



EDUCATION
for a
CHANGING WORLD

GREEN PAPER on EDUCATION

BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH:
ARNA FHOILSÚ AG OIFIG AN ISOLÁTHAIR.

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FOREWORD

The Irish people are rightly proud of their education system, which has served the country superbly.

But no education system can be frozen in time. If it is to continue to deliver quality, it must constantly adapt to changing educational needs and to changes in the world it serves. At key times there is a need to take a fundamental look at the education system, and redirect it to reflect new needs as they emerge.

Such a moment is now.

Throughout the developed world at present, including the OECD countries, there is a widespread consensus on the need for a radical reappraisal of traditional approaches to education policies, to take account of the complexities of modern living and the extension of education to all and for a longer period of life. Ireland cannot stand apart from these developments.

This 1992 Green Paper, while recognising the solid base on which our system has been built, naturally draws attention in a special way to those areas which require change and development. However, the Paper also emphasises that our system will continue to develop those perennial values which are part and parcel of our national and European heritage.

Certain of the proposals involve radical reform, in order to introduce a spirit of enterprise in our young people and to prepare them for a new world. They are intended to initiate a wide national debate — among education professionals, parents, and all who have a commitment to the quality of education.

After a period of about six months for consultation and debate, the Government will prepare a White Paper, followed by a series of Education Bills to provide the legislative framework for a reformed structure. Progress in implementing change will take place within the framework of available resources.

Séamus Brennan

SÉAMUS BRENNAN, T.D.

Minister for Education

June, 1992



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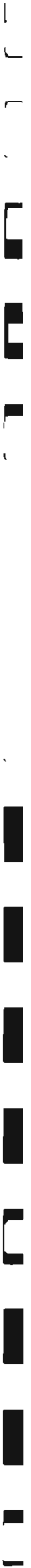
INTRODUCTION

(as published 21 April, 1992)

THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGE

The circumstances to which the Irish education system must adapt in the decade ahead include:

- The need, particularly in an enterprise culture, to equip students with the ability to think and to solve problems — rather than just with an accumulation of knowledge.
- The need to develop students for life as well as for work, in a social and economic environment that is rapidly changing.
- The need to prepare young people adequately for work.
- The need to ensure that the handicap of social and economic disadvantage is alleviated rather than aggravated by the education system.
- The need to educate young people for their role as citizens of Europe, while retaining and strengthening their distinctive Irish identity and culture.
- The need to provide increasingly for “second-chance” education.
- The need to respond to the increasing demands on teachers, who must adapt to radically changing circumstances during their careers.
- The need to get the best return from education resources that will always be less than those in education would wish.
- The need for the education system to adapt quickly to change.
- The need to respond to increasing levels of expectation from education.
- The need to reflect the right of parents to be informed about, and involved in, the education of their children.
- The need to ensure gender equity throughout the education system.
- The need to respond to the demand for greater openness in society.



SHORTCOMINGS IN THE WAY OF CHANGE

When we look at the present Irish education system in relation to these challenges, shortcomings immediately present themselves:

- Many disadvantaged children fail to enjoy the full benefits of education.
- A significant minority of children encounter basic literacy and numeracy problems, which handicap them in the education system and more importantly, for life.
- The current Senior Cycle is unsuitable for a significant number of students.
- There is frequent criticism (most recently by the Industrial Policy Review Group) that education does not prepare students adequately for work, particularly in the technological area.
- Our learning performance in European languages does not reflect our needs in the new Europe.
- The curriculum and exam system is strongly biased towards acquiring factual knowledge, rather than developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
- The education system is over-centralised, with even the smallest decisions on everyday administration taken by the Department of Education. This approach, as well as being inefficient, distracts the Department from its central task of strategic policy-making.
- Management structures and skills are not adequate to manage effectively the considerable resources devoted to education.
- There is relatively little development and training of teachers after initial qualification.
- Policy-making is hampered by the lack of adequate quantitative data on educational attainment, particularly in the early years of schooling. An adequate system of quality assurance is also lacking.
- The system as a whole lacks openness. Very little information is shared with parents, and they are also involved very little in running the system.

RESPONDING TO CHANGE

In the light of the emerging needs, and the shortcomings of the present system in relation to them, the Green Paper reflects six key aims:

1. To establish greater equity in education — particularly for those who are disadvantaged socially, economically, physically or mentally.
2. To broaden Irish education — so as to equip students more effectively for life, for work in an enterprise culture, and for citizenship of Europe.
3. To make the best use of education resources — by radically devolving administration, introducing the best management practice and strengthening policy-making.
4. To train and develop teachers so as to equip them for a constantly changing environment.
5. To create a system of effective quality assurance.
6. To ensure greater openness and accountability throughout the system, and maximise parent involvement and choice.

Aim 1

To establish greater equity in education — particularly for those who are disadvantaged socially, economically, physically or mentally.

EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

The overall national strategy for education is: *to provide the opportunity for all to develop their educational potential to the full.*

It is proposed that this aim be adopted as a main priority in allocating resources in education.

BARRIERS TO EQUITY

Problems in the way of achieving this goal include:

- The social and economic background of some students, who because of this enter the education system at a disadvantage and have greater than normal difficulties as they progress through the system.
- The number of students who fail to become literate and numerate enough to succeed in the education system. As a result, these students are poorly motivated and seriously ill-equipped for life.
- The number of students for whom the current curriculum at second level is unsuited and who leave the system strongly dissatisfied and without having benefited. For instance, almost one in five students currently ends the senior cycle without achieving five D grades.
- The further problems traveller children face, in addition to those experienced by other disadvantaged students. Only a handful of traveller children, out of several thousand, are in secondary education.
- The special needs of children with disabilities.
- The difficulties that disadvantaged students face in accessing and benefiting from third-level education, particularly in universities. Research shows that the lower socio-economic grouping are strongly under-represented in third-level education.

MOVING TOWARDS EQUITY

Giving Clear Priority to Disadvantaged Students

A higher than proportionate allocation of resources would be targeted at the problems of disadvantaged students.

For instance, any extra teaching resources that become available would as a priority be devoted to increasing staffing in schools in disadvantaged areas. These schools would continue to get priority in the allocation of special and other teachers, and in resources for the in-career training of teachers.

The initial concentration of effort would be on schools in disadvantaged areas, though it is recognised that a proportion of children attending schools in other areas are also disadvantaged.

Extending Liaison between Home and School

Building close links between the home and the school would be used as the main way to foster positive attitudes to education by both students and parents.

This is the focus of the current home-school liaison project, which would be extended progressively to all disadvantaged areas, to include both primary and second-level schools.

Identifying Problems Early

The focus of remedial action would continue to be on identifying students with learning problems as early as possible, then responding with remedial intervention and a highly flexible approach to the curriculum.

Addressing Special Needs

At second level, special programmes would be developed in the junior cycle for those students whose needs are not met by the Junior Certificate. In the senior cycle, the wider range of subject areas proposed under Aim 2 would also help to ensure that more people leave school having benefited from the experience.

Improving Access to Third Level

Direct links would be set up to create "twinning" arrangements between individual third-level institutions and designated schools in disadvantaged areas. Priority access to third level would be facilitated, and access programmes developed.

Bringing Travellers into Education

Within a framework of working urgently to improve traveller education generally, a priority objective would be to improve participation by traveller children in second-level education and to provide for their absorption into the second-level school system.

The aim would be to ensure that second-level schools would accommodate traveller children, as currently happens at primary level.

The visiting teacher scheme, which parallels the home-school liaison approach used in other areas of disadvantage, would be extended.

Special training programmes for teachers of traveller children would also be set up.

Catering for Children with Disabilities

As with social and economic disadvantage, it would be policy to devote a higher than proportionate share of resources to the special needs of children with disabilities.

Dealing with this problem effectively involves a recognition that there is a very wide variety of different needs, and that the needs of individual children will change from time to time. Consistent with this, the approach would be committed to having as many children as is appropriate in ordinary schools, backed up by a range of facilities, including special schools, which children could draw on as necessary. The greatest possible flexibility would be aimed for, with children moving from ordinary schools to special schools and back

again as their needs dictated. A committee is currently working out the practical details of this approach.

ENSURING GENDER EQUITY

An equity problem of quite a different kind is that of equality between male and female in the education system. This takes three main forms:

- Unequal distribution of the sexes at management levels in education.
- Teaching materials and practices which reinforce outdated stereotypes of the roles of men and women, including career roles.
- Restricted availability of options at second level which force boys and girls towards particular course choices.

To address these imbalances, a 6-point programme would be initiated:

Campaign for Gender Equity in Education

1. All education institutions, at primary, secondary and third level, to develop and publish an active policy to promote gender equity. They would also record progress in implementing this policy, in an annual report.
2. All Boards of Management in schools to aim at gender balance in their membership, and to have not less than a minimum representation of each sex. There would be similar requirements for selection committees for all education staff.
3. A systematic examination of all teaching materials to take place regularly, and action taken to withdraw or adapt unsuitable material. Priority be given to revising materials for younger age-groups.
4. Second-level schools to ensure that the full range of course options is available to students, irrespective of sex. Smaller or single-sex schools

to be encouraged to share resources with other schools to make this possible.

5. Co-education to be actively encouraged as the norm at both primary and secondary level. Primary schools to become co-educational as soon as practicable.
6. The Department of Education to bring about a greater participation by women in management at all levels in the Department. Participation by women in the inspectorate to be increased.

