and time limits are set out for the implementation and review of the Improvement Plan at the end of which the Principal will furnish a report to the CEO/EO setting out the outcome. Where the CEO/EO decides that the required improvement has not been brought about, the CEO/EO will request the Chief Inspector to review the teacher's work.

Stage 3

The Review by the Chief Inspector is referred to as an "External Review" and the Procedures are set out at Stage 3. Engagement with and by the teacher is a requirement, and all documentation provided to the Chief Inspector must be furnished to the teacher. The Review may involve a series of visits to the teacher's class. Ultimately a report will be prepared by the Chief Inspector which will set out the conclusions reached in relation to the concerns raised by the CEO/EO, and the teacher will have an opportunity to make a written response to the Chief Inspector. Ultimately the CEO/EO will decide what action, if any, should be taken, which can include a disciplinary process conducted by the CEO/EO, or referral to the Committee of the VEC.

Stage 4

Stage 4 sets out a procedure where the CEO/EO decides to deal with the matter himself/herself; this process can result in certain limited sanctions including final written censure, deferral of an increment or withdrawal of an increment(s). It also sets a procedure where the CEO/EO considers that the matter requires to be referred to the VEC's Committee as a "reserved function" under the VEC Acts. This can result in more serious sanctions: suspension for a limited period with or without pay, or suspension in accordance with the VEC Acts (in which case the matter is referred to the Minister for possible dismissal).

Stage 5

Finally Stage 5 provides for an appeal to the Teacher's Disciplinary Appeal Panel.

USE OF THE PROCEDURES

It is not possible to get an accurate view of how many Vocational Principals have used the Procedures since 2008, say at Stage 1 (informal stage) or Stage 2. It is worth considering, however, to what extent the Procedures have been used at Stage 3 and beyond. So how many vocational teachers have been subjected to an "external review" pursuant to Stage 3 of the agreed Procedures, in the more than four years since they were introduced? The answer is: none. Not one vocational teacher has been subjected to an external review. While accepting that competency issues are normally resolved within the school, it is hard to believe that a CEO is never

required to bring matters to Stage 3, External Review.

It is worth considering why the Procedures have never been utilised beyond Stage 2. Some have suggested that the Procedures are so unusually complicated, and the timescales so protracted that vocational Principals have little enthusiasm for entering into a lengthy process. Which could take more than a school year to complete. Others have suggested that the particular dynamic in a school staff room, coupled with a perception of a lack of support for Principals in taking on these issues, make vocational school Principals question whether the benefits to be gained by raising competency issues will outweigh the likely unpopularity among colleagues which may result.

One way or the other, it appears clear that Principals appear to have little confidence that the Procedures will result in a successful outcome. Maybe the traditional method of addressing these issues – timetabling around a teacher's competency problems – is still the preferred response. If this is the case, the welfare of students in the context of a teacher's competency issues is hardly best served. It is worth bearing in mind that the Sutton Trust, an independent UK based educational research trust estimates that if the performance of the bottom 10th percentile of teachers was brought up to the average it would catapult England's schools into the world's top five education providers within a decade. Even allowing for all of the obvious differences between our respective countries and education systems there is no reason to doubt why a similar transformation could not be achieved in Ireland. That is the prize I fear we are failing to grasp.

Ian O'Herlihy is Head of Mason Hayes & Curran's Employment Law and Benefits Department and practices widely throughout the educational sector.

Rethinking Foreign Language Proficiency

(What the 'new' Irish can offer us)

By Pat O'Mahony, IVEA

Given the extent to which Ireland's prosperity depends on our capacity to sell products and services in the global marketplace, it is hardly surprising that foreign language skills are in high demand in the employment market. In fact, these language skills are as critical to indigenous businesses as they are to multinationals because, if a firm wants to do business off-shore, it often needs to be able to communicate fluently with customers and prospective customers in their own language.

Up till now, Ireland has been fortunate in that we speak English, as it is the common means of communication for speakers of many different first languages across the globe. But, as the balance of economic power moves East and South, the relative importance of English to our future is on the wane.

Today Ireland needs fluent speakers of virtually every international language if it wants to guarantee its prosperity and social cohesion, both of which inevitably depend on economic growth. The problem is that our schools have tended

to concentrate on teaching French and German and, to a much lesser extent, Spanish. In any case, language teaching in our schools has tended to have a written rather than an oral focus, so a young person with a good Leaving Certificate result in one of these languages is often not well equipped to communicate fluently in them.

There is the further consideration that producing workers with the capacity to speak fluently with non-English speakers in their own language has a significant lead-in time – a minimum of four years, assuming that those who commence the training programmes have the necessary aptitude and commitment. As well, there is the need to produce cohorts of workers fluent in a very wide range of languages and, ideally, each language cohort would need to comprehend persons from a range of disciplines – business, engineering, science, and so on. For example, if we really want to engage with the Chinese around electronic engineering, we need electronic engineers who speak fluent Chinese. In this context, someone with even an A in Higher level Chinese in the

Leaving Certificate (if we had got to that point in embedding Chinese in the school curriculum) would be of little use. So, what, if anything, can be done to rectify matters?

For a start, we need to be realistic. There is little point in the finger-wagging behaviour that so many commentators engaged in last year when PayPal, the global online payments firm, announced that it would have to 'import' 500 employees from abroad in order to staff its new customer support office in Dundalk. The PayPal operation will require workers fluent in up to twenty languages and it is unrealistic to think that we could offer a school curriculum that could go anywhere near meeting this kind of demand for business fluency in foreign languages. We also need to acknowledge that many jobs that PayPal have on offer are, as Richard Eardley (the managing Director of Hayes Ireland) recently pointed out in an article in the Irish Examiner, essentially entry level roles, and people working in them tend to move employment after a short time.

While a basic capacity to communicate in a foreign language will be beneficial in many work situations, we ultimately require significant numbers who speak these world languages with absolute fluency – irrespective of whether they are working in what might be termed

"More than half a million (514,068) Irish residents live in homes where English is not the first language."

"Young people coming from non-English speaking homes can become one of our greatest assets."

call or support centres, or engaging with foreign language speaking professionals either at home or abroad. It would certainly be good if the PayPal's of this world could employ mainly Irish residents, but this will not be possible unless we radically rethink how we produce sufficient numbers of workers with the requisite language skills. This rethink will not come from beating ourselves up about why we are not achieving the impossible.

An examination of the 2011 census figures shows that there are significant numbers of persons currently resident in Ireland who are fluent in many of the languages that we need in order to build economic prosperity by doing business in a globalised world.

Table 1 details the numbers of Irish residents, broken down by age group, who speak English with a good level of proficiency as well as being native speakers of a number of key languages that might be relevant to Ireland's economic development. It is possible to obtain similar statistics for virtually every world language from the 2011 CSO census. Interestingly, the 2011 census figures show that more than half a million (514,068) Irish residents live in homes where English is not the first language.

The benefit of teaching foreign languages to young Irish people who come from homes where English or Irish is the first language is widely acknowledged. On the other hand, the advantage to be gained from assisting young people

who already speak a language other than English in the home to acquire full written fluency in their heritage languages has been, to a significant degree, unrecognised by the education sector, the State or the media.

A number of national groups, in particular the Polish, make valiant efforts to ensure that their young people acquire written fluency in their heritage language; but they get little, if any, support or encouragement to do so. Even gaining access to school buildings for their weekly classes can be problematic. The prevailing view seems to be that, while such classes are in the interest of families likely to return to their countries of origin, they are of little benefit to Ireland.

True, it is important that the offspring of immigrants from non-English-

speaking countries develop excellent literacy skills in their heritage tongue so that they are not disadvantaged in the event of the family returning home. On that basis alone, Ireland, given its history of emigration should make it as easy as possible for those children to develop their heritage language competence. And, as a former emigrant, I can attest to the extent that the vast majority of migrants cling to the idea of returning to their homeland one day – even if that dream only becomes a reality for some.

But it is not only the 'newcomers' that can gain from such an approach; the Irish economy has even more to gain. Those young people coming from non-English speaking homes can become one of our greatest assets. If we assist them to acquire native-speaker standard competence in their heritage languages, we will be going a significant way to meeting our need for workers fluent in both English and a foreign language.



It should ensure that not only will we have workers to take up the entry level jobs in call and support centres, but we should also have highly qualified professionals, across the disciplines, who can communicate confidently with their professional colleagues all around the globe, but especially in Europe and the BRIC countries.

These bilingual and, in a sense, bicultural workers, will have a significant advantage over what we might term native Irish workers who are bilingual. They will have roots in their families' country of origin, and these roots have the potential to provide business, cultural, and even political connections that would take the 'non-native' a long time to develop.

In 2012, Ireland had thousands of young people taking a foreign language in the Leaving Certificate: French (25,977), German (6,787), Spanish (4,330), Italian (384), Portuguese (63), Dutch (20), Russian (269), Czech (14), Polish (794), Latvian (87), Lithuanian (262), Hungarian (33), Romanian (109), Japanese (239) and Arabic (149)¹.

These statistics however, are to some extent misleading for a number of reasons. Firstly, the focus of many students in taking French, German and Spanish is to satisfy the requirement for entry to university rather than the acquisition of a linguistic competence. This is borne out to some extent by the relatively high percentage of students who sit the ordinary level paper in French (47%), German (36%) and Spanish (42%)². Ordinary level language

competence is not a good basis for becoming proficient in a language, if one has studied it for five years.

Secondly, it is not even the Leaving Certificate Higher level standard that our workers require, but native speaker proficiency. And, of course, this is the standard possessed by those who come from homes where English is the second language.

Thirdly, it is not just three or four languages that we need proficiency in, but 30 languages. Admittedly, the numbers that need to be proficient in any particular language depends on the relative economic importance of that language to us economically. For example, we need many more proficient in BRIC country languages than we need proficient in Dutch or Swedish, where English is widely spoken.

As mentioned above, some national groups, such as the Polish, make a very big effort to ensure that their young develop proficiency in their heritage language, but the Polish and other national groups need our assistance if they are to ensure that their offspring develop native-speaker standard written and oral language proficiency, to their benefit and to Ireland's.

The support that these national groups require has a number of dimensions. In the first instance, they need access to suitable buildings, free of charge, to accommodate their language classes. Ideally, our school buildings should be made available for such purposes and if there is a cost associated with this, it is in the interest of the State

to bear this cost. It should not be a matter of national groups having to beg for teaching facilities; instead, the schools system needs to be proactive in making them available.

The mere availability of facilities for extracurricular classes, however, can only achieve so much. We need to look at ways in which the teaching of heritage languages can be integrated into the school curriculum from Infants through to Leaving Certificate. Given that the number of students with any heritage language background in any school is going to be relatively small, it will require real proactivity and creative thinking to achieve this.