Aim 2

To broaden Irish education — so as to equip students more effectively for life, for work in an enterprise culture, and for citizenship of Europe.

THE NEED TO BROADEN

Educating for Work

Irish education, particularly now, must equip students so that they have the best chance of entering employment or of making a successful career in self-employment.

In the business world there is wide recognition that many Irish young people tend to lack:

- The range of technical skills needed in today's industry;
- The communication and other interpersonal skills sought by employers;
- The critical thinking, problem-solving ability and individual initiative that an enterprise culture requires;
- The language skills to work and win markets across the EC, and to take part in tourism-related activities.

Educating for Life

The emphasis on acquisition of facts rather than critical thinking which handicaps young people in preparing for work is also a handicap in preparing for life.

There is a need for the education system to develop in the student:

- An ability to manage oneself and to make the most use of personal resources;
- An ability to express one's own viewpoint rationally, and
- An ability to relate effectively to other people.

The second-level programme, in which nearly all now take part, was traditionally geared towards entering third level and to selecting the minority of academic high-achievers. Even after the many changes of recent years, it is clearly still not suited to all.

Many students complete a dozen years of schooling without having developed their own individual strengths, while some lack the basic literacy and numeracy skills necessary for everyday life.

Educating for European Citizenship

Until now, Irish education was concerned only with educating Irish citizens. Now, as the pace gathers towards European Union, it must educate Irish young people to be European citizens as well.

Introducing a European dimension into Irish education means more than spreading a greater knowledge of European languages, vital though that is. It also involves the need to develop an awareness of the European heritage and values that we share, in addition to our distinctive Irish identity and culture.

Greater awareness of the wider political and social framework of which we are now a part is another aspect of educating for European citizenship.

THE WAYS TO BROADEN

Promoting Critical Thinking

There is an across-the-board need to promote the development of critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, which are in turn linked to many interpersonal skills essential both in employment and life. This would involve a revised approach to the Certificate examinations, allied to curriculum changes.

Developing the "Health-Promoting School"

There would be increased emphasis on educating students, from primary upwards, on matters relating to health and fitness in the broadest sense. This is

relevant both to better school performance and to preparation for life. Specific elements that would be addressed include:

- A physical education programme, beginning at the early stages of primary education, that would promote the physical well-being of students in a non-competitive way. This would be linked to education on hygiene and nutrition.
- A systematic health-screening programme, linked to support and advice for families of young people in need.
- Sexuality education, appropriate to all levels of pupils, beginning in the early stages of primary education.
- At the appropriate level, programmes relating to substance abuse and the promotion of a healthy lifestyle.

Emphasising Technology and Enterprise

Throughout the second-level programme, at both junior and senior cycles, there would be a major initiative to increase awareness of both technology and enterprise among all young people, including those who have no intention of pursuing either area in depth. This would include computer literacy.

Enterprise and Technology Studies, structured on a modular basis, would be mandatory for all students. Existing business subjects would be restructured to inject an enterprise dimension. The use of visiting lecturers from industry would be encouraged.

This approach would produce a generation of young people who have basic literacy in both technology and enterprise, the two central elements of economic growth.

Strengthening the Vocational Dimension

The vocational dimension at senior cycle would be greatly strengthened, within the framework of a unified Leaving Certificate. A broader base of technical subjects would be developed at Leaving Certificate level. The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme, which includes a compulsory European language, would be further extended.

An important aim would be to make available to students in all schools a comprehensive range of subject choices. Co-operation between schools would be encouraged so as to make this a reality.

Without creating a separate stream, a much-strengthened vocational element will offer new success opportunities for students of a wider range of abilities.

Increasing Capability in European Languages

There would be a major increase in the priority given to learning European languages, and special EC support would be sought for this. Since the great majority of students currently take a European language at second level, the priority is not to increase participation but to raise the standard of competence that they achieve.

Awareness of European languages would be introduced at primary school level. Emphasis at second level would be decisively shifted to the practical use of language. Measures to upgrade teacher capability in line with this need would make full use of EC programmes.

Language course modules would make it easier for students to begin a language at senior cycle level, and yet acquire useful competence in it before leaving school.

Benefiting from the 3-year Senior Cycle

The option of a 3-year senior cycle for all students creates the opportunity to add elements to the Leaving Certificate programme to broaden students' learning into new areas.

Work experience is an example, and would be only one aspect of strengthened links between schools and industry.

Subject modules, rather than complete subjects, would be added to broaden the range of students' learning.

Increasing the Use of Irish in Practical Life

There would be a major redirection of effort in the teaching of Irish so as to ensure that most people left the education system with the capability to use the language if they wished.

As a practical way of encouraging this to happen quickly, it is proposed to increase dramatically the proportion of marks given in Certificate examinations to oral and comprehension abilities. Together, these would account for at least 60% of the total marks (compared to 25% at present).

All educational institutions would be required to develop policies to encourage the use of Irish, and to report annually on progress. School premises would be widely used to run summer camps in Irish.

Developing Political and Social Awareness

A review of the curriculum would seek ways to increase students' awareness of the political and social framework in which they live, particularly in the context of a European Union.

This dimension would be enhanced by a requirement that all second-level schools have a representative council for students. As well as giving students a greater say in the running of their school, this council would give students experience in public discussion and mutual persuasion.

After School: Upgrading PLCs

The post-Leaving Certificate courses (PLCs), which are geared specifically to vocational training, would be restructured so as to provide a common form of recognised certification. Progress from PLCs into third-level education would be facilitated for high-achievers, with time credit given where appropriate.

The thrust of vocational training would be moved towards a dual system, in which employers would play a much greater role.

After School: Increasing Flexibility at Third Level

At third level, there would be much greater use of the modular approach, to broaden the learning of students in particular disciplines.

Examples of this approach: technology awareness programmes could be available for humanities and business students; business-related modules could be provided for students in technical disciplines; language modules could be available to all.

In addition, there would be a comprehensive system of credit transfer for courses at third level, to facilitate mobility between institutions in Ireland and across Europe during the course of a student's time at third level.

After School: Developing Adult Education

The use of adult education as a medium for "second-chance" education would be strongly encouraged.

The existing Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) for the unemployed would be expanded, and vocational training programmes in general would be opened up to second-chance students. There would be expanded involvement of all secondary schools in extended programmes of adult education.

Access to third-level education for mature students would be further extended.

Adult literacy programmes, which address an important social need, would be expanded.

Out of School: Youth Services

A comprehensive, integrated youth work provision would be promoted across the country, with special emphasis on programmes for disadvantaged young people.

Out of School: Sport for All

As a follow-on to the promotion of physical well-being of children in school, greater fitness and a more active lifestyle would be encouraged among the adult population.

Aim 3

To make the best use of education resources — by radically devolving administration, introducing the best management practice and strengthening policy-making.

THE DEVOLUTION PRINCIPLE

It is proposed to devolve radically decision-making and responsibility in the education system, creating a new dimension of autonomy for schools.

The principle is that everything that can be administered effectively at individual school level should be done there; only matters which cannot be administered effectively at that level should be done elsewhere.

The effect of this principle would be to shift decisively the responsibility for day-to-day administration from the Department of Education, freeing it to concentrate on strategic issues allied to policy-making.

BOARDS OF MANAGEMENT: THE NEW CENTRE OF GRAVITY

At the school and college level, responsibility would be devolved to the Board of Management. The aim is to create throughout the system strong and committed Boards of Management, exercising a high degree of autonomy. All schools receiving State support, primary and secondary (including vocational), would have a representative Board of Management equipped with effective powers.

Representation

The Board of Management would represent the owners or trustees, the parents, the teachers, the school principal, and the local business community. At secondary level, representation of senior students is envisaged at a later stage. The Board could co-opt involvement from past pupils and other people who could further the school's interests.

The Board's chairperson would be elected from among the members, with rotation of this position encouraged. Balanced representation of the sexes on Boards would be aimed for, with compulsory minimum representation from each sex.

School Plan

The first task of each Board of Management would be to draw up a formal School Plan, which would be published for the community. This would set out the school's policy objectives in the light of its particular needs and the resources available to it.

Day-to-day management would be within the Plan's framework, and an annual report to parents would detail progress in implementing it. Inspection of schools would include the review of achievement against the plan. Guidelines for plans and annual reports would be on offer.

Budget

The Board of Management would administer an annual budget from the Department of Education. The amount would be based on a standard cost system, with extra amounts for special needs, such as the disadvantaged.

Some flexibility would be allowed in how schools allocate spending within the overall budget. Discretion over schools' budgets would be increased progressively. The budget could include provision for school transport, if this can be more effectively managed at school level.

A common form of funding for all state-aided schools would be introduced. Funding would be conditional on there being no barriers to entrance on grounds of means, social background or academic ability.

Staff

The Board of Management would appoint all staff, including the principal, with professional assistance in selection when appropriate. Adequate representation of both sexes on selection committees would be required.

The Board of Management would be responsible for the quality of education in the school, and for identifying its staff development needs. Self-assessment by teachers would be part of a formal procedure for evaluating teachers' work by the principal and ultimately by the Board of Management. Structures would be put in place to address the problem of the small minority of teachers who have major problems in coping with the demands on them.

Co-operation and Consultation

The Board of Management would be required to consult with other schools in the area, to bring about the greatest possible co-operation and to share resources where necessary. Principals would be encouraged to work closely with other principals in their catchment area, including those at different levels; this could be either informally or in consultative groups, according to need.