What might be done? Could the NCCA, working in collaboration with the departments of education in Poland, Lithuania, India, China, Portugal, and so on, through their national embassies and consulates, develop a comprehensive language curriculum, from Infants to Leaving Certificate, in these heritage languages? Certainly, anyone who attended the annual conference of the network of Polish schools in Ireland, at UCD last November, could see the willingness of the Polish Embassy to assist with programmes aimed at developing the Polish language skills of first generation Irish coming from Polish backgrounds.

It is not just curricula that would need to be developed; we would need to develop a full suite of e-teaching and e-learning programmes, from Infants to Leaving Certificate, capable of being delivered over the Internet. Within the next 18 months, most first and second level schools will have access to 100-megabit broadband. The heritage language learners would merely need access to a computer and a set of headphones. This way, primary school students could devote a period of time

"Would the availability of high quality distance learning programmes encourage other students to take up some of these languages?"

¹ See <http://www.examinations.ie/index.php?l=en&mc=st&sc=r12>

² <http://www.examinations.ie/index.php?l=en&mc=st&sc=r12>

each day to learning their heritage language, without interfering with the learning of their classmates. At second level, it should also be possible to accommodate the learning of heritage languages, though doing so may present some added challenges.

Given that the aim is to develop native speaker proficiency, the language curricula would need to be aligned with the language curricula that apply in, for example, Poland or Lithuania. Similarly, examinations and accreditation would need to be set explicitly at this level. In this regard, could students taking Polish, for example, sit the Matura in Polish rather than the Leaving Certificate examination? To incentivise these students to achieve a high standard in their heritage languages, might we consider giving bonus CAO points for results in, say, the Polish Matura?

Would the availability of high quality distance learning programmes in heritage languages encourage other students, from 'native Irish' backgrounds, to take up some of these languages? Might we consider identifying students with a particular aptitude for learning languages and point them in the direction of these programmes? Could third level

"If you keep on doing what you've always done, you'll keep on getting what you've always got."

colleges make provision for students in any discipline, to take on a heritage language as an optional part of their academic programme? The curricula developed for school students could be extended or adapted to meet the needs of third level students, depending on their prior knowledge of the language.

One thing seems relatively obvious, the efforts of our education system to date leave a lot to be desired when it comes to developing significant numbers of workers with the capacity to speak even French, German or Spanish – not to mind the array of heritage languages that we need to master. Also, recent initiatives to introduce Chinese in both Transition Year and the new Junior Cycle, while welcome, are unlikely to contribute, in the medium term, to generating a

cohort with proficiency in Chinese.

We need to adopt more radical approaches. The arguments set out in this piece are intended to catalyse some radical thinking in this area. As W L Bateman noted: "If you keep on doing what you've always done, you'll keep on getting what you've always got."

We live in a globalised world, where our products can be sold in literally every corner of the earth. Likewise, we can attract visitors and students from all around the globe. The key to doing this however, is the extent to which we develop the capacity to communicate proficiently in foreign languages. Our historical dependence on trade and tourism with the English-speaking world has left many of us convinced that, because, we speak English, we don't really need to worry about other languages. If we are to guarantee our future prosperity and cohesion, we will have to disabuse ourselves of this view, and do something effective to ensure that we can communicate with the people of the globe in their own languages.



Table 1

Persons usually resident in the State who speak a Language other than English or Irish at home – classified by age group, place of birth, language and how well English is spoken³.

Language spoken at home	Total	English Spoken		English Spoken (0 to 4 years)			English Spoken (5 to 12 years)			English Spoken (13 to 18 years)		
		Very Well	Well	Total	Very Well	Well	Total	Very Well	Well	Total	Very Well	Well
German	27,342	19,923	4,773	1,056	535	239	1,975	1,620	231	5,232	3,606	1,041
Yoruba	10,093	8,374	1,171	440	237	115	2,170	1,774	200	924	800	77
French	37,800	26,640	5,322	1,769	818	488	3,372	2,551	418	11,046	7,305	2,136
Italian	3,624	2,866	409	466	227	105	524	440	50	279	210	43
Dutch	3,522	2,868	554	56	18	15	236	189	43	179	153	22
Russian	18,850	6,612	7,491	201	25	42	1,187	729	342	1,046	809	199
Rumanian	16,613	5,785	7,196	187	17	30	1,044	637	262	101	752	240
Arabic	8,958	4,201	3,310	212	18	47	822	496	204	732	548	142
Turkish	1,180	656	371	14	4	4	66	47	17	58	46	9
Urdu	6,726	3,784	2,230	87	20	27	598	441	118	562	462	81
Vietnamese	705	149	224	14	7	3	22	11	9	37	18	15
Chinese	12,503	3,318	5,677	42	9	13	202	99	72	402	191	165
Japan	837	435	277	31	12	7	76	53	15	46	34	9
Portuguese	11,902	4,864	4,205	628	174	147	1,028	699	221	688	429	166
Spanish	21,640	14,981	4,313	1,170	515	295	1,846	1,472	209	3,226	2,139	679
Lithuanian	31,635	8,731	12,422	2,449	239	384	3,412	1,995	1,035	1,884	1,311	471
Polish	119,526	33,811	49,322	10,451	847	1,446	10,527	5,292	3,646	4,834	3,261	1,284

³ The data included in this table is extracted from Table CDD46 of the Census 2011 reports – see <http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/Define.asp?maintable=CDD46&PLanguage=0>

Inaugural Business Education Forum

hosted by IVEA and North Kildare Chamber

The IVEA and North Kildare Chamber recently organised and hosted the inaugural Business Education Forum in IVEA Headquarters in Piper's Hill, Naas on 21 February. The theme of the forum being:

Entrepreneurship:

what business can teach education;

what education can teach business.

The objective of the Forum is to not only discuss the topic, but to introduce IVEA to the local business community.

Speaking on behalf of business were Brendan Cannon, Director of Corporate Affairs, Intel and Eilis Quinlan FCCA, President of North Kildare Chamber.

Dr Irene Sheridan, Head of CIT Extended Campus, Cork Institute of Technology and Carol Hanney, CEO of Dun Laoghaire VEC spoke from an education standpoint.

All speakers delivered their message in a clear, concise manner. Additionally, there was much constructive engagement between the speakers and the audience during the Q&A session, which bodes well for the next Business Education Forum; scheduled for 23 May 2013.v



The next Business Education Forum is on the 23 May 2013

Speakers at the IVEA and North Kildare Chamber Business Education Forum (left to right): Brendan Cannon, Director of Corporate Affairs, Intel, Dr Irene Sheridan, Head of CIT Extended Campus, Cork Institute of Technology, Clem Ryan, CEO, Kfm Radio (Moderator of Forum), Eilis Quinlan FCCA, President of North Kildare Chamber and Carol Hanney, CEO of Dun Laoghaire VEC.



Des Murtagh, Adult Education Officer, Kildare VEC, Fiona Hartley, Executive Director (Designate), SOLAS and Tony Donohoe, Head of Education, Social & Innovation Policy, IBEC at the IVEA and North Kildare Chamber Business Education Forum

Ombudsman Amendment Act 2012

By Niamh Ginnell BL, IVEA

The Ombudsman Amendment Act 2012 passed its final stage in the Dáil on Tuesday 23rd October 2012 and its enactment now sees an additional 140 public bodies coming under the remit of the Ombudsman, Emily O'Reilly.

The additional agencies now coming under the Ombudsman's remit include all publicly funded third level education institutions, including the Universities, Vocational Education Committees, FÁS, the Legal Aid Board, the National Treatment Purchase Fund, the State Examinations Commission, the Student Grant Appeals Board, the National Transport Authority, the Family Support Agency, Sustainable Energy Ireland, and a range of other public agencies.

These agencies will come under Ombudsman oversight on 1st May 2013.

ROLE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

The role of the Office of the Ombudsman is to examine complaints from members of the public who feel they have been unfairly treated by certain public bodies.

The Ombudsman has been empowered to examine complaints in relation to the administrative actions of these additional bodies, which occur on or after the date on which the body concerned comes under Ms O'Reilly's remit.

"The Ombudsman has been empowered to examine complaints in relation to the administrative actions of these additional bodies, which occur on or after the date on which the body concerned comes under Ms O'Reilly's remit."

The Ombudsman may investigate any action taken by or on behalf of a reviewable agency in the performance of administrative functions if that action has resulted in an adverse effect and if the action has been taken without proper authority, taken on irrelevant grounds, the result of negligence or carelessness, based on erroneous or incomplete information, improperly discriminatory, based on an undesirable administrative practice or otherwise contrary to fair or sound administration.

The Ombudsman expects that public bodies including VECs, will have well developed complaints handling procedures in place, ensuring that where any faults are identified, the public body will act expeditiously to rectify its mistake and to take the appropriate action necessary to ensure that the mistakes does not recur.

There are four stages to the processing of a complaint by the Ombudsman's Office:

- Enquiry stage
- Assessment stage
- Examination stage
- Investigation stage

Like with any external body of appeal or complaint, the Ombudsman will look to ensure that a complainant has utilised an internal complaints procedure before initiating an Ombudsman investigation.

The Ombudsman may decide not to investigate if the action complained of is trivial and vexatious, the complainant has insufficient interest, the complainant has not taken reasonable steps to seek redress or if satisfactory measures to remedy, mitigate or alter the adverse effect have been or are proposed to be taken by the body against whom the complaint is being made.

The Ombudsman has published guidelines for public bodies in order to support them in the provision of their services.

Public bodies coming under the remit of the Ombudsman's are expected to:

- Be customer oriented
- Be open and accountable
- Act fairly and proportionately
- Deal with errors effectively
- Seek continuous improvement

- Act in accordance with the law and with due regard for the rights of those concerned
- Act in accordance with the body's policies and guidelines
- Take proper account of established good practice
- Take reasonable decisions, based on all relevant considerations
- Providing effective services, using appropriately trained and competent staff
- Avoid undue delay

In Summary:

- If an individual is dissatisfied with the service they have received from a body comprehended under the Act and have been unable to resolve the problem with the body concerned, they may refer a complaint to the Ombudsman.
- An individual may complain on their own behalf or on behalf of someone else if they ask them to.
- The complainant may make a complaint as an individual, as a public representative or as a business or organisation.
- The complaint should be made to the Ombudsman as soon as possible but not later than 12 months after the action being complained of has occurred or the individual has become aware of it occurring.
- Complaints may be made about the administrative actions of bodies which are open to investigation by the Ombudsman.

These changes come into effect on 1 May 2013 which means that the Ombudsman will only process complaints regarding VECs which are received on or after 1st May next.