The Board of Management would consult with parents and report to them regularly. It would also be encouraged to develop close links with local industry.

MANAGEMENT IN SCHOOLS

Principal as Chief Executive

It is proposed to enhance the role of principal, reflecting the nature of this position as the central executive function. The principal would be responsible for executing the School Plan, and would be expected to initiate proposals to the Board of Management. Evaluating individual teachers' capability would be an important leadership task of principals, as would liaison with parents. Consultation with students on issues relevant to them would be encouraged; at second level, an aspect of this would be the setting-up of student representative councils with which the principal would liaise.

To encourage mobility and career development, principals would be appointed on fixed-term contracts (such as 7 years) rather than permanently. These contracts could be renewed.

Management training for principals, to equip them for this enhanced role,

would be a priority of in-service development. A special training course would adapt the best practice in management generally to the special needs of education. Obligatory for new principals, this course would be extended progressively to existing ones.

Developing Management Capability within Schools

Central to the principle of devolving power to school level is creating an effective management structure in the schools. Principals would allocate specific responsibilities to vice-principals, and other posts of responsibility would have specific responsibilities attached to them and appointment would be on merit. Training in management functions would become a stronger element on both initial and in-service training of teachers.

Education Support Services

Though the policy would be to devolve as much decision-making as possible, not all services in education can be administered at school level. The principle would be to supply other services on a support basis, without adding another tier to the education hierarchy. This would preserve the principle of radical devolution, while getting the most from resources. Below national level, some support services could be provided at regional, area or local level, as educational requirements dictated.

Role of VECs

Vocational Education Committees would have a major role in co-ordinating technical education and vocational training in second-level schools, adult education including literacy programmes, and sport and youth affairs at local level. The 60-year-old system would be streamlined to meet future challenges.

MANAGEMENT ISSUES AT THIRD LEVEL

Throughout the higher education sector, improved management structures would be encouraged, in line with the very large State resources that are devoted to this area.

While respecting the autonomy of third-level institutions, this would aim towards

- Rationalising the composition and functions of governing bodies,
- Strengthening the executive role of college presidents, and
- Setting-up common management information systems throughout the sector.

In common with other educational institutions, universities would be required to publish annual reports, setting out their progress against stated educational objectives.

The legislative framework for universities, which has grown on an ad hoc basis, now needs to be rationalised.

New funding arrangements, based on a unit cost system, would make for greater accountability and fairness between third-level institutions.

New funding arrangements for research would make it easier to target State funds towards nationally important activities and also to solicit funds for research from a variety of sources.

Universities would be required to establish formal links with Regional Technical Colleges (RTCs) in relation to degree development, research and development, and services to industry.

All institutions at third level would be required to develop an explicit policy on interaction with industry, and to report annually on progress in this activity.

STREAMLINED ROLE FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

With the radical devolution envisaged in these proposals, the Department of Education would be freed to concentrate on what should be its main roles.

These are:

- Formulating strategic policy
- Assuring quality throughout the system
- Allocating budgetary resources

In order to make this streamlining a reality, certain other functions, which would still remain at national level under the devolution approach, would need to be devolved to executive agencies. Small agencies organised around a specific task would be the most efficient way of using resources to execute these tasks.

Examples of functions which would be dealt with in this way include building and property services, the payment of teachers, guidance on school transport, the administration of examinations, curriculum development, and the psychological service.

Aim 4

To train and develop teachers so as to equip them for a constantly changing environment.

TEACHERS AS CHANGE AGENTS

The nature and quality of education delivered by the system depends critically on the teachers. Teachers are entrusted with responsibility for educating Ireland's young people and for ensuring that what they teach and how they teach it are fully in line with the changing needs of their students.

It follows that in an environment that is changing constantly and substantially, teachers themselves must change during the course of their careers. It is proposed to reform the system of teacher training to take this into account.

INITIAL TRAINING

At present quite different forms of initial training are followed by primary and secondary teachers. This discourages mobility within the profession.

This approach would be replaced by an initial system that would be broadly common, while making full allowance for the differences in teaching different age-groups.

The model suggested has three components:

- All prospective teachers would take a university degree (in which Education could be a subject for some).
- This would be followed by a 1-year full-time training programme, with specialised course options dealing with the teaching of different age-groups.
- This would in turn be followed by a further probationary year of in-school training. The probationary year would be linked closely to the

overall process of teacher preparation, supervised by the school principal and monitored by the Inspectorate.

Registration as a teacher would follow successful completion of the probationary year.

IN-CAREER DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS

The main focus for the in-career development of teachers would be on each school identifying its own staff development needs, with delivery of training taking place as close to the workplace as possible.

In this way, the funds available for this activity can be put to best use across the widest possible number of teachers. The aim would be to use existing mechanisms to the greatest extent possible, and to cover both the updating of skills and competences and the wider area of attitudinal change. Where appropriate, a team approach and action-learning techniques would be used in training.

Responsibility for identifying individual needs for in-career development would be shared between the teachers themselves and their schools.

Boards of Management would be required to include in their annual report an account of the in-career development work that was carried out during the year, and the Inspectorate would both review and facilitate progress. Selection committees for management posts would be required to pay particular attention to each candidate's track-record in in-career development.

The dissemination of good practice would be a main aim in this area, and excellent teachers would be seconded to a role in which they would advise teachers in other schools.

Aim 5

To create a system of effective quality assurance.

As already outlined, Boards of Management at individual school level will be responsible in the first instance for the quality of education in their school. In support of this, there is also clearly a need for a system of effective quality assurance at national level.

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS AT DIFFERENT STAGES

An important part of the system of quality assurance would be the collection of quantitative data about students' performance, so that school performance can be assessed against national norms and, in particular, that students requiring special assistance can be identified early.

Students would be assessed by standard methods around the age of 7, 11 and 15 (as part of the Junior Certificate process). Assessment at 7 and 11 would be school-based, but on a standard basis that yielded comparable results. Assessment in the Junior Certificate would be school-based, complemented by standard measurement on a national basis.

ROLE OF THE INSPECTORATE

The Inspectorate would be the main vehicle for quality assurance at first and second level. It would operate by inspecting the performance of a range of schools in the context of their School Plans and by reference to national norms, by disseminating good practice, by targeting situations needing support, and by monitoring the effectiveness of in-career training.

The Inspectorate would have an independent role in evaluating the school system, and would be constituted on a statutory base. It would be statutorily required to make an annual report on the performance of the school system, published independently of the Department of Education.

Inspectors would no longer be involved in certain tasks, such as setting examinations, which at present divert them from their core functions. Some positions in the Inspectorate would be reserved for teachers with particular expertise, serving on short-term contracts before returning to teaching.

QUALITY AT THIRD LEVEL

More systematic procedures for quality assurance would be introduced at third level. This would involve the preparation and publication of performance indicators, internal quality-review procedures, and external monitoring under the aegis of the Higher Education Authority.

Aim 6

To ensure great openness and accountability throughout the system, and maximise parent involvement and choice.

DEVOLUTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The reorganisation proposed involves a large-scale devolution of administration throughout the education system.

Following directly from this increased autonomy is the need for adequate systems of accountability, so that State resources are seen to be best employed and national priorities in education followed.

This will be achieved through a much greater degree of openness at all levels. The workings of the education system would become much more transparent to the world outside.

ANNUAL REPORTS

An important vehicle for openness would be the production by all education institutions of annual reports, which would record performance against planned objectives.

Reports for each academic year would be published by the end of that calendar year, and would follow national guidelines on format and content. Care would be taken to ensure that the task of preparing these reports was streamlined, and their presentation modest and functional.

The Department of Education would specify policy areas to be covered in annual reports; these could include progress on in-career development for staff, gender equity, promotion of European languages and of Irish.

In the case of schools, the main audience for annual reports would be the parents and the local community. The report would be presented to parents at

an annual general meeting of the parents' council, and formally adopted there. Only a summary of statistical data would go to the Department of Education, which would publish annually a report including statistical information on national educational attainment. The full school report would be subject to review by the Inspectorate.

Colleges at third level would be required to publish a listing of their performance indicators and the college's performance against them, together with their progress against policy objectives such as liaison with industry, access for disadvantaged students, and the promotion of Irish.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

The policy of openness would both encourage and facilitate greater involvement by parents in the education of their children.

The publication of the School Plan would allow parents to understand the aims of the school, while the annual reports would provide a means for assessing performance against the plan. One aim of this would be to assist parents to make a more informed choice in the selection of schools for their children.

With the introduction of representative Boards of Management in all schools, parents would have the opportunity to elect their own representatives. A priority role for the school principal would be to foster greater consultation with parents, both on matters affecting the school generally and on a one-to-one basis with parents regarding their own children.

At national level, parent organisations would be invited to make a full contribution to policy-making in education. Support would be given to initiatives aimed at better informing parents about the background to choices they and their children must make, and at fostering closer co-ordination between school and home.

Chapter 1

A
FRAMEWORK
FOR
DEVELOPMENT

Chapter 1

A FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPMENT

1.1 WHY PLAN FOR NEW EDUCATION LEGISLATION?

Irish society has been undergoing a period of profound cultural, social, occupational, demographic and attitudinal change. This is of great significance for how the educational system relates to society generally. Irish people, always well-informed about and interested in educational developments, have become more active participants in the debate on education in recent years. Specifically, parents and teachers are seeking more effective participation in the formulation and implementation of educational policy.

With the enormous expansion and diversification of the education system, the highly centralised nature of its management has been called into question and, with it, a desire has been expressed that education should be more responsive to local needs and should reflect a closer partnership between the school and its local community.

Many now believe that there is a need for greater cohesion between the various elements of the education system and for clarification of the rights and duties of the parties involved. Furthermore, the major developments in education and in Irish society generally over the past 25 years have highlighted a number of important issues that must be addressed.

The current legal basis for Ireland's education system has been described as a patchwork of legislation and regulation, with much of the existing legislation stemming from the nineteenth century. Ireland is probably unique among European countries in the degree to which it administers an education system without a comprehensive and up-to-date legislative structure.

The adequacy of current legislation, particularly at the first and second levels, has been the subject of debate over many years. For example, the practice of issuing important policy directives in the form of rules and circulars, with a tenuous, if any, link to legislation, is a continuing cause for concern. In addition, doubts have been raised about whether some of the current practices

in relation to education fully conform with Articles 42 and 44 of the Constitution.

The process leading to an Education Act offers an opportunity to ensure that the nation is benefiting fully from its investment in education. The promotion of reforms leading to qualitative improvements, and the stimulus that can be given by the empowerment of individual schools, together with better administrative structures, point us in the direction of providing a new framework for development.

In addition, recent reports and recommendations, including those from the Primary Education Review Body, the Review Body on the Primary Curriculum, the 1991 OECD Review of National Policies for Education in Ireland, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, and the Commission on Adult Education, together with the major dialogue that has begun with the universities and the VEC colleges on changes at third level, provide a firm basis of informed opinion for many of the proposals in this paper.

1.2 PURPOSE OF THIS PAPER

This paper is a discussion document and is accompanied by an invitation to all interested persons and bodies to offer comments on the issues in education. As a focus for the debate, the paper identifies issues and proposes a framework for development into the next century, reflecting the following key aims:

- To establish greater equity in education — particularly for those who are disadvantaged socially, economically, physically or mentally.
- To broaden Irish education — so as to equip students more effectively for life, for work in an enterprise culture, and for citizenship of Europe.
- To make the best use of education resources — by radically devolving administration, introducing the best management practice and strengthening policy-making.
- To train and develop teachers so as to equip them for a constantly changing environment.
- To create a system of effective quality assurance.

- To ensure greater openness and accountability throughout the system and maximise parent involvement and choice.

1.3 EDUCATIONAL AIMS

A statement of the aims of education is important, first, in providing direction and purpose for all the partners in education and, second, as an important guide to all those involved in educational planning.

The Constitution, Article 42.1, states that it is the inalienable right and duty of parents *“to provide, according to their means, for the religious and moral, intellectual, physical and social education of their children.”*

In seeking to define educational aims, the starting point is to recognise that the parent is the primary educator, complemented by the efforts of the State. During their formative years, children assimilate attitudes, values and aspirations in the home, from their immediate environment and from their peer group. The churches are also a significant influence in fostering the beliefs and values of the majority of children.

The school, in turn, will seek to establish values and behaviour consistent with its own ethos. In all circumstances, however, the school must have due regard for the rights and wishes of parents. For this purpose, appropriate links between the school and the home, and between the school and the community, are necessary elements in forging a partnership of effort between all concerned interests.

In a relatively homogeneous society such as Ireland's, a reasonable consensus might be anticipated on the broad educational aims that would inspire such a partnership, related to preparing each person for personal and family life, for working life and for living in the community. The following summary of aims are proposed as the basis for such consensus:

- Fostering an understanding and critical appreciation of the values — moral, spiritual, social and cultural — of the home and society generally.

- Promoting self-esteem and self-worth, combined with a respect for the rights and beliefs of others.
- Fostering intellectual development and the attainment of one's full educational potential.
- Developing a spirit of inquiry and the capacity for the critical and constructive analysis of issues.
- Developing expressive and creative abilities to the individual child's full capacity.
- Providing students with the necessary skills to equip them for work and to enable them to function effectively in society.
- Creating tolerant, caring and politically aware members of society.
- Fostering a spirit of self-reliance, of innovation and of enterprise.
- Creating an environment that is conducive to and supportive of emotional and physical well-being.
- Achieving standards of educational performance comparable to the highest internationally.
- Ensuring that people are appropriately educated and trained to support the country's economic development.
- Ensuring that Ireland's young people acquire a keen awareness of their national and European heritage and identity.

The proposed aims are likely to find expression in different forms and with varying degrees of emphasis, in accordance with the wishes of parents and the related ethos and traditions of the school.

Most parents seek to have their own efforts in the moral and spiritual development of their children reinforced through a school ethos that is compatible with their own beliefs. In recognising the wishes of parents in this regard, respect must also be assured, within the school environment, for the wishes of those who do not share the religious beliefs of the majority.

Complementing the work of the home, the school will play its part in transmitting and fostering the core values of society for each new generation. In this era of rapid change, however, when basic values are frequently challenged,

the school must seek to develop in its students the capacity for sound personal judgement. It must foster independence of mind and the ability not only to acquire and absorb information, but to assess it critically and to reach conclusions on the basis of the evidence.

An underlying educational aim is to assist or enable each individual to promote his or her development and personality and to achieve a sense of self-worth. The values that we share with other democracies stress the individuality and freedom of the person and impart a respect for the rights of others in society. The aim must be to promote in students an appropriate sense of balance between the rights and duties of the individual and those of society at large.

The school must seek to create an environment that fosters a sense of political and social awareness, of civic and social responsibility, within a caring society. In this regard, the school should involve students in an active and responsible way in decision-making in the school, commensurate with their level of maturity.

Education should be both challenging and relevant in preparing students for life and for work, and should equip them with the skills for this purpose. It should foster a spirit of self-reliance and enterprise among students, to assist them in their own personal fulfilment and to use their skills to support job creation and the country's development. While adhering to its philosophy of contributing to the development of the whole person, the education system must seek to interact with the world of work to promote the employability of its students and in playing its part in the country's economic development.

Ireland has a rich cultural heritage, and the education system has an important role to play in its preservation and development. It does this by inculcating a strong sense of pride in being Irish, through an emphasis on the Irish language and traditions, Irish literature, music and other cultural endeavours.

1.4 THE GROWTH OF THE SYSTEM

The number of students in primary education increased steadily over the period 1965 to 1987 (the peak year) and has been declining since then; it is projected to continue to decline very substantially over the next decade.

By contrast, numbers at the second level have increased by over 130% since the mid-1960s and, at third level, the increase has been even more dramatic, with numbers increasing by over 230% during the same period.

The following table illustrates the quantitative development and projected trends:

	Number of Students (000s)		
	1965	1991	2001
Primary	505	553	421
Second Level	143	332	334
Vocational Training ¹	—	15	30
Third Level	<u>21</u>	<u>70</u>	<u>100</u>
Total	669	970	885

¹Mainly VPT, but including also special programmes such as those under VTOS

Source: Department of Education

Currently, over 93% of 16-year-olds, 75% of 17-year-olds and about 50% of 18-year-olds are in full-time education. Some 73% of those who enter second-level education complete the senior cycle. Almost 40% of the age-group now proceed to third-level education, compared with 20% in 1980, while a further 20% follow a post-second-level vocational training programme within the school system.

One policy target is that, by the end of the decade, 90% of the age-group would complete the senior cycle. By mid-decade, it is anticipated that over 45% of the age-group would be transferring to third level and a further 25% to post-second-level vocational training programmes.

Accordingly, the decline in enrolments at primary level is expected to be significantly offset by an increase at second level, because of higher participation rates and also as a result of the introduction of the 3-year senior-cycle option. As a result, enrolments in mainstream programmes are not expected to decline from their current level until the beginning of the next century.

At the same time, participation in post-second-level vocational training programmes is expected to increase from its current level of 14,000 to about 20,000 by the year 2000. These numbers, taken in conjunction with the projected expansion of the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme for the long-term unemployed, are likely to increase, as plans to provide second-chance education and training, particularly for the unemployed, come to fruition.

Numbers at third level are expected to increase steadily over the decade. It is expected that, in addition to the demand for third-level education arising from direct entry from second-level schools, there will be an increasing demand arising from the requirement of industry for recurrent education and training of the workforce and the growing numbers of mature students entering the system.

1.5 CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

The achievements of the past 30 years have been impressive, particularly in respect of the degree of change in participation in full-time education and of an enhanced recognition of the benefits of such education. There is, at the same time, a general recognition of the need for further far-reaching reform if the system is to respond adequately to the many challenges now facing us. These challenges must be tackled positively and with vigour at all levels, because of the critical importance of education for the development of all our people, individually, socially and economically.

Providing the opportunity for all to develop their educational potential to the full is the primary goal of the measures proposed in this paper. The Programme for Economic and Social Progress (PESP) identified the following actions as the principal means of achieving this goal:

- Providing a broadly based education for all ability levels during the compulsory cycle of education (6- to 15-year-olds).
- Intensifying efforts to provide for the needs of those with educational difficulties, in particular during the compulsory cycle.
- Encouraging and facilitating students to continue in full-time education during the post-compulsory period (16- to 18-year-olds), by providing a range of education/training programmes suited to their abilities and aptitudes.
- Providing post-second-level education for all students interested in pursuing such education and capable of benefiting from it.
- Providing second-chance education or training for those who leave the system prematurely.
- Facilitating mature students in upgrading their education or training levels within the educational system.