Significant provisions of the Act include:

- **Section 5** outlines exclusions to the Ombudsman's jurisdiction. These include if a person has already initiated court proceedings or has a right of appeal to another body, national security, terms and conditions of employment or where a complaint is not made within 12 months of the action occurring.
- **Section 6** provides that when the Ombudsman decides to carry out an investigation he or she must inform both the complainant and the reviewable agency of the results. The reviewable agency must be afforded an opportunity to consider the matter and make representations before any adverse finding or criticism is made. The Ombudsman can make recommendations to the reviewable agency concerned to remedy, mitigate and alter the adverse effects and also provides that the Ombudsman may make a general recommendation to other reviewable agencies in similar terms.
- **Section 7** – bodies under the Ombudsman's remit will, in the context of the performance of certain administrative actions, be legally obliged to give reasonable assistance and guidance to members of the public and deal with them properly, fairly, impartially and in a timely manner;
- **Section 9** – arising from an investigation, the Ombudsman may make general recommendations to such public bodies under her remit as she considers appropriate in order to mitigate adverse effects identified during the investigation;
- **Section 10** – if a person/body fails to comply to a request from the Ombudsman to provide any specified information, document or thing she may apply to the Circuit Court for an order of compliance; and
- **Section 12** – arising from an investigation, the Ombudsman may refer any question of law arising to the High Court for determination.





Instructional Leadership Programme:

The capacity to support systemic educational reform

By Tadhg Long, Curriculum Development Co-ordinator, County Cork VEC



A presentation locating the emergence and development of the Instructional Leadership Programme (ILP) in the context of Irish education policy and legislative framework was delivered by members of the ILP National Steering Committee at the recent Teaching Council EU Presidency Conference in Dublin Castle.

Entitled *Integration, Innovation and Improvement – the Professional Identity of Teacher Educators*, the conference aimed to provide a forum to stimulate ideas from a range of perspectives and establish collaborations that will build on the work initiated by the European Commission. So how does the ILP tie in with the concept of 'teachers as teacher educators'? In attempting to answer this question, it is pivotal that we understand the core principles and key aims of the programme and that we explore how the participants themselves are cascading the content within their own school settings.

Since its inception in 2008, over 400 teachers have engaged with the

IVEA-led series of seminars facilitated by Professor Barrie Bennett of the University of Ontario. Each of the fourteen modules contained within the programme identify key aspects of instructional leadership with the aim of exploring how teachers can generate more powerful learning experiences. Through engagement with the programme, teachers extend and deepen their instructional repertoire of skills, tactics and strategies whilst acquiring a common language through which they can articulate and deconstruct their practice in the classroom.

By focusing on the pedagogical development of teachers, and not on subject-specific content, this unique form of continuous professional development (CPD) facilitates the cascading of material at a regional and local level. In essence, the ILP aims to enhance teachers' professional identity not only as pedagogical experts but also as teacher educators through the dissemination of their own instructional repertoires to fellow colleagues in their schools.

In embracing this conceptual shift of continuous professional development, where collegial supports and networks form the basis for peer-led education, we provide an opportunity to further develop teaching and learning in our schools. The Teaching Council has already identified that the rationale for effective CPD stems from growing national and international awareness that teacher quality is inextricably linked, not only to the quality of initial teacher education, but also to the provision of high quality CPD. Such CPD should empower change in both school and classroom culture; inciting conversations, encouraging the formation of networks and facilitating collaboration with peers. ILP participants are in an excellent position to achieve this.

In examining the effectiveness of teachers as teacher educators from the perspective of the ILP we must examine its application in a school setting. Breda Sunderland, Deputy Principal of Athy College, is a Steering Committee member and graduate from Cohort One of the ILP. Athy College is an admirable example of how applicable and beneficial the ILP can be to peer-led CPD. In December 2011, Athy College invited the entire staff of three adjacent primary schools to their college with an aim of building collegial relationships with fellow professionals. Through the application of a 'deVries Teams Games

"In essence, the ILP aims to enhance teachers' professional identity not only as pedagogical experts but also as teacher educators through the dissemination of their own instructional repertoires to fellow colleagues in their schools."

Tournament', an instructional strategy, the college fulfilled this aim in a fun way, whilst also creating a platform from which to cascade IL between the sectors.

Within the 2012 – 2013 academic year, a series of CPD sessions for all teachers will take place in Athy College based on the Classroom Management Bumps Model as detailed in "Classroom Management: A thinking and Caring Approach" (Bennett and Smilanich). In addition to this, the Teaching and Learning Club (TLC), which was established in the college in 2010, meets for thirty minutes each Tuesday evening and although established and run on a voluntary basis, invariably over half of the staff are in attendance. Such success is attributable not only to the determination and hard work of the participants, but also to the applicability of the programme to enhancing the culture of teaching and learning in a school.

This entwines with recommendations, submitted from the conference to shape E.U Policy on Teacher Educators, that a reconceptualization of the notion of teacher educators is needed. Greater definition and recognition needs to be given to the role of teachers, as well as principals, as teacher educators across the continuum of teacher education. The ILP offers supports to further recommendations that teacher education should recognise the need to use a shared language that enables teachers to articulate their practice and converse with each other on pedagogy, irrespective of their subject discipline. The use of a shared language would also assist in policy formation and implementation, foster systemic change and prevent fragmentation of teacher professional identity.

The placement of the ILP in the context of current policy developments in Irish education has been relevant since the programme's establishment in 2008. Joan Russell, CEO of County

"Learning has to be at the core of systemic change, for the student, for the professional and for the system. The establishment and delivery of CPD which focuses on pedagogical practice is key to achieving this."

Cork VEC and Chairperson of the National Steering Committee of the ILP, has repeatedly remarked on the capacity of the programme to dovetail neatly with the ambitious reforms in education, noting how the programme links neatly with such policy-driven themes as the reconceptualization of initial teacher education, the increased focus on literacy and numeracy across the curriculum, the emphasis on the critical thinking skills in junior cycle reform and the formalisation of models of school self-evaluation.

In the delivery of a keynote address at the ILP National Conference in October, 2012, Dr Harold Hislop, Chief Inspector with the DES, emphasised the importance of creating effective learning environments. Learning has to be at the core of systemic change, for the student, for the professional and for the system. The establishment and delivery of CPD which focuses on pedagogical practice is key to achieving this.

The Irish educational landscape of 2013 may oftentimes appear as one fraught with evaluation and reform. The trepidation associated with Whole School Evaluations and Incidental Inspections, the apparent complexity of Junior Cycle Reform and School Self-Evaluation and the wide span implementation of Literacy and Numeracy strategies, all cohabiting on the same terrain, has resulted in an appearance and feeling of crowdedness. In navigating the landscape it is necessary to identify the central tenets which underpin it: Preparation for teaching, teaching approaches, management of students and students' engagement with learning. These four elements are

central and crucial. These four elements form the main composition of the Instructional Leadership Programme.

RECENT AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS IN ILP

A number of graduates from Cohort One have commenced further study with **NUI Galway's Post Graduate Diploma in Leading Learning** in partnership with the IVEA and developed in association with the ILP Steering Committee.

A one-day **workshop for Cohort One** is proposed for 20 May 2013. The aim of the workshop is to support graduates, evaluate the impact of ILP in the classroom/school and consider future developments.

A **new county-wide cluster of IL participants**, entitled ILN Cork (Instructional Leadership Network), was established for all current and past IL participants in the region of Co. Cork following similar developments elsewhere. The inaugural meeting took place on the evening of Thursday 21st February 2013 in Yeats House, Co Cork VEC HQ. The purpose of this IL Network is to provide a forum where current and past participants can continue to share ideas, experiences and resources, as well as endeavour to find avenues to overcome the challenges of maintaining motivation, direction and purpose. It is envisaged that this support will prove beneficial for both management and classroom teachers.

A **fourth cohort of participants** began the programme in the Mount Wolseley Hotel, Tullow on 6 March. This followed the graduation of Cohort Three on 5 March.

The End of an Era

By Michael Moriarty, General Secretary, IVEA

After 83 years of dedicated and committed service to local communities, the reign of the VECs draws to a close as the current 33 bodies are about to be replaced by the 16 Education and Training Boards (ETBs).

Rather than bemoan their very significant loss to local communities we need to review and celebrate their years of service and evolution over more than eight decades. *The History of the IVEA* (2009) by Jim Cooke illustrates the vital role that IVEA and member VECs played, not just in the cause of vocational education but as significant education stakeholders in their own right.

"Rather than bemoan their very significant loss to local communities we need to review and celebrate their years of service and evolution over more than eight decades."

As local education authorities the VECs evolved to meet the varying and changing needs of society and communities. The capacity to evolve and change as society needs were changing ensured their continued existence despite threats and challenges in almost every decade.

Growing from the technical schools and group certificate era to the present era of state-of-the-art first and second level schools with extensive community and further education provision, they will now hand over a vibrant and dynamic sector to the ETBs. The present educational framework stands as a testament to the vision and labours of committees, CEOs and staffs of present and previous times. Each member VEC will have its own story to tell and each will do so over the next couple of months, as they write the final chapter and close the book on the life and times of their particular VEC.

In IVEA too, the final chapter will be written, but the change perhaps will not be as dramatic. Already, the sector has unanimously agreed to the name ETBI (Education and Training Boards Ireland) as the name for the national association to represent the ETBs. Since 1902 there has been a national body representing member VECs or the previous technical instruction committees.

The Irish Technical Instruction Association (ITIA), founded

in 1902, was renamed the Irish Technical Education Association (ITEA) in 1929 and changed again to Irish Vocational Education Association (IVEA) in 1944. The new name change in 2013 to ETBI ensures the historical evolution of a national membership association for ETBs which are the successors of VECs.

The Education and Training Boards Bill, when enacted, will cause the birth of new statutory bodies, ETBs, to carry the torch of inspirational leadership for the twenty first century as the VECs did for much of the twentieth century. Whatever our views about this change process, we must face the future with confidence while inspired by our past.

Time marches on and stands still for no one.



Timeline: A look at Vocational Education

from 1902 to the present day

By Jim Cooke



TITLES OF NATIONAL ASSOCIATION

1. **1902 – 192** Irish Technical Instruction Association (ITIA)
2. **1929 – 1944** Irish Technical Education Association (ITEA)
3. **1944 – 2013** Irish Vocational Education Association (IVEA)
4. **2013** Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI)

COMPOSITION OF ASSOCIATION

In 1914	There were 72 Instruction Committees in all Ireland
In 1930	<p>Last Congress before 1930 Vocational Education Act there were 48 Technical Education Committees in Saorstát Éireann.</p> <p>From Northern Ireland 10 Technical Education Committees attended the 1930 Congress in Cork.</p>
In 1931	<p>Following the restructuring of the sector with the enactments of the 1930 Vocational Education Act, there were 38 Vocational Education Committees (VECs) as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. 27 Counties (including Tipperary North Riding and Tipperary South Riding). b. 4 City Boroughs, Dublin, Cork, Limerick and Waterford. c. 7 Town VECs - Bray, Drogheda, Dun Laoghaire, Galway, Sligo, Tralee and Wexford.
In 1931	<p>From Northern Ireland – 10 Technical Instruction Committees attended Congress, (Enniskillen) as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Belfast, Co. Borough Educational Committee (Technical Sub-Committee) 2. North Antrim Regional Education Committee (Technical Sub-Committee) 3. Ballymena Regional Education Committee (Technical Sub-Committee) 4. County Down Regional Education Committee (Technical Sub-Committee) 5. Larne Regional Education Committee (Technical Sub Committee) 6. Larne Urban District Technical Instruction Committee 7. Armagh Urban District Technical Instruction Committee) 8. County Fermanagh Regional Education Committee (Technical Sub-Committee) 9. Lisburn and Belfast Regional Education Committee (Technical Sub-Committee)

Municipal technical schools in Ireland date from 1887 with the opening in Dublin of Kevin Street Technical Schools to the present 2013 i.e. 126 years, but there was a long pre-history going back

to the medieval trade guilds where the apprenticeship system was firmly established and developed, as in the rest of Europe.

It is proposed here to follow the story

of Technical and Vocational Education in Ireland through a timeline, which will be illustrated with some of the people and places connected with the course of this history of a very important educational endeavour.



John Marcus O'Sullivan, Minister for Education 1926-1932. He steered the Vocational Education Act, 1930 through the Dail leading to the establishment of Vocational and Technical schools throughout the country.



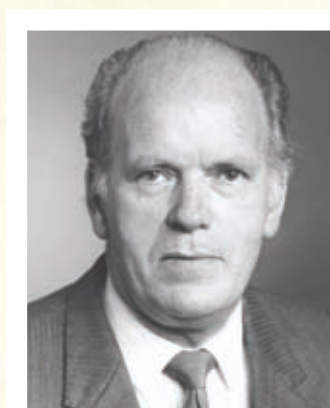
John Ingram, Chairman of the Technical Education Commission. He was the mastermind in framing the Vocational Education Act, 1930.



Jack McCann long-time President of IVEA 1972-1984.



Joseph K. Rooney the first full time General Secretary IVEA 1980-1996



Tom Keenan, President IVEA 1984-1985



Seán Conway, President IVEA 1986-1995



Brendan Griffin, President IVEA 1996-2004



Mary Bohan, President IVEA 2004-2010

TIMELINE

1192	Prince John (as Lord of Ireland, later King John) decreed that the citizens of Dublin were granted “the right of having all their reasonable guilds as the burgesses of Bristol have” – Dublin was twinned with Bristol in its Norman settlement period.
1824	Dublin Mechanics’ Institute, Lower Abbey Street (now the Abbey Theatre) founded one year after the London Mechanics’ Institute (1823). Afterwards there were 28 Mechanics’ Institutes in Ireland, including the Bianconi sponsored one in Clonmel.
1853	The Science and Art Department, South Kensington, London was founded, following the Great International Industrial Exhibition in 1851 in Hyde Park, London. There was a similar Exhibition in Dublin in 1853. Science and art classes were organised in Ireland, mainly by national school teachers after school hours, for payment by results.
1865	The Dublin International Exhibition, held in Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin, now The National Concert Hall.
1867	The Royal College of Science, Ireland (1845), 51, St. Stephen’s Green, Dublin reconstituted. Science and engineering subjects were taught leading to an Associate (A.R.C.Sc.I) or Fellowship (F.R.C.Sc.I) qualification.
1880	City and Guilds of London Institute founded. It became the leading technical certification body in technical education.
1881 - 1884	Commission on Technical Instruction for Great Britain and Ireland showed the need for municipal technical schools similar to those in Germany and the United States of America.
1885	Irish Artisans’ Exhibition, held in Exchequer Street, Dublin brought the trades’ unions together in a concentrated effort to establish a technical school.
1887	Kevin Street Technical Schools opened. Two schools, one for science and art subjects and one for technical trade subjects were run in the building.
1889	First Technical Instruction Act for Great Britain and Ireland. Allowed one penny to be struck on rates to support a school. 14 Irish schools were aided under this act.
1895 - 1896	Recess Committee seeks Irish Department. “Constructive Unionism” seeks to mollify Ireland.

1898	Local Government Ireland Act introduces new city borough, town and county councils.
1899	Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction (DATI) Act.
1990	DATI commences April 1900.
1902	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Every local authority in Ireland had agreed to raise a rate for Technical Instruction. ▪ The Irish Technical Instruction Association (ITIA) was founded by delegates from Technical Instruction Committees meeting at the Cork International Exhibition, at the invitation of Fr. P. J. Dowling C.M.
1903 - 1904	<p>The second Annual Congress of the ITIA was held in Belfast and in 1904 in Dublin.</p> <p>The Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction (DATI) recognises the ITIA as the official representative body to which the Department of Technical Instruction Committee funds could be allocated.</p>
1905	The Congress in Limerick was attended by delegates from the 6 city boroughs, 26 urban districts and 24 counties i.e. 56 Technical Instruction Committees.
1911	On the 10th anniversary, the Congress was held in Manchester as a treat but much work was done at Congress and many civic and industrial concerns were visited
1914	Congress was held in Killarney with representations of 72 Committees in attendance. Delegates were completely unaware of the impending outbreak of war in August.
1915 - 1918	No Congress held due to the Great War, The Easter Rebellion and the War of Independence.
1922	58 TICs sent delegates to Congress of which 9 were from Northern Ireland, including Belfast and Derry. T. P. Gill and Fr. Tom Finlay SJ sought hard to encourage the Northern Committees to stay on board and gradually some more returned to Congress until the disastrous Congress of 1933.
1924	New Department of Education takes over Technical Instruction Board (TIB).

1926	The title of the Association was changed to Irish Technical Education Association (ITEA) in view of the imminence of The Vocational Education Act.
1930	Vocational Education Act establishing 38 Vocational Education Committees, 27 Counties (including Tipperary North Riding and Tipperary South Riding) and 4 City Boroughs and 7 Town VECs. The 1930 Act provided for two types of school – the preparatory trade/ commercial/home economics school of “Continuation” i.e. beyond primary education for those leaving primary school at 14 years until 16 years. And “technical education” typically began at 17 years of age or older, which would, often in an apprenticeship framework, engage in technical studies proper. From the foundation of the DATI, it was the absence of a preparatory education between 14 years and 16 years (in places filled by the 16 Day Trade Preparatory Schools), which prevented progress at the start of the technical education proper.
1931	Apprenticeship Act – The 1926 – 1927 Commission on Technical Education initially wanted the apprenticeship system to be put under the VECs but the Trade Unions, who determined entry to trades, under agreements with the employers, would not let go of this system. It was little over 20 years since the 1913 Look Out and class warfare was still very much in the air. It was not until 1959 that the Minister for Industry and Commerce, Sean Lemass T.D, revisited the issue of apprenticeship training with the establishment of AnCo.
1931	Congress held in Enniskillen. Delegates were welcomed by Sir Basil Brooke, who, at this time (contrary to common belief) was pro all-Ireland co-operation. Later, at the Congress Seminar, he said that while Co. Fermanagh had many lakes, Southern delegates would not be forced to drink water only.
1933	Congress held in Belfast. Delegates welcomed by Lord Charlemont, Minister for Education, The Lord Mayor of Belfast etc. Coleraine Technical Instruction Committee re-joined the Association. Councillor W MacCartney suggested they could all try to learn the Irish language. But a caucus of southern delegates elected a Catholic priest as President of the Association (who would preside over the mainly Presbyterian Northern Committees). The mood of Northern delegates suddenly changed and the Minister for Education ended all further participation of Northern Committees. Congress ended in Northern Ireland with very hostile exchanges between Northern and some Southern delegates. It was not until 1965 in the lead up to the O'Neill-Lemass talks that Mr/ Tom Cowen of the Northern Ministry of Education addressed delegates at the IVEA Congress in Sligo.
1936	Congress welcomed the new Department of Education trade examinations.
1938	Following the ratification of the 1937 Constitution, which established Seanad Eireann on the lines of vocational panels, with the ITEA having the right to nominate members for election to the Educational Panel in the first election to the Seanad in 1938 Seamus Úas O'hEochadha (An Fear Mor), Principal of Ring College, Waterford and Co. Waterford VEC (later a President of IVEA) was elected. He was the first of a long list of IVEA members to be elected to Seanad Eireann up to the present.
1942	Congress members had prepared for the Department of Education Memorandum V40, which set out Group sets of subjects to be followed by boys or girls in the Vocational Schools, and it emphasised the Christian ethos and religious syllabus, which was to be followed in schools.
1944	The Association's title was changed to “Irish Vocational Education Association” reflecting the majority part of Vocational Education being pursued and, perhaps, the widespread discussion on Vocational viz-a-viz The Commission of Vocational Organisation that year.

1947	The Group Certificate examination was introduced as even players wanted to have some standard of formal education indicated, and Vocational School students were ineligible to take Civil Service type examinations for the Post Office Clerkships etc.
1948	Following proposals to place Vocational Schools under the control of National School education or a religious congregation, Minister for Education, General Richard Mulcahy, a graduate in telephonic installation from Bolton Street College of Technology, and his successor Sean Moylan, a trained carpenter and house builder, equally held the line to retain the local authority run VEC system.
1956	Under the post-war Marshall Aid Plan for Ireland, Martin Gleeson, CEO of the City of Dublin VEC went to America to see the operation of the new Technician category of employee and this subject became a regular topic of discussion at Congress as technicians were gradually introduced to all levels of Irish industry, research and education.
1958	Dr. Ken. Whittaker's seminal "Economic Development" plan praises the Vocation and Technical School System.
1963	The International Apprentice Competitions, held at Bolton Street College, Dublin, with many Irish successes, as usual.
1966	"Investment in Education" report proposes development of vocational and technical education. Martin Gleeson, CEO, City of Dublin VEC proposes permanent Secretariat for IVEA. Mr. Gleeson was a founder member of the Irish Management Institute.
1968	Report on Technological Education proposes Regional Technical Colleges under VECs. Report adopted forthwith.
1970	The Vocational Education (Amendment) Act, 1970, provided for VECs to become partners in Community Schools and the Department of Education pushed amalgamations of Secondary and Vocational Schools into new Community Schools.
1980	The Association set up a permanent Secretariat with Joseph Rooney as General Secretary The Community College model was accepted by the religious authorities, The Department of Education and IVEA.
1985	IVEA opposes Regional Structures in favour of the county system.
1987	Threat of abolition of VECs. Amalgamation of VECs proposed in rationalisation plan.