The huge increase in participation rates requires the system to identify and cater for a much wider range of abilities and aptitudes. Education must assist all students to reach their full potential, having regard to their respective abilities and capabilities.

It will be necessary to direct particular attention and support to assisting those who are socially, economically, physically or mentally disadvantaged. Positive, concerted action is required to ensure that such students are enabled to participate to the fullest extent possible in the education system and to achieve their full educational potential.

At the same time, we must ensure that the country's educational standards are such as to place our students on a par with the best internationally. This requires quality assurance systems which are effective in monitoring students at

all levels, from the attainment of basic literacy and numeracy on the one hand to the standards of our third-level graduates on the other.

Education must increasingly nurture an ethos of creativity and innovation in students to equip them more effectively for life in a rapidly changing society, confronted by major social and economic problems. The essence of such an ethos revolves around the development of critical thinking and the problem-solving capabilities in students at all levels and as part of all programmes, including the more general academic programmes and the specifically vocationally oriented ones.

A broader curricular base will be required to cater for the wider range of ability levels. It is also necessary in order to prepare students more effectively for working life in a rapidly changing technological environment. Not only will it be necessary to address the content of what our students learn, it will be equally important to address the way they learn, including teaching methods, assessment of progress and the nature of the links between schools and the working world.

Increasingly, in the future, the post-compulsory educational system will require the flexibility, in terms of range and variety of programmes, course structures, certification procedures and organisational arrangements, to cater for continuing and second-chance education and training arising from mature students wishing to return to education, from the recurrent education and training needs of those in employment, and from the need to enhance the employment opportunities of those who find themselves unemployed.

With developing integration within the European Community, the education system will need to foster a fuller understanding of our role as potential citizens of Europe, coupled with the practical skills, specifically the language skills, required to garner the full benefits of integration. Alongside fostering a greater appreciation of Europe, the system must underpin and nurture our own distinctive national identity and an appreciation of our unique cultural heritage.

The development of gender equity must be an ongoing priority for the education system, supported in programmes at all levels and given positive

expression in the form of increased participation by women in the decision-making process.

Increasing openness and transparency in the operation of the system needs to be developed. Comprehensive information on all aspects of the operation and performance of the system should be a basic right of users of educational services, children and their parents, in permitting them to make informed choices.

The nature of these challenges are such that they will require fundamental changes of attitude and approach from all involved in the delivery of education, including teachers, managers, parents and the Department. Management structures, at all levels, need to be reformed. The present arrangements have not kept pace with the rate of change in the system generally, deriving as they do from a time when the system was much smaller and less complex. New structures are required, with a clearer definition of respective rights and responsibilities and more effective participation by concerned interests. Structures and practices must ensure the most effective use of the available resources.

1.6 THE FUNDING OF EDUCATION

Total public expenditure on education in 1992 amounts to £1.6 billion, representing almost 20% of total Government expenditures and 6% of GDP. This represents a substantial increase in allocation of available resources to education in comparison with 1965, when the corresponding figures were 13.2% and 3.3% respectively. Ireland compares favourably with most European countries in this regard.

The pattern of expenditure has altered since 1966. In that year, primary education accounted for just over half of total expenditure, but, because of the growth in enrolments at the second and third levels in the intervening period, this proportion has now fallen to just over a third. In 1966, second-level education accounted for 30% of expenditure and third-level 8%. In 1992, the

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proportions were 37% and 22% respectively. In the current year, the cost of the central administration of the education system amounts to just 5% of the total.

The size of the overall education budget, in absolute and relative terms, underlines the need for effective and efficient management at all levels, in order to ensure the most effective and equitable distribution of resources. The development strategy set out in this paper seeks to create a framework for the development of the system into the next century, centring on a number of core themes. Funding will take place within this framework, with priorities and phasing of implementation established by reference to available resources.

Chapter 2

EQUITY
and
ACCESS

Chapter 2

EQUITY AND ACCESS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

It is widely recognised that access to education can be one of the most important factors in promoting equity in society. Participation in education has always been highly valued in Ireland, and schools and teachers have worked, sometimes against considerable odds, to provide the best possible education for their students. Remarkable progress has been made, over the past 25 years, in extending access to education to all sectors of the community. In 1990/91, 85% of the 12 to 18 age-group were in full-time education. Some 73% of those entering second-level education complete the senior cycle and about 83% of those proceed to some form of post-second-level education or training.

In translating equality of access into full equality of participation, the priority must be to tackle barriers to participation which militate against those from disadvantaged backgrounds, or those suffering from particular difficulties or handicaps.

A complex set of factors — social, economic and cultural, as well as educational — influences the extent to which young people and adults can and will participate in education. Tackling the problem requires integrated action and collaboration between education, health, social welfare, labour and training agencies and, equally, co-operation between schools, parents and the wider community.

Building close links between the home and the school is essential to the development of positive attitudes to education on the part of both students and parents, as is the provision of special support to those schools that serve disadvantaged areas. The development and expansion of a home/school/community links project, together with other support measures for schools, are described in this Chapter.

Unfortunately, a small but significant number of young people leave education at the age of 15 and, indeed, in some cases before that age, many of them without any formal qualifications. Experience shows that, if they remain

unqualified, these young people are at serious risk of being unemployed throughout their adult lives. The *1990 Labour Force Survey* shows that 50% of unemployed males had only primary education and that 82% of the male and 62% of the female unemployed had not progressed beyond Intermediate level.

A range of measures, aimed at encouraging young people at risk of early leaving to remain in school and obtain at least basic educational and vocational qualifications, are also described. For those who have left school, the Youthreach programme and the work of the local groups established as part of the "area-based strategy" (set up under the PESP) represent ways in which young people and adults with few or no formal qualifications can return to education and training.

Children with special educational needs are a particular concern throughout the educational system and the development of the present provision for such children is described below. The policy of integration of these children, where practicable, into mainstream schools will require sensitive planning and implementation by all concerned, to ensure that both mainstream and special schools work together for the maximum benefit of the children concerned.

2.2 LINKS BETWEEN THE HOME AND THE SCHOOL

The development of effective links between school and home enhances children's participation in education and also helps parents and children to develop more positive attitudes towards education and the school. The promotion of home/school/community links is important for all schools and should be encouraged, as a normal part of the school's effective operation. Such links are especially important in areas with a high degree of disadvantage or where there has been little previous support for participation in education.

The aims of effective home/school link programmes are:

- To maximise the participation of young people in the learning process.
- To promote active co-operation between the home, the school and the

relevant community agencies, as a support for young people during their time at school.

- To encourage parents to support and enhance their children's education and to assist them in developing the relevant skills for this purpose.
- To improve retention rates to the end of second level and to improve transfer rates to third-level education.

As one of a number of initiatives, in 1990 the Minister for Education launched a major home/school liaison project for primary school students in certain designated urban areas that suffer a high degree of disadvantage. The project, which initially included 55 schools (with 18,000 students), was expanded to 80 schools in 1991.

A National Steering Committee, consisting of a variety of interests, managers, teachers, parents, the Garda Síochána and the Departments of Education and Health, is overseeing the project. In addition, local informal committees — representing schools, parents, voluntary bodies and local community representatives, and working with local co-ordinators and a national co-ordinator — play an essential part in the successful operation of the project. There has been wholehearted support and participation by all concerned in the project and the results, to date, are very encouraging.

The closer involvement of parents with the school has proved a particularly vital feature. Experience has also confirmed the importance of ensuring that such contacts should commence at as early a stage as possible in the child's education. It is proposed, therefore, to begin to develop pre-school programmes as part of the project.

Parents are also finding that their involvement with their children's schools is making them aware of their own potential for helping their children and for improving their own education and training.

The programme has now been expanded to include a number of second-level schools in the same disadvantaged areas, and participation by second-level schools will be further expanded in 1992. Second-level authorities now

participate in an expanded National Steering Committee and in the various local structures. It is intended that the scheme will be expanded progressively to all disadvantaged areas, as resources permit.

The project has confirmed the range of factors which adversely affect the extent to which many young people in disadvantaged areas can achieve their potential and which cannot be overcome in a school context alone. Equally, it shows that parents are willing to assist in their children's education, even in very adverse circumstances.

The home/school project has demonstrated clearly that there are many other related problems, involving, for example, social workers or the Garda Síochána. The problem of erratic attendance — a serious problem for some schools — and of disruptive behaviour have a variety of causes which must be looked at in a caring and concerted way. Creating conditions for a more supportive environment, and to alleviate adverse factors, will require co-ordinated efforts by all concerned — health and social welfare agencies, the Garda Síochána, local community groups, parents and educational interests.

As a basis for further development, the scheme is being evaluated to identify the most successful practices and to highlight why they are successful. As part of the dissemination process, a number of in-career courses have been provided. The widespread interest in the project throughout the educational system augurs well for the active involvement of teachers, schools and parents in this important initiative.

2.3 YOUNG PEOPLE NEEDING PARTICULAR CARE

Support for Schools Serving Disadvantaged Areas

A number of measures in support of schools serving disadvantaged areas have already been undertaken and will be expanded as quickly as resources permit. In addition to the home/schools links programme, there are several schemes of direct support, both by means of additional funding and also through the allocation of additional teaching posts.

Under the new funding arrangements described in Chapter 5, all schools serving disadvantaged areas would receive a separately identified budget allocation. In addition, priority will continue to be given to such schools in the allocation of remedial teachers and teachers required for special curricular needs.