1992	Separation of RTCs into stand-alone Institutes of Technology.
1993	DIT becomes independent with degree awarding powers.
1996	Congress held in Newcastle, Co. Down. Joseph Rooney, General Secretary, dies suddenly, in office.
1997	Michael Moriarty confirmed as new General Secretary. Five Town VECs amalgamated with their respective counties i.e. Bray, Drogheda, Sligo, Tralee, and Wexford. This reduced the number of VECs to 33, with Dun Laoghaire and Galway City remaining Town VECs.
1998	Education Act 1998
2001	Vocational Education (Amendment) Act established, inter alia, the reserve/executive model of governance.
2013	The Education and Training Boards Act abolishes VECs, establishes Education and Training Boards (ETB) and recognises ETBI – Education and Training Boards Ireland as the successor body to IVEA. This followed on from an Extraordinary Congress of the IVEA held on 8 February 2013 to approve the name change from IVEA to ETBI with effect from establishment date of the new ETBs.

CONGRESS VENUES - 1902 – 2012

YEAR	VENUE	YEAR	VENUE	YEAR	VENUE
1902	Cork	1939	Tralee	1976	Sligo
1903	Belfast	1940	Galway	1977	Waterford
1904	Dublin	1941	Dublin	1978	Bundoran
1905	Limerick	1942	Rathmines	1979	Dundalk
1906	Waterford	1943	Dun Laoghaire	1980	Dublin
1907	Dublin	1944	Rathmines	1981	Tralee
1908	Newry	1945	Bray	1982	Galway
1909	Galway	1946	Lisdoonvarna	1983	Portlaoise
1910	Sligo	1947	Rathmines	1984	Schull
1911	Manchester	1948	Arklow	1985	Ennis
1912	Cork	1949	Sligo	1986	Wexford
1913	Bangor	1950	Rathmines	1987	Killarney
1914	Killarney	1951	Bundoran	1988	Blarney
1915	None Held	1952	Tramore	1989	Bundoran
1916	None Held	1953	Mosney	1990	Ballina
1917	Dublin	1954	Cork	1991	Limerick
1918	None Held	1955	Tralee	1992	Furbo
1919	Dublin	1956	Limerick	1993	Wexford
1920	Larne	1957	Bray	1994	Sligo
1921	Dublin	1958	Galway	1995	Tralee
1922	Clonmel	1959	Wexford	1996	Newcastle, Co Down
1923	Dublin	1960	Bundoran	1997	Ennis
1924	Dublin	1961	Kilkee	1998	Wexford
1925	Dublin	1962	Athlone	1999	Galway
1926	Killarney	1963	Ballybunion	2000	Tralee
1927	Galway	1964	Clonmel	2001	Kilkenny
1928	Limerick	1965	Sligo	2002	Cavan
1929	Sligo	1966	Bray	2003	Limerick
1930	Cork	1967	Waterford	2004	Wexford
1931	Enniskillen	1968	Cork	2005	Carlow
1932	Waterford	1969	Limerick	2006	Bundoran
1933	Belfast	1970	Galway	2007	Killarney
1934	Dublin	1971	Tralee	2008	Ballybrit
1935	Wexford	1972	Port na Blath	2009	Dromoland
1936	Drogheda	1973	Ennis	2010	Laois
1937	Clonmel	1974	Westport	2011	Cork
1938	Cork	1975	Bantry	2012	Cavan

All items in this synopsis are referenced in "A History of the Irish Vocational Association 1902 – 2002" (<http://www.ivea.ie/publications/history.shtml>)

Monaghan Education Campus

– The Vision is now a Reality



Photograph by Geray Sweeney.

In 2009, Co. Monaghan VEC and CEO Martin G O'Brien launched a vision for the redevelopment of the former 'Military Barracks' site in Monaghan town – namely the provision of a multi-user education campus incorporating primary, post-primary and further education on the one site. Later that year in November 2009, the then Taoiseach Brian Cowen announced that the Government would back the vision and entrusted Co. Monaghan VEC to oversee the procurement, planning and building. Co. Monaghan VEC was the first education authority to receive sanction from the Department of Education and Skills to manage a project of this scale on a "devolved pilot basis". That was just three years

ago and students moved to the campus at the beginning of February 2013. This project signals the increased involvement of VECs in the procurement and delivery of major building projects throughout the country. Co. Monaghan VEC has now proven that "it can be done" on-time and within budget.

There are five buildings on the campus – Gaelscoil Ultain (primary school), Coláiste Oiriall (post-primary school), Monaghan Institute (further education college), Gymnasium/ Sports Hall and The Garage Theatre. There is also a centralised Biomass heating system on site and it is anticipated that energy costs will be 40% cheaper as a result.

The Gymnasium on campus will be used by both Monaghan Institute and Coláiste Oiriall. The aim to provide one dual-usage gym area on campus was carefully considered and incorporated efficiently and effectively in the master-plan.

The centralised energy centre contains a wood-chip boiler providing a sustainable and renewable solution to the provision of heat for all facilities on the campus. This will realise annual savings on heating costs in the order of 40%.

Other efficiencies can be achieved through the centralised procurement of electricity, IT systems, maintenance, repair and upgrade.



Photograph by Rory Geary.

Left to right: Niall Hardiman, John Sisk & Son (Holdings) Ltd., Veronica Feeney, Buildings Officer, Co. Monaghan VEC, Declan Sharkey, John Sisk & Son (Holdings) Ltd, Martin G O'Brien CEO, Co. Monaghan VEC, Pauline Grogan, Head of Human Resources, Co. Monaghan VEC and Amanda Taylor, Co. Monaghan VEC at Monaghan Institute



Exciting changes in Primary Education

By Marianne Henry, Principal of Piper's Hill Community National School, Naas



Recent years have seen the establishment of six Community National Schools in Ireland, with more planned. The move emanated from a 2007 initiative of Minister for Education and Skills, Batt O'Keeffe. The Minister of Education is patron these schools, while officially, the local VEC is 'patron in waiting'. Legislative changes are pending which will hand over this role permanently to the VEC. In the interim, Ministerial decree has devolved the role to each VEC on a day-to-day basis.

Vocational Education Committees around the country have a long and proud tradition of promoting education in Ireland. Supported in their efforts by the IVEA; Co. Dublin, Co. Meath and Co. Kildare VEC's responded positively to the then Minister's initiative and have developed Community National Schools to be exactly what the name conveys. Founded in local communities, these schools are child-centred, inclusive, multi-belief, State supported schools – which strive to provide a high quality primary education for every child in line with the primary school curriculum and guidelines laid down by the Department of Education and Skills.

Our Mission is to provide a new model of primary education that

reflects Ireland in the 21st Century. Community National Schools provide a welcome to each child in the community we serve and create learning opportunities in a setting of diversity and inclusion. Our schools cater for the physical, academic, social, emotional and spiritual needs of children within the school day in a supportive and caring environment.

Working with the students, teaching staff and parents, the ethos has evolved to one where:

- The school becomes a centre for the local community
- Children are encouraged and supported in living their lives to the full
- High standards are the goal in teaching and learning
- Everyone is valued and treated with respect
- Diversity is recognised and celebrated
- Respect for plurality of faiths is seen as integral to the daily routine of the school
- Belief nurturing in all beliefs occurs during the school day

Most people in Ireland are used to the idea of the local national school being run by the churches. Additionally, over the eighties and nineties the flourishing

Gaelscoileanna and Educate Together schools made their mark on the Irish educational landscape. What makes the Community National Schools different is the programme used to nurture belief during the school day. It's called 'Goodness Me/Goodness You' (GMY) and is in development through the NCCA, under the careful supervision of Dr Clare Maloney. The structure of the programme is to have children of all beliefs and none taught together as often as possible. It focuses on the shared values and practices in our community and celebrates our difference in a meaningful way. In engaging with the profound, the children come to the realisation that there is strength in diversity. They are nurtured in their own belief but understand that their best friend, while sharing much with them, has some differing beliefs.

The core programme is story based – after all every community has a storytelling tradition and children respond to stories. It incorporates stories from a wide range of traditions and cultures. Common elements permeating the programme include; family, friendship, sharing, our school community, the wider world and recognising the beauty and good in the world around us. In addition to

stories, there are also songs, poetry, art and contemplation.

For approximately four weeks of the year, during the 30 minutes allocated to GMGY, the children are differentiated into various belief/faith groups. It is at this time, the beliefs and practices appropriate to their own faith/belief group are nurtured. Many societies have the view that it takes a whole village to raise a child and in many ways the Goodness Me Goodness You programme encompasses that view as parents and faith leaders also have a role to play in the programme.

As the primary educators of their children, especially in relation to belief practices, parental participation in GMGY is vital. They are invited to information meetings about GMGY at the beginning of each school year, and to the 'Welcome Celebration'. Parents provide feedback into the programme, as it develops, and are encouraged to play an active and supportive role by means of home/school link sheets. Using these linkages, parents

are encouraged to engage with their children in adapting the themes and stories of the lessons to their own belief traditions. In addition, if appropriate, they are supported and facilitated in preparing their children for the sacraments or other milestone event in their respective beliefs..

With the renewed focus on patronage following the report of the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism and the impending divestation, of over 40 primary schools by the churches, local communities are now looking to see what model of education best suits their community. In some areas, the parents have already been asked by the Department of Education to decide what they want for their child and their community. Community National Schools under the care of the VEC may well provide that answer for many communities. For many families, they now have an opportunity to develop their child from cradle to grave with the help and support of the VEC, soon to be ETB, that they know and trust. An organisation that has a proven track record in nurturing and developing our

citizens to be the best that they can be. The changing shape of Irish society places new demands on our system of education. It must respond to the needs of the communities. The role of the traditional churches, and other patronage bodies, in managing and providing schools has enormous value and deserving of appreciation. Many of us wouldn't be what we are today without it. However, in our emerging new community there is a need for additional choice, one that can accommodate the diverse preferences of parents for varying forms of religious education and faith nurturing during the school day, in a single school environment including and respecting children of all religions and none. That's what we are in the Community National Schools of Scoil Choilm, Scoil Ghráinne, Scoil Chormaic and Scoil Niamh in Dublin, at Pipers Hill CNS in Naas and Ard Rí in Navan.

A community national school is also proposed for Mallow in Co. Cork, the date of opening to be confirmed. Additional schools are likely to come on stream in the coming years.

Long-serving Principal of Comeragh College, Carrick-on-Suir, retires

Staff and pupils of Comeragh College recently marked the retirement of Pat Callanan after 38 years of service to the school, with an amazing 32 of those years served as principal.

The whole school community, retired members of staff, as well as other invited guests came together to mark a lifetime of service. The excitement, was heightened even further when RTE's South-Eastern Correspondent, Damien Tiernan and his film crew arrived to interview Pat and film in the school.



Coiste Gairmoideachais Thiobraid Árann Theas
Seirbhís Oideachais den Chéad Scoth
South Tipperary Vocational Education Committee
Provides a Quality Education Service



Fionuala McGeever CEO, South Tipperary VEC making a presentation to Pat Callanan, Principal Comeragh College, Carrick-on-Suir, Co. Tipperary on the occasion of his retirement

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4. GENERAL SCIENCE TEACHERS Bachelor's Degree in Physics, Chemistry, Biology or equivalent. Minimum 3+ years experience in teaching Science subjects to secondary level students at accredited schools.	5. MATHEMATICS TEACHERS Bachelor's Degree in Mathematics or equivalent. Minimum 3+ years experience in teaching Mathematics to secondary level students at accredited schools.	6. ICT TEACHERS Degree in Computer Science/ Computer Engineering/ ICT Minimum 3+ years of teaching/ training experience at secondary school level.
7. VOCATIONAL (ENGINEERING) TEACHERS Degree in Engineering specializing in Mechanical/ Mechatronics/ Electrical/ Electronics Engineering. Minimum 5 years experience, of which at least 3 years should be spent teaching relevant Engineering subjects & at least 2 years of industrial/trade experience.	8. BUSINESS TEACHERS Degree in Business Administration or equivalent degree in Business Minimum 5 years total experience, of which at least 3 years should be spent teaching subjects such as Management and Human Resources, and at least 2 years work experience in HR, management or project management or small business.	9. AVIATION ENGINEERING LECTURERS Degree in Aviation/ Aircraft Maintenance/ Avionics Engineering Minimum 5 years experience in aviation (or related) engineering of which minimum 3 years experience in teaching/ training aviation Engineering subjects AND minimum 2 years of aviation industry experience.
10. LABORATORY TECHNICIANS Bachelor Degree in Physics, Chemistry or Biology. Minimum 5 years experience in educational institutions (high schools or institutions of Higher/ Further Education). Must have experience as laboratory technician, demonstrator or assistant in relevant science subjects to various grades across the school.	PLEASE NOTE THAT ALL TEACHERS MUST HAVE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent and Proven Pedagogical and Demonstration skills. Desire to train UAE National students for whom English is a Second Language. Aptitude to work in a PLC (Professional Learning Community). Clear spoken (Native) English skills. Passion to teach and participate in education reform. 	
11. DIRECTOR OF INSTITUTES PhD with Masters in Electrical, Electronics, Mechanical or Mechatronics Engineering. Minimum 12 years of progressive experience in teaching, education management, administration and leadership. Extensive experience in senior level administration of department or entire institutions. Track record of control and administration over a considerable budget. Prior experience as Dean of department, Deputy Director or Executive Director is preferred.	12. EDUCATION CONSULTANTS Masters in Education, Education Management, Headship or any other stream comprising research in Pedagogy and Education. Minimum 10 years of progressive experience in teaching, advisory, strategic or operational consulting and leadership. Proven experience in working with top management and institutional leadership. Expertise in creating policies, procedures, implementation of best practices, creating roadmaps for future development and determination of key milestones.	13. VICE PRINCIPALS Must be Master Degree in Education/ equivalent qualified. Minimum 8 years experience in educational institution administration at senior levels. Proven administrative skills, adaptable, innovative and resilience to thrive in a reform based system. Evidence of progressive career experience in an academic setting.

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Minister Quinn announces Department of Education and Skills Funding for Music Generation

Members of the group "Teaspach" and Elsa Kelly with Minister Ruairi Quinn, the EU Commissioner for Education and Music Generation's Rosaleen Molloy & Eithne Egan

Music Generation is Ireland's National Music Education Programme, which helps children and young people access music education in their local area. Initiated by Music Network, the programme is co-funded by U2 and The Ireland Funds together with Local Music Education Partnerships throughout the country.

Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairi Quinn T.D., recently addressed Music Education Partnerships participating in Music Generation at the inaugural Music Education Partnership Seminar on 21 January.

Presented by the Department of Education and Skills in partnership with Music Generation, this event brought together the members of Local Music Education Partnerships from the ten areas together with original pilot programmes previously established by the Department of Education and Skills in Donegal and Dublin City.

Addressing the delegates the Minister said, "By 2016, the investment by local Music Education Partnerships and Government is expected to be on a par with the €7m donation from U2 and The Ireland Funds. The Department of Education and Skills will commence funding the initiative on a phased basis from July 2014. Music Generation is a great example of how when we put our heads together we can deliver really exciting education programmes in new and innovative ways. Over 5,000 children and young people have participated in the many programmes available throughout the country. I want, in particular, to acknowledge our philanthropic donors, U2 and The Ireland Funds, and also our diverse range of local partners including local Authorities, VECs, Higher Education Institutes, parents, musicians and schools".

U2's The Edge stated, "We are absolutely delighted that the Department of Education and Skills has committed to the long-term funding of

this brilliant Music Generation scheme. It is a source of great pride for U2 that along with The Ireland Funds we were able to step in and keep it going after government cut backs put it in jeopardy in 2009".

Over the past eighteen months, the programme has been established on a phased basis in ten areas of the country – initially in Louth, Mayo and Sligo, expanding into Cork City, Laois and Wicklow and more recently Carlow, Limerick City and Offaly/Westmeath, the latter being the first regional partnership to be established. To date, employment opportunities have been created for more than 120 musicians. It is expected that the programme will expand in up to three more areas of the country by 2015.

For further information visit,
www.musicgeneration.ie





Game-changer or second half?

The Framework for Junior Cycle

By Dr Anne Looney, Chief Executive, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)

I believe that those who present the Framework for Junior Cycle as the dawn of a new era of innovation in Irish second-level schools are greatly mistaken. And in recent months I have heard many suggestions, usually from those who work outside the education system, that 2014 will mark some sort of watershed between an age of inertia and an age of change. The introduction of the Framework for Junior Cycle will be the “game-changer”. I think that’s the wrong image. We need to recognise that 2014 will mark the second half of a game that’s already underway.

FIRST HALF

That 2014 represents some sort of new departure for the system is beyond doubt. Including curriculum, assessment, programme planning, qualifications, reporting to parents,

transfer from primary, progression to senior cycle and teacher professional development in ONE developmental initiative is a departure for a system that has preferred the piecemeal over the wholesale.

But 2014 does not represent such a departure for schools. Schools have shown little appetite for inertia over the past decade. The Instructional Leadership programme (see article on page 22) – an initiative of the IVEA – is a good example of the initiative shown by schools and those who support them in innovating locally and collectively in response to school identified challenges. Schools have not been waiting around for the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment and the Department of Education and Skills to come up

with another good idea! The Learning School project – supported by the education centres is another example of this kind of innovation. So too, the TL 21 project run by NUI Maynooth.

All of these projects have engaged teachers and school leaders in reflecting, inquiring, researching, imagining, and experimenting in classroom and school settings. They are defined by collective and collegial endeavour and support, most visible in conferences and meetings, but supported by online spaces where ideas can be shared, tested and validated.

A further feature of innovation in the last five years in particular has been the growing range of informal online spaces which connect teachers rather than schools. David Puttnam recently reported that TES Connect, the website for teachers to share resources and ideas, supported by the Times Educational Supplement, has over 20,000 Irish users, making Irish teachers, pro rata, the biggest “users” of the site. Irish teachers use of Twitter to share ideas and resources has given rise to a loose

“Schools have not been waiting around for the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment and the Department of Education and Skills to come up with another good idea! The Learning School project – supported by the education centres is another example of this kind of innovation.”



"Irish teachers" use of Twitter to share ideas and resources has given rise to a loose network of informal digital curators among the profession at both primary and post-primary levels."

network of informal digital curators among the profession at both primary and post-primary levels as teachers learn to trust the resource choices and professional observations and insights of colleagues whom they have never met face to face. Monday evenings at 8.30 pm sees a remarkable convergence on Twitter when #edchatie goes "live" for an hour and some of these digital curators "gather" to "discuss" a topic or question chosen as the theme through a poll a few days earlier. A reminder for non-twitter users (the untwits?) – the sharing of comments and ideas is public. Anyone can follow the debate and read the comments. And if you are not available in Monday evening, you can access the debate

through chirpstory.com. Teacher "voices" on professional issues in a public space on their terms – now that is an innovation!

The "game" has been "played" for some time now, by organisations like the IVEA, by schools and by teachers working collectively and individually. The "second half" – the Framework – gives the "game" a system-wide context, joining up and responding to work already underway and in some sense, responding to the first half of innovation efforts that inevitably get to that Van Morrison point... "wouldn't it be great if it was like this all the time"...

SECOND HALF ALREADY UNDERWAY IN SOME SCHOOLS

The decision to start the second half with 48 schools was based on a realisation that a system response needs to be school-led if it is to reach into every classroom and every school. The schools in the network are not all playing the same game. Some have chosen to focus on introducing and developing short courses, others on assessment and reporting. Others on

looking at the basic structure of the school day – on the tensions between trying to organise active and engaged teaching and learning between two bells 35 minutes apart! Some have worked on connections – between School Self-Evaluation and Literacy and Numeracy and planning for junior cycle for example, to share with other schools how they are working on all three together in the same project. Some are still in the half-time huddle...meeting, thinking, and planning. Others have made dramatic tactical decisions – to run first year next year without text books, or to block the timetable for longer "learning sessions" with more students and more teachers working together for more time. Some of the schools – even though they chose to participate in the network – have been more comfortable pitch-side for the past few months, watching and learning from the play of others. And some have gone back to the dressing room for a temporary breather because school life and events meant they needed a sit down and some hydration!

Already, the work of the network is beginning to be made available to other schools – work on timetabling for examples, and on programme planning is already being accessed by schools outside the network planning for 2014. Principals and teachers from network schools have shared their experiences with colleagues at local and national networks, some organised through VECs.

One key insight – that schools need to move at their own pace – is critical to planning for the second-half for all schools and for the system as a whole. Another, is that with some external support and encouragement, many schools find expertise in their own staff they did not know that they had – individual innovators who had been keeping their heads down! A third – is that some of the richest and most relevant insights come when

schools and teachers share practice with each other. The model of the expert with the PowerPoint is well and truly dead.

AND THE SECOND HALF FOR ALL

While much of the Framework for Junior Cycle is whole-school and relates to the whole junior cycle experience for students, second-level teachers are subject specialists and they view the game from that perspective. It's not the only perspective, but it is the dominant one. And for that reason, many teachers may well stay on the sidelines or even in the stands until "their" subject comes on stream. There will be encouragement to tog out for a game of key skills even before their official start time, as schools may decide to focus on these for all first years as a foundation for the rest of junior cycle. But that will be a school decision. Not a DES one! Equally, as subject specialists, some teachers cast a cold eye on short courses, concerned that "their" subject might be "downgraded" to a short course. As teachers watch

"The economy will not have recovered by 2014. Schools and those who work and learn in them will all still be feeling the pain and the pressure, and will be doing so for some time beyond that date."

and work through the squeeze on human and capital resources in schools, these concerns are deeply felt. But teachers are torn between this concern and the opportunities afforded to introduce students to new areas of learning, or skills they feel have been much neglected, or to connect young people to their communities in ways that might have benefits for the life of the school and for the life of communities. While the NCCA will provide a range of off-the-shelf short courses, decisions about locally-developed short courses will have to be local. Just as decisions to participate in Instructional Leadership had to be local, or to join the innovative work on e-learning in Cavan or in Louth had to be local. In many ways the Framework for Junior Cycle is a good fit for the VECs and soon-to-be ETBs as the tradition in that sector has always been "local".