Helping Students to Achieve their Potential

Various measures have been introduced to identify and to provide support for students who have particular educational needs, either because of their socio-economic status, or unfortunate emotional experiences, or because of their general or specific learning difficulties.

A specific measure which has been developed over time to assist students who are underachieving in literacy and numeracy has been the appointment of remedial teachers in schools. These teachers work with individual students or with small groups of students. The role of the remedial teacher has developed with time, and remedial teachers are functioning also as resource teachers to the principal, other members of staff, and parents.

Currently, there are almost 950 full-time remedial teachers in primary schools, many of them providing a service to a number of small schools. At second level, there are over 260 posts in secondary, vocational, comprehensive and community schools for remedial teaching purposes.

The Department will continue to target additional teaching resources, as they become available, towards augmenting the number of remedial teachers in schools. The Department will also review present arrangements for remedial teaching, to make sure that current methods provide the most effective use of this valuable resource and also that the present deployment of remedial teachers achieves the most satisfactory coverage within resources.

At second level, additional teaching posts have also been allocated to certain schools to enable them to provide for guidance and counselling, for education for special needs, and for support for students in disadvantaged areas. The Department's Psychological Service has had the responsibility for monitoring

this provision, for providing basic and continuing in-career education for these specialist teachers and for advising schools on the most effective use of the resources available. Accommodation and materials for remedial education are provided for new school buildings.

The early identification of students with particular educational problems will be greatly facilitated by the introduction of the standardised assessment tests described in Chapter 7. The data thus obtained will enable each school to plan its provision according to the needs of its current students and, in aggregate form, also will enable the Department of Education to obtain a general view of the needs across the country, and to make provision accordingly.

The main responsibility for teaching each student will rest, as always, with the classroom teacher, who will be able to call for further help from the remedial or resource teacher or guidance counsellor. Those teachers will consult psychologists in the Department or in other agencies as further advice is needed. The core of the psychologists' work will be to guide teachers to the provision of the most effective support for students with particular educational needs, by encouraging and guiding them to work in close co-operation with one another, to share their skills with their colleagues, and to liaise with parents and the community.

Primary Level

The achievement of an adequate level of literacy and numeracy is critical to the future success of students. The evidence indicates that most of those who leave school early do not have an adequate basis in literacy and numeracy and, as a result, are not able to benefit fully from second-level education. A major concern under programmes for early school-leavers, such as Youthreach, is to provide literacy and numeracy education, in order to alleviate difficulties that might have been more effectively remedied at an earlier stage of education.

It is essential, therefore, that children at risk should be identified early in their schooling and special assistance provided at that stage. The difficulties experienced by children living in disadvantaged areas extend beyond the schools, and problems of motivation are often caused by adverse socio-economic circumstances in the home and community. It is critical that these

out-of-school factors are tackled in parallel with actions within the school, if efforts are to be successful.

Junior Second Level

In order to complement the efforts of the primary schools, follow-up measures will be necessary to identify the particular needs of students at risk as they commence their second-level education:

- A range of courses, at alternative levels, within the new junior cycle programme, which are attractive to a wide range of abilities.
- Special programmes for the minority of students whose particular needs are not met within the junior cycle courses.
- Expansion of the home/school links programme to second-level schools, to increase students' motivation and to reduce absenteeism.
- Improved availability of guidance counsellors, to strengthen schools' ability to identify needs and provide counselling and guidance.
- Allocation of more staff, as they become available, to remedial and other special needs.
- Dissemination of information on successful support programmes for poorly motivated students, and on the work of innovating schools, to encourage more schools to develop their own responses to the needs of their students.

Many of the students who need special help start their second-level education later than the desired 12 years of age. As a consequence, they will not have completed three years of second-level schooling if they choose to leave on reaching the current age of compulsory schooling (15 years). It is for this group, in particular, that it is proposed that the school-leaving age should be raised to 16. In this way, such students would have the opportunity to avail of at least three years of second-level schooling before reaching school-leaving age. If these measures prove successful in improving the achievement levels and motivation of such students, there is every hope that they may wish to continue in education beyond the compulsory stage.

Senior Second Level

On the basis of their own assessment of student progress, together with the results of external tests at the end of the junior cycle, schools will be able to help young people and their parents to choose the appropriate programmes for the senior cycle. The wider range of options within the new structure for the senior cycle, as discussed in Chapter 4 below, are directed towards the needs of all ability levels. Co-operation between smaller schools and smaller centres will be necessary if they are to be in a position to avail of the various options in order to cater effectively for all their students.

Third-Level and other Post-Second-Level Education

A particular concern of this paper is to improve participation to completion of second-level education and beyond. Many of the actions throughout this paper, such as more structured student assessment, enhanced remedial and guidance services, home/school links programmes and in-career training for staff, will be particularly concerned with helping the disadvantaged to achieve their full education and training potential.

Such measures, in addition to improving the likelihood that young people from disadvantaged areas will complete second-level education, should help and encourage them to participate in third-level and other post-second-level education and training.

With the objective of improving transfer rates to third-level education from the groups concerned, the following positive intervention and supportive actions are proposed:

- Direct links between third-level institutions and selected schools, with designation of an appropriate staff member in each third-level institution to oversee this.
- Support and access programmes for students, particularly during the senior cycle.
- Priority access for such students to third-level education will be explored with the authorities concerned.

To complement such measures, students from disadvantaged areas will be facilitated in every way to participate in post-second-level vocational education and training programmes. Special access courses will be provided, where required, for students who may need particular assistance before they begin any of these programmes. New arrangements for the national certification of these programmes will make them more attractive to students and, at the same time, will provide the means by which successful students can proceed from such programmes to more advanced courses in third-level colleges.

Student Support at Third Level

In January 1992, the Minister for Education announced a range of major improvements in the higher education grants scheme and related student support schemes. These changes are being introduced to remedy a number of inequities in the existing schemes and will lead to a fairer distribution of the available funds. Mature students, families with more than one child attending third-level education, and lone parents will benefit under reforms in 1992.

A full review of the entire grants scheme is now being undertaken with the overall aim of ensuring equity within and between the different schemes, and including the removal of any outstanding anomalies or barriers which may militate against the participation of students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The review will, in particular, re-examine:

- The financial criteria for eligibility for student grants.
- The more equitable application of means-assessment criteria.

In addition, in consultation with the colleges, consideration will also be given to making special arrangements for students whose exceptional, necessitous circumstances would not come within the ambit of the general support schemes. Any such arrangements would be intended to support the efforts of the individual colleges to meet the needs of such students and would be administered by the colleges themselves.

2.4 MEETING THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF TRAVELLERS

Primary Level

What has been done

When the Commission on Itinerancy published its report in 1963, only 114 traveller children were regularly attending primary schools. By 1988, when the Department conducted a survey in primary schools, just short of 4,000 children of traveller families were enrolled. Approximately 30% of these children were in special classes, a further 35% were partly integrated in ordinary classes but were given additional assistance on a withdrawal basis, and the remaining 35% were integrated in ordinary classes.

Achieving this level of enrolment has been greatly helped by the visiting teacher service, established in 1980. Valuable work is done by the visiting teachers in motivating parents to take an active interest in their children's education. They also liaise with school management, health boards and voluntary agencies. The success of these teachers is reflected in improved school attendance in their particular areas. It is also evident in the goodwill they enjoy in the traveller community and among teachers of traveller children.

Attendance is helped too by the provision of transport on a flexible basis for traveller students in a large number of schools. A special capitation grant is also paid for special classes for traveller children.

The task of building teachers' competence in the field of traveller education was taken forward at a special residential course in Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, in the summer of 1991. This course, organised on a national basis for some 50 teachers of traveller children, provided useful experience in devising future in-career education for teachers.

A start has also been made in providing special reading materials suitable for traveller children. Reading material related to traveller life has been distributed to schools attended by traveller children.

The primary school provision has been complemented in recent years by the establishment of pre-schools. These have grown in number from 18 in 1984 to

49 in 1992. The Department provides substantial grants to meet tuition and transport costs and for the purchase of equipment.

What has to be done

While these measures represent steady progress over the years, more remains to be done. Further action is premised on the principle of full participation in school life by all traveller children. This implies integration — on a phased basis where necessary — into ordinary classes while respecting the unique culture of travellers.

The issues requiring action at primary level are set out below.

- Numbers of traveller children are still not enrolled in primary school. Through the National Education Officer for Travellers recently appointed, the visiting teachers and the Department's inspectors, the Department will seek to ensure that all traveller children enrol in primary schools.
- This work would be assisted by more accurate information on numbers of traveller children not attending school. A census conducted by the Health Research Board in 1986 showed approximately 4,400 traveller children in the primary school age range. The Department is taking up the matter of a regular census with the relevant Departments. The Department itself will undertake a further survey of the numbers of traveller children in primary schools to update the survey carried out in 1988.
- The Department will investigate the reasons for poor school attendance of some traveller children in order to see how this can be improved.
- As additional teaching posts become available in the future, the Department will allocate further posts of visiting teachers.
- The Department will pursue vigorously specific cases where schools may be reluctant to provide for travellers in order to have these cases resolved satisfactorily locally. More generally, all primary schools were circularised in 1988, urging school authorities to make a special effort to enrol traveller children who were not attending school. The Department will again strongly draw the attention of schools to their responsibilities in this matter.