Working with the PDA and the IVEA, the NCCA is setting up a network of a dozen or so smaller schools in the sector to prepare for 2014 and identify the particular challenges for these schools, both the "stand-alone" schools and those positioned within a complex local educational ecosystem of secondary schools. The work of this network, which is just getting underway, will be a valuable support for all schools but it can also inform national planning for the second half.

WRONG TIME, EXTRA TIME?

The economy will not have recovered by 2014. Schools and those who work and learn in them will all still be feeling the pain and the pressure, and will be doing so for some time beyond that date. Resources to support the Framework have been ring-fenced over the next few years, but the "squeeze" will remain for some time. Why now? Because the efforts of the first half will have been for nothing unless the second half is played. Because the teachers who participated in the consultation on junior cycle said that unless the examination changes nothing else will. Because, as many have said in recent months, the time has come...

Time is a big theme of the discussions and work with the network schools – how they use it, how they structure it, how they make, manage and save it, what is counted as "real time" and what is not, and by whom, and the realisation that no matter how much time you have, it is never enough! All of those debates, and the ideas and solutions proposed by schools of all sizes, can inform and are informing preparation for the "second half" ahead. Game on!





COISTE GAIRMOIDEACHAIS CHONTAE ÁTHA CLIATH
COUNTY DUBLIN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Language, Literacy and Numeracy

Co. Dublin VEC Leads the Way!

This term marked the launch of a number of exciting initiatives to promote language, literacy and numeracy in our second level schools. Earlier in 2012 the Department of Education and Skills published *Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life*, the new national strategy which aims to improve literacy and numeracy levels among children and young people over the next nine years. Part of Co. Dublin VEC's response to this has been the development of a set of strategies to support curriculum planning and development in language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) in our second level schools.

The LLN Toolkit was put together following consultation with a VEC Expert Group, led by Deirdre Keyes, Education Officer, Co. Dublin VEC, and the second level Principals and Deputy Principals. The Toolkit includes the best of what is available in the field, both nationally and internationally, as well as containing some materials developed by Co. Dublin VEC. The Toolkit was designed by Rosemarie McGill, Development Officer, Co. Dublin VEC and was disseminated to school management teams at the end of August 2012.

The Toolkit is very much a work in progress and is just one of the ways in which Co. Dublin VEC are seeking to affirm best practice in teaching and

learning. In November, another step was taken towards sharing materials and approaches to language, literacy and numeracy through the establishment of a new network for second-level schools. Almost 40 staff, mainly teachers designated as the link person for literacy or numeracy in their school, as well as some Principals and Deputies, attended the first meeting of the LLN Network. There was a great buzz in the room as participants talked about what they already do in their schools to enhance the oracy, literacy and numeracy skills of their students and what they are hoping to do this academic year. Among the strategies mentioned were debating clubs, weekly Maths puzzles with prizes for the winners, Seachtain na Gaeilge, the Red Wall initiative (a designated area in school for displaying book reviews by students), paired reading initiatives, creative writing competitions, using the SNIP reading and spelling programme, oral Irish exams for 1st years, Operation Oracy and agreeing language, literacy and numeracy priorities in all subject department plans.

Deirdre Keyes, Education Officer, Co. Dublin VEC, said the following at the first LLN Network meeting:

"All our teachers have a role to play in promoting literacy and numeracy and focusing on these key skills benefits students of all abilities. This meeting proves not only the excellent work that is already underway in our schools but the spirit of enthusiasm and generosity that exists in our VEC."

It is hoped that the LLN Toolkit and the Network are the start of sharing ideas and information about literacy and numeracy and that these projects will complement other school initiatives such as whole school development planning and school self-evaluation. Plans are also underway to support literacy and numeracy initiatives in our primary schools and our Youthreach Centres. Go n-éirí go geal linn.

For further information on any of the above, please contact Rosemarie McGill at r.mcgill@codubvec.ie

"It is hoped that the LLN Toolkit and the Network are the start of sharing ideas and information about literacy and numeracy and that these projects will complement other school initiatives such as whole school development planning and school self-evaluation."

VEC Provision of Irish Medium Educational Services in Ireland

Seosamh Mac Donncha, Cathaoirleach, Coiste Gaeloideachais IVEA



The Irish Vocational Education Association (IVEA) and the Vocational Education Sector (Vocational Education Committees – VECs) have a long tradition and track record in supporting the Irish language and promoting the provision of Irish medium educational services throughout the state, including the Gaeltacht. Since the enactment of the Vocational Education Act, 1930, the Vocational Education Sector has established and maintained second level schools in peripheral Gaeltacht areas when many other second level providers failed to do so.

That tradition continues to this present day as exemplified by these following examples:

- Gairmscoil Éinne, Inis Mór, founded in 1952
- Coláiste Ghobnait, Inis Oírr, founded in 1985
- Coláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin, founded in 2000
- Gairmscoil na bPiarsach, Ros Muc, founded in 1935 all under the patronage of Co Galway VEC
- Coláiste Pobail Cholmchille, Oliéán Thoraigh, founded in 1999
- Gairmscoil Chú Uladh, Béal an Átha Mhóir, founded in 1982 all under the patronage of Co Donegal VEC
- Meánscoil San Nioclás, An Rinn, founded in 1959 under the patronage of Co Waterford VEC

Indeed there are many other examples of small second level schools in Gaeltacht areas which are maintained by VECs.

VECs have also been to the forefront in establishing Gaelcholáistí and Aonaid (Irish medium Units) throughout the country in response to the increasing demand for Irish medium second level provision. Most of the country's current Irish medium second level provision comes under the patronage of VECs, and the Vocational Sector is very proactive in encouraging and facilitating the establishment of new Irish medium second level provision. This coming academic year, 2013/2014, will see 2 further Irish medium Aonaid being established by Co Louth and Co Kildare VECs.

Adult and Further Education services are also provided through the medium of Irish in Gaeltacht areas by the relevant VECs. Co Galway VEC currently hosts and manages a project called "Breacadh" which publishes Adult and Further Education resources in the Irish language for Gaeltacht areas. This partnership project between VECs with Gaeltacht areas and Gaeltacht Local Action Groups was founded in 2000, and it has also undertaken important projects such as an Irish language Phonics Scheme and a Gaeltacht Adult Literacy Survey. This project is funded

by the Further Education Section in the Department of Education and Skills.

The IVEA has established an Irish Medium Education Forum to advise it on Irish language policy. In the context of the current rationalisation of VECs, the Forum is currently addressing the implications of this rationalisation and also addressing the IVEA's/Vocational Sector's role in the 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language, 2010-2030.

Finally, the new Education and Training Boards (ETBs) will be public bodies which will fall within the remit and terms of the Official Languages Act, 2003. As with VECs currently, the new ETBs will be obliged to prepare Language Schemes which will ensure the delivery of educational services through the medium of Irish in Gaeltacht areas, as well as an administrative capacity to provide services through Irish. In that context, ETBs will be obliged to meet the relevant Irish language requirements.

The IVEA recognises that the Government's 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language, 2010-2030 promotes an integrated approach to the Irish language which is consistent with best international practice. Since ETBs will be public bodies, funded by Government, they will be committed to supporting that strategy and giving practical effect to its aims and objectives.

President visits the Education Centre in Midlands Prison, Portlaoise



An Gaisce – The President's Award has been running in the School in Midlands Prison, Portlaoise since September 2008. In this capacity, President Michael D Higgins recently visited in order to present two gold medals, one silver medal and three bronze medals.

The two students who received gold medals in 2011 were only the second and third students to receive the gold medal while in prison. They were, however, the first in the country to have completed bronze, silver and gold while in prison. This year's two gold recipients repeated that pattern. Since the programme commenced, the participants have been involved in many diverse personal, community and physical challenges.



Left to right: John Concannon, Chairperson, Gaisce, Joe Cunningham AEO, Co. Laois VEC, Anne O' Keefe CEO, Co. Laois VEC, Barney Callaghan CEO, Gaisce, President Higgins, Linda Tynan, Head Teacher, Midlands Prison, Catherine MacNamara, Gaisce coordinator, Anita Hanrahan, Gaisce coordinator, Governor Martin Mullen, Chief Officer Tom McQuinn

Since 2008 they have raised considerable amounts of money for charities including; the local Block Project, Laois Down Syndrome, Crumlin Children's Hospital, St Vincent

de Paul and Pieta House. President Higgins spoke very highly of the education programmes on offer and complemented Co. Laois VEC for their role in delivering this service.

Student from O'Carolan College, Nobber receives All-Ireland Scholarship Award

Thomas McGrath, from Carrickleck, Nobber, was a recipient of a JP McManus sponsored All-Ireland Scholarship award. Thomas, who is in his first year of Dentistry in TCD, completed his secondary education at O'Carolan College in Nobber last year. The scholarship will last the duration of his undergraduate course.

The awards were presented by former US President Bill Clinton and students were accompanied onto the stage by their former school principal. Scholarships were awarded to 115 students from all over the island of Ireland.

Thomas also received an Entrance Exhibition award from Trinity College Dublin.



Coiste Gairmoideachais Chontae na h-Éire
Forbairt agus Naiscúit in Oideachas
County Meath VEC
Excellence and Innovation in Education



Left to right: JP McManus, Thomas McGrath, Bill Clinton, John Grant, Principal, O'Carolan College, Nobber

The National Disability Authority (NDA)

By Marion Wilkinson, Senior Policy and Public Affairs Advisor,
National Disability Authority



The National Disability Authority (NDA) is the independent state body providing expert advice on disability policy and practice to Government and state bodies, and promoting Universal Design in Ireland.

The National Disability Authority's mandate is set out in the National Disability Authority Act 1999 and the Disability Act 2005, and in summary is:

- To provide policy advice to Government and public bodies
- To advise on coordination of services to people with disabilities
- To undertake, commission and collaborate in disability research and assist in the development of statistical information
- To advise on standards and guidelines in services to people with disabilities
- To develop standards, education and promote awareness of Universal Design¹

The National Disability Authority has always acknowledged the importance of the role that education plays in supporting people with disabilities to lead full and meaningful lives. An important feature of this role is assisting people with disabilities to plan their careers. Research shows that education and training are key mechanisms in enabling people to live, work and participate in mainstream society. In Ireland while the overall rate of access to further/higher education rose by 8% between 2000 and 2006, the equivalent rate for students with disabilities increased by just 2.6%. Young people with disabilities are more likely to discontinue their studies because of health conditions and a lack of appropriate supports².

Between a third and a half of people with disabilities who are not employed wish to work, and among the obstacles they identify are lack of education

"The evidence shows that people with disabilities are more poorly educated than the population at large. There is also evidence that some young people with disabilities when they leave school have underachieved relative to their peers."

or training. The employment rate of people with disabilities is directly proportional to the highest level of education they receive.

The evidence shows that people with disabilities are more poorly educated than the population at large. There is also evidence that some young people with disabilities when they leave school

¹ Universal design refers to the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people, regardless of age, size ability or disability. Within the education sector this means instruction, student services, information technology, and physical spaces.

² ANED (2011) Inclusive Education for Young Disabled People in Europe; Trends, Issues and Challenges. University of Leeds.

have underachieved relative to their peers. Consequently further education and training is essential to develop their talents and capacities to the full.

MAINTAIN THE EXPERTISE OF THE VEC SECTOR

Acknowledging the challenges that exist for learners with disabilities, the NDA notes the VECs' long-established role in supporting all learners, including those with disabilities, to access and complete their education. An admirable feature of the VEC system is its ability to respond to learners' needs and create programmes to address those needs. The unique position of the VEC sector is that its expertise spans both the secondary and further education areas. Therefore, the understanding and support required to help individual learners is built up over time, and results in better outcomes. An additional strength is the VEC web of connections to local communities.

In a time of change and reform it is necessary to retain what has worked well and achieved results. The NDA is aware that within the VEC system there are examples of good practice in delivering supports and education provision to students with disabilities that should be showcased.

REFORM

The establishment of SOLAS, the new education and training authority, will bring change to the further education sector. Solas will involve a merger of FÁS with the VECs to form new Local Education and Training Boards. This reform in the mainstream further education sector will place demand on programmes run by VEC colleges. The social welfare system is also undergoing considerable reform, with the integration of welfare payments and supports to employment in the one Department. There is a shift underway towards a more active

approach to supporting people to get jobs. In 2012 the FÁS Employment Services transferred to the Department of Social Protection to form part of the establishment of the Intreo (the National Employment and Entitlements Service). This new service will have a key role in advising learners about the type and mix of programmes available in their local areas.

SHOWCASING GOOD PRACTICE SUPPORTING LEARNERS WITH DISABILITIES

Reform within the activation and further education sectors has provided agencies with an opportunity to be proactive and create new ways of working to achieve agreed results. Partnerships at the policy or service

delivery level are increasingly recognised as a key strategy in addressing 'need' in a more holistic way. The partnership concept in public sector programmes has been recognised for a number of decades as having potential to assist communities to address issues at the local level.³

The National Disability Authority is therefore partnering with the IVEA in hosting a joint workshop with the IVEA membership through which we can showcase VECs' good practice in providing inclusive mainstream education to people with disabilities.

For further information on this, please contact Niamh Fawl, Policy & Public Affairs advisor at nafawl@nda.ie



³ Kellock 2005 citing Considine 2004, OECD 2001



Coiste Gairmoideachais Chontae Dhún na nGall
County Donegal Vocational Education Committee

Peace III Funded Restorative Practice Project Continues in Co Donegal

Co Donegal VEC continues to lead out on an exciting two-year countrywide Peace III funded project on Restorative Practice, which began in 2011. Fourteen out of the county's twenty-seven post-primary schools, eight of which are Co Donegal VEC schools, along with five Youthreach centres, Donegal Youth Service and Foróige embarked on this project in May 2011 to work towards embedding restorative practice in their organisations over the following two years.

Co Donegal has a progressive history of promoting restorative practices in schools for some years. The origin of this can be traced to a 2004 initiative, Restorative Justice in Schools, supported by the Health Service Executive West. Peace III funding has enabled an expansion of restorative practices within the formal and informal education settings and has also enabled Co Donegal VEC to reach out to non-VEC schools and the county's youth service.

The project has three elements to it – research, training and organisational activity. The University of Ulster's Restorative Practices Team are Dr Derick Wilson, Tim Chapman and Hugh Campbell who have been restorative practitioners for many years before this and are currently promoting the concept of Restorative Practices in Schools and Youth Services in

"Peace III funding has enabled an expansion of restorative practices within the formal and informal education settings and has also enabled Co Donegal VEC to reach out to non-VEC schools and the county's youth service."

Ireland, supported by SCoTENS (Standing Conference on Teacher Education North and South). They were commissioned to conduct the project's research element which has sought to ascertain the current level of development and delivery of restorative practices in participating organisations as a means of resolving conflict situations and restoring relationships. It has also looked at developing a whole system approach to embedding restorative practice in these schools, centres and youth work projects.

Staff from all organisations, ninety-nine in total, participated in training in 2011 to enable them to further the use of such methods in their organisation. In addition sixteen staff are also undertaking a Post-Graduate Certificate in Restorative Practice through the University of Ulster. Since September 2012, participating schools, Youthreach centres and youth work organisations have availed of a modest amount of funding to be used as they see necessary to further embed Restorative Practice into their centres. To date the project has engaged more than 1,600 learners, staff and parents in training;

it is hoped to reach more than 2,000 by the time the project comes to a close in May.

The fourteen schools involved are St Catherine's V.S., Killybegs; Magh Ene College, Bundoran; Gairm Scoil Mhic Diarmada, Arranmore Island; Errigal College, Letterkenny; Finn Valley College, Stranorlar; Crana College, Buncrana; Gairmscoil Chú Uladh, Béal an Átha Móir; Mulroy College, Milford; St Columba's Comprehensive School, Glenties; PCC Falcarragh; Carndonagh Community School; St Eunan's College, Letterkenny; Rosses Community School, Dungloe and the Royal and Prior Community School, Raphoe. The five Youthreach centres are based in Ballyshannon, Buncrana/Glengad, Gortahork, Letterkenny and Lifford.

For further information, please contact Dr Sandra Buchanan, Youthreach County Coordinator at sandrabuchanan@donegalvec.ie

Project supported by PEACE III
Programme managed for the Special
EU Programmes Body by Donegal
County Council





Ray shows support for football education and employment project

By Derek O'Neill - Project Manager, Project FUTSAL

Left to right: Derek O'Neill, Project Manager, Project FUTSAL, Ray Houghton and Michael Moriarty, IVEA General Secretary

Republic of Ireland legend Ray Houghton was on hand to launch the FAI Project FUTSAL initiative before the recent friendly against Poland. The FAI has developed seven football education hubs along the South Eastern seaboard of Ireland in Waterford, Wexford, Carlow, South Tipperary and Dublin and enjoys the valued support of the VECs and Local Authorities in each area.

The FAI and its project partners are providing a unique opportunity for people who are unemployed and out of formal education to get involved in this innovative project designed to help them back into the workforce.

Project FUTSAL is an EU funded joint initiative between the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) and the Welsh Football Trust (WFT) with the core aim of utilising football as a social inclusion tool in order

to facilitate innovative community regeneration. The main funding comes via the Ireland Wales 2007-13 Inter Regional programme.

The overall aim of the project is to provide education and work placement opportunities for young people and to influence and assist community regeneration via employment and volunteerism. This innovative approach sees the FAI and the WFT cooperating to share knowledge, experience and best practise in relation to grassroots programmes.

Ray Houghton said:
"It's great to see the Football Association of Ireland partnering with

the Welsh Football Trust to use the attraction of football to encourage young men and women into education. These centres are encouraging people to attain new educational qualifications as well as becoming certified football coaches. These are skills which can bring great benefits not only to the individuals but also to their local towns. I think it's a marvellous idea."

At the core of the project is the concept of football hubs. Hubs are education centres coordinated by FAI/WFT staff and offer an academic year of adult education, personal development, football coaching education and work/volunteer placements. A total of seven hubs in Ireland are operational with

"It's great to see the Football Association of Ireland partnering with the Welsh Football Trust to use the attraction of football to encourage young men and women into education."

three up and running in North Wales. Places on the programme are open to both men and women and run throughout the academic year September to May. The extensive programme of football activity on each course is designed to incentivise potential participants to engage with the project and this approach has worked very well to date.

According to Project Manager Derek O'Neill: "The project has been up and running for a year and a half now and the dedication of local FAI Development Officers has ensured that things are progressing well so far. This is a great opportunity for people who are unemployed to get involved in a project designed to broaden their education and help them back into the workforce. The added bonus of football being included in the programme also brings positive health benefits for participants and by extension, the communities where they are delivering coaching sessions. The extra qualifications and work experience gathered on the

course should provide a real boost to a person's CV when seeking a job or to looking to progress their education." A total of 90 people signed up for the course last year and twenty of those who graduated are now working with the FAI on the Job Bridge internship scheme. This year, over 200 people are involved in the programme which delivers a FETAC level 5 Sports & Recreation major award programme and provides a great opportunity to start a career in the sports industry with the FAI looking to expand the success of the Job Bridge initiative to accommodate more people.

The involvement of the VECs has been a huge advantage to the programme with funding and tuition being provided as part of their partnership contribution. This has enabled project participants to gain a solid and accredited educational grounding which enables them to look towards the many sports related third level courses on offer in institutes around Ireland.

The General Secretary of the Irish Vocational Education Association, Michael Moriarty commented: "VECs are involved in this project because the aims and objective are at the core of VEC educational philosophy. Upskilling and progression along learning pathways leading to employment is a core function of VECs and this fits the aim of Project FUTSAL."

Another key element of the project is the establishment of pan-disability football teams attached to each Hub. The project encourages and assists local clubs and communities around the Hubs to support the delivery of football to a wider range of players with disabilities in their communities. In this regard, all project participants have received training in how to deliver pan disability football training sessions.

Overall, it's a positive regeneration step for local communities and project partners such as the VECs are already seeing tangible benefits of their close involvement in the project.

What is Futsal?

Futsal is a five-a-side game, recognised by both UEFA and FIFA, normally played on a flat indoor pitch with hockey sized goals and a size 4 ball with a reduced bounce. It is played to touchlines and all players are free to enter the penalty area and play the ball over head-height. Games are 20 minutes per half, played to a stopping clock (similar to basketball) with time-outs permitted.

The surface, ball and rules create an emphasis on improvisation, creativity and technique as well as ball control and passing in small spaces.

Many of the top world class footballers played Futsal in their youth and credit it with supporting their footballing development; players of the calibre of Ronaldinho, Kaka, Lionel Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo, Deco, Xavi to name but a few who have played Futsal to develop their skills.

Perhaps in regular football you cannot appreciate the talent. Everything is more physical. But in Futsal you have small details of quality, class and tactical aspects.



Xavi - FIFA World Cup and UEFA Champions League Winner.

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Representing Vocational
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