- Guidelines that are currently in preparation, dealing with the education of traveller children, will shortly be issued to schools. These guidelines will cover matters such as the enrolment of students, placement and integration, curriculum, assessment and records. The Department will review progress towards the phased integration of traveller children in ordinary classes.
- The Department will take up with the Colleges of Education the matter of providing a module on travellers and traveller culture in the pre-service education of teachers. It will also follow up on the in-service needs of teachers, helped by the experience gained in the 1991 Mary Immaculate College course.
- The Department will draw up guidelines for publishers so that material on travellers' culture can be included in school books.

Second Level

Information currently available indicates that only a minority of traveller children over 12 years of age continue in full-time education. About half of these are in Junior Training Centres, while the remainder are enrolled either in primary or second-level schools.

The Junior Training Centres, of which there are 11, were established with the aim of providing a form of second-level education for travellers, which would be sufficiently attractive and relevant to make them want to continue attending school between the ages of 12 and 15. The curriculum attempts to maintain a balance between academic and craftwork education, together with an emphasis on social and sporting activities. In addition, a network of senior training centres for young travellers is provided jointly by FÁS and the Vocational Education Committees, to cater for the needs of travellers in the 15 to 25 age-group.

In contrast to the picture in the primary school, where efforts over the years have resulted in a relatively satisfactory level of school enrolment, the low level of enrolment of traveller children in second-level education is a matter of serious concern. Accordingly, a working group was established within the Department to make specific recommendations on how the second-level education of traveller children should be promoted. Based on its findings, the

Department will seek to build upon and extend the current provision at primary level, through the planned involvement of local second-level schools. The following will be the basis for actions to be taken:

- In future, the aim will be to have as many traveller children as possible in the 12/13 to 15-year age-group catered for in local second-level schools.
- To facilitate the integration of traveller children, a number of options will be explored within the schools, including special "bridging" classes where appropriate, but with the overall aim of integrating the traveller children in mainstream classes. Integration will be facilitated by increased flexibility and adaptation of the curriculum, in structure and content, where desirable.
- In the context of the full integration of traveller children in second-level schools, the role of the Junior Training Centres will be examined. These centres continue to provide an essential service at second level and, in a transition period towards full integration, they will be given recognition on a more structured basis. Their provision will be linked, where possible, to that of an adjacent second-level school.
- The visiting teacher service will be extended to support co-ordination of the links between schools and the travelling community and other agencies.
- These developments will also provide the platform for possible advancement to all aspects of the senior cycle in the future, including vocational preparation courses.
- The Department will consult those concerned with the adult education and vocational training of travellers to identify priority needs and future action.

Through these measures, total provision will follow an integrated approach. This is aimed at promoting future access for traveller children to all levels of education and training. In addition, pre-service and in-service education of teachers will support the development of teachers and schools to back up these initiatives.

2.5 SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

A review of the working of the School Attendance Act of 1926, including an examination of the roles and responsibilities of the various agencies involved, will form part of the preparatory work for new legislation in education. At present, school attendance staff are employed in Cork, Dublin, Dun Laoghaire and Waterford; in the rest of the country, the enforcement authority for the Act is the Garda Síochána.

Some schools, particularly in disadvantaged areas, experience considerable difficulty in ensuring reasonable levels of attendance. Schools should monitor and take action on erratic school attendance, since this can often provide an early warning of a range of educational and other problems, related to both the school and the student's situation in the wider community. The home/school links programme provides a particularly valuable mechanism by which to resolve the problem, where factors outside the school are responsible.

A poor attendance record at primary level may lead to students dropping out prematurely at the end of the primary school. It is estimated that about 1,000 children leave education in this way every year. Primary schools will be required to work with their local second-level schools to find out, in the final year at primary level, the school to which each child intends to transfer, and to confirm their attendance at the school identified, in the first term after their transfer.

The Social Guarantee Register is the means by which students who leave second-level schooling early are identified and helped. Every second-level school is required to send a twice-yearly return to its local FÁS office, of students who have left school without completing second-level education. This information is used for the compilation of a Social Guarantee Register, FÁS staff contact those on the list with an offer of an education or training programme or employment.

Although the system works well in very many cases, there is a need to ensure closer co-operation in this work between schools and FÁS. The Department of Education will discuss this issue with FÁS and the managerial

bodies, with a view to improving the present system of communication and co-operation.

2.6 ENCOURAGING YOUNG PEOPLE TO RETURN TO EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Apart from purely educational considerations, students leave school early for a multiplicity of reasons relating to the backgrounds from which they come, the value they and their families put on education, and the general support within their community for participation in education. A number of recent studies have shown clearly that young people who leave school early, without formal educational qualifications, are much more at risk of unemployment than those who stay on to complete their second-level education.

A major priority for education must be to offer every incentive to these young people, first, to stay on in education, or, if they leave, to return later to obtain formal qualifications or to complete their education or vocational training. Measures to support the return to education and training of early leavers are described here; a range of initiatives for adults wishing to return to education is described in Chapter 9.

Youthreach

The Youthreach programme offers an opportunity for young people who leave school at 15 years of age, without formal qualifications, to obtain their first, basic, vocational education and training qualification and experience. Youthreach is a 2-year integrated education, training and work experience programme, in two parts: a foundation year to help the young people overcome learning difficulties, develop self-confidence and acquire a range of competences essential for further learning; and a second, progression year, which provides for a more specific development of a range of education, training and work-experience options. The programme is provided jointly by FÁS and the Vocational Education Committees, in a variety of out-of-school settings and in Community Training Workshops.

Experience of the first Youthreach programmes has shown that the level of disadvantage among participants is greater than was originally anticipated and, as a result, additional counselling and special literacy and numeracy tuition will be provided for participants. In addition, local systems of referral will be improved through the establishment of contacts with community groups, social workers and Gardaí and among providers of programmes. Information on good practice and the problems and successes of the programme will be disseminated to providers throughout the country.

A Community Response to the Needs of Early Leavers

The local, community-based groups, now established as part of the "area-based strategy" launched in the Programme for Economic and Social Progress, are an important means of encouraging young people and adults to return to education and training. The area-based strategy programme was piloted in both rural and urban areas in 1991, and it is hoped to promote a community-based response to long-term unemployment and, especially, to the problems of young people at risk of long-term unemployment.

Each group, representative of all concerned local interests, will identify the needs of those who are, or are in danger of becoming, long-term unemployed. On the basis of assessed needs, initiatives will be developed, including education and training programmes and employment experience.

The local groups will help to identify and make contact with young people in need of further education, make them aware of the programmes available and ensure that these programmes are best suited to their needs. Staff with special educational expertise (mainly teachers) are being seconded from the Vocational Education Committees to assist the groups in this task.

2.7 CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

It is a matter of particular concern that appropriate arrangements are made at all levels of education for children with special educational needs. These are children whose disabilities or circumstances prevent or hinder them from benefiting fully from the education which is provided in ordinary schools at

present for children of the same age. The great majority of these children can benefit from enrolment in ordinary schools, provided there is some additional support. These include students in need of remedial help, as well as those with lesser special education needs.

There is a continuum of provision required for children with special educational needs. This ranges from students having learning difficulties in the ordinary class who can be assisted by additional support within the school, to those with disabilities of a more severe nature which require specialised attention. The first group comprises the great majority of students needing remedial help. The needs of these children are considered elsewhere in this paper. The main thrust of this section is concerned with a minority of those children with special needs who, because of mental handicap, impaired vision, impaired hearing, physical disability, emotional difficulties or other disability, require more intensive help.

In many countries, including Ireland, providing for children with disabilities has, historically, followed the path of building networks of special schools. In recent times, a strong movement has developed throughout Europe favouring the integration into mainstream schools of as many as possible of these children. Special schools were set up in earlier stages of development because only in this way could children with disabilities get the specialised attention they needed. Increasingly, however, these children and their parents are reluctant to accept the separation from their peers which a special school system entails.

EC Council of Ministers' Resolution

During the recent Irish presidency of the European Community, a resolution on the integration of children with special educational needs, proposed by the Minister for Education, was adopted unanimously by the EC Council of Ministers of Education meeting in May 1990. The basic principle set out in that resolution is that the integration into mainstream schools of children with disabilities should be accelerated in all appropriate cases, on the basis of individual assessment, and provided that good quality education can be maintained.

Principles of Policy

In line with this resolution, policy in this area will seek to provide for children with special educational needs in mainstream schools as far as possible and according as it is appropriate for the particular child. This means that it is accepted that there will continue to be children with disabilities for whom enrolment in an ordinary school would not be appropriate.

The major issues in special needs education today are, therefore, how the balance is to be struck between special school and mainstream provision, and how integrated mainstream provision should be developed.

Currently, the proportion of the total population of compulsory school attendance age (6-15 years) enrolled in special schools is approximately 1.2%. The great majority are children with degrees of mental handicap but there are also significant numbers of children with visual or hearing impairment, physical handicap or emotional disturbance provided for in special schools.

This level of special school provision is low in comparison with other countries of the European Community. Nevertheless, a policy of integration inevitably will have impact on special schools according as students in these schools with less severe degrees of disability are able to be provided for in ordinary schools.

The issues to be addressed concern the following:

- Identification of students in special schools who are more appropriately provided for in ordinary schools, and vice-versa.
- Arrangements for ensuring that students can be moved from special provision to mainstream, or vice-versa, as the changing needs of the child require.
- A system ensuring effective identification and assessment of students with special needs.
- Adequate support services for both special schools and ordinary schools providing for these students.

Elements of Policy

A first step in the direction of comprehensive provision is to have accurate knowledge of the extent of disability. A survey in schools will be undertaken to provide this information.

On a general basis, structures for educational assessment of students need to function at three levels. Assessment should begin in the school, involving remedial and guidance teachers. For more difficult cases, school-based assessment should be supplemented by the School Psychological Service, as it develops. More complex cases still would be attended to by the multi-disciplinary teams at present in existence under the Director of Community Care. Arrangements will be made to ensure that a structure of this kind is developed.

A review of current provision will be undertaken, having regard to the results of the survey, to identify what is needed in accordance with the policy principles outlined above. This review will aim at formulating a national planning framework, on a catchment area basis, and will show where special support is needed for the integration of students in ordinary schools and where reorganisation of special school provision is necessary.

The review will likely entail also a degree of restructuring of existing special school provision to cater, where appropriate, for more than a single disability in a particular school and to enable the special school to act as a resource for the ordinary schools in its area. Special class provision will also be reviewed to determine the extent to which separate special classes should continue in being or should be integrated wholly or partially with mainstream classes.

This framework will need to take into account not merely the adjustments needed in the primary school area, but also new arrangements at second level where provision is on a very limited scale at present.

The teaching provision to be made in support of a programme of integration, in general, will take the form of the appointment of resource teachers to schools where there are a number of children with disabilities. Where the number of

such children in a particular school is insufficient to justify the allocation of a full-time teacher, consideration will be given either to the sharing of a resource teacher among several schools or to the designation of a school centrally in a locality to provide for children with a particular disability. Some resource teachers may be assigned by redeployment in the event of reorganisation of special school and special class arrangements. Since students requiring more specialised attention than the ordinary school can be expected to provide will remain in special schools, it will be necessary to review the pupil/teacher ratio in those schools.

The Visiting Teacher Service will also have an important role to play. This service is being reorganised at present in order that it be made available, on a phased basis, to children in the different categories of disability. In addition, so that it may be effectively supportive of the integration programme, the number of teachers in the service will be augmented.

In relation to support services, discussions will be held with the Department of Health with a view to ensuring that all children requiring the services of speech therapists can have access to them. The position in relation to the provision of child care assistants will be considered following receipt of the report of the Special Education Review Committee, referred to below. In the meantime, a number of vacancies for child care assistants are being filled.

Other support needed to ensure a successful programme of integration will include, as appropriate, supplementary tuition, special facilities or special equipment. There will be sufficient flexibility to allow an appropriate response to individual cases of special educational need.

Third-Level Education

To enable young people with disabilities to follow third-level courses satisfactorily, special additional arrangements must be made for them.

These arrangements may include the following:

- Consultation with the individual student before enrolment to find out what arrangements may be necessary in the particular case.

- Individual assessment, as necessary, of entrance and course requirements.
- Provision of equipment such as audio equipment for those with impaired hearing, or braille equipment for those with impaired vision.
- Provision of additional facilities, such as transcription of taped lectures.
- Arrangements for counselling with academic staff during a course.
- Special examination arrangements such as time extensions, oral examinations, and technical aids.
- Physical access arrangements.
- Special additional arrangements for students with intellectual impairments so that they can have access to suitable programmes of further education and training at third level on the same basis as the rest of the population.

A special access programme launched in 1989 by University College, Dublin, in co-operation with the Rehabilitation Institute, illustrates the kind of arrangements which can be developed. This programme comprises three special initiatives:

- An orientation programme where the special needs of a student enrolling in the College are clarified in advance with the student and a follow-up programme of support put in place.
- A 1-year pre-university course, designed to enable potential students with disabilities to meet the requirements for university entrance.
- A special examination centre provided at the Rehabilitation Institute's National Training Centre at Roslyn Park, Dublin.

Other third-level institutions are also addressing the needs of students with disabilities, and the Higher Education Authority is pursuing a supportive and monitoring role. The Department will actively encourage the development of special arrangements for such students in all colleges. These measures will result in a much improved situation for young people wanting to follow third-level courses.

Other Areas of Special Educational Provision

Access Facilities

Other areas of special educational provision include that of access facilities for people with disabilities. In accordance with existing Departmental policy, access facilities are provided in all new buildings and in all buildings being refurbished. Where existing buildings are concerned, every effort is made to ensure that all requests for improved access are met.

Vocational Training

A further area of concern relates to the vocational training of young people with serious disabilities, specifically those with a moderate degree of intellectual disability. The Department already grant-aids a number of training units attached to sheltered workshops. In accordance with the recommendations in the report of the Review Group on Mental Handicap Services (1990), this Department, in conjunction with the Departments of Health and of Labour, will seek to have a comprehensive network of such training units established.

Research and Development

Arrangements will be made so that the expertise of universities and other third-level institutions would be available to participate in the development of suitable programmes for people with disabilities. One approach might be to establish a research facility in one of the universities to co-ordinate the contribution that the various disciplines might make to the education and training of those with intellectual, physical, sensory or emotional disabilities.

Special Education Review Committee

The foregoing policy elements are reflected in the terms of reference of the Special Education Review Committee. This committee, set up by the Minister in September 1991, comprises of the representatives of the various interests involved in providing for children with special educational needs. The committee was asked to report on:

- The identification and assessment of young people with special educational needs.
- The educational provision best suited to the needs of these children and the arrangements that should be put in place to provide for them.
- The support services required.
- The linkages which should exist between the Department and other government Departments' provisions.

The committee will provide recommendations for the detailed implementation of policy as set out above.

Special Schools for Young Offenders

There are at present five special schools in Ireland for young persons remanded or committed for offences by the Courts. These schools have a significant role to play in the rehabilitation of young offenders. There is close liaison between the three Departments — Education, Justice and Health — most directly involved in this area. Special attention will continue to be devoted to provision for young offenders, in order to ensure that adequate facilities are available, that these facilities function as efficiently as possible, and that the effectiveness of provision is reviewed and updated as required, in line with modern approaches to rehabilitation.

2.8 THE IMPORTANCE OF GENDER EQUITY

It is the fundamental aim of the Irish educational system that each person be enabled to achieve her or his potential as a human being. Principles of justice, freedom and democracy demand that no individuals should be handicapped by their sex from self-realisation and full participation in the country's social, cultural and economic life.

The last two decades have seen the development of a legislative framework, within the European Community, for the achievement of equality between women and men in pay, social security and treatment in the workplace. While progress has been made, much remains to be done. There is a broad consensus that education and training must play a crucial part in the development

strategy of the European Community, since economic and demographic pressures mean that there will be a need to attract greater proportions of the population into higher levels of skills and training. Education, therefore, must contribute to the breaking down of stereotypes, the opening up of opportunities, and the growth and self-esteem of all, irrespective of sex.

Promoting Gender Equity in Education

One of the great achievements of the Irish educational system is the parity of participation rates at all levels. However, educational research has pointed to important differences in the kind of education received by girls and boys. In particular, it has been found at second level that, while more girls are likely to complete second-level education than boys, there are marked gender differences in subject provision, allocation and choice. This was highlighted in the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) report, *Schooling and Sex Roles*, in 1983 and in a number of subsequent studies. Girls are offered, or choose, more languages and such subjects as Home Economics, Art and Music, while boys take fewer languages and more science and technological subjects. Girls and boys are limited in the achievement of their full potential by stereotypical patterns of subject provision and choice. In addition, girls are likely to be disadvantaged in the labour market if their current pattern of participation in Science and Technological subjects continues.

In recent years, the response of schools to the initiatives of the Department of Education in the field of gender equity has been very positive. Intervention projects, such as those in Physics and Chemistry, which were introduced in girls' schools, have been very successful.

It is proposed to expand the intervention projects in Physics and Chemistry, as resources permit, to include other appropriate subjects. There is a particular need to encourage girls to take up higher-level Mathematics and technological subjects.

Gender Equity in the Curriculum

Avoidance of gender bias in curriculum content is also of considerable importance. This is particularly relevant in the case of subjects that have been

“traditional” subjects for either sex. The content and presentation of subjects such as Physics, Chemistry, the Technological subjects and Home Economics should be such as to give them equal appeal to boys and girls.

The achievements and contribution of women to the country's economic, social and cultural life, past and present, must receive much more emphasis in all subjects. The primary school curriculum and the new junior cycle in second-level schools are compatible with this aim. It is also desirable that principles of gender equality should underlie the personal counselling and careers advice given to students. Both girls and boys should be encouraged to consider a wide range of career and third-level college options and not be bound by notions that some careers are the exclusive province of one sex. This is equally important in vocational training. Particular concerns include the very low proportion of girls who receive places on apprenticeship training schemes and, at third level, the low proportion of girls in certain disciplines — for example, engineering and technology. Correspondingly, the low level of male entrants to primary teaching may lead them to think of this as a female occupation.

School authorities and teachers, whether in single-sex or co-educational schools, should be aware of the needs of all students and should ensure that both the school ethos and policy, as well as the formal structures of the curriculum and timetable, meet the needs and help fulfil the potential, aspirations and interests of all girls and boys.

In this regard, schools are encouraged to examine the structures of what is often called the “hidden curriculum” of the school. Gender stereotypes may be either reinforced or challenged by the way in which teachers interact with students within the classroom; by the way in which different tasks and equipment are allocated to girls and boys in the classroom and around the school and playground; by the content and illustrations of textbooks and other teaching materials; by the organisation of the timetable and the choices it permits; by the nature of extra-curricular provision for girls and boys; by the relationship of the staff to each other, and by the extent of visibility of women in positions of decision-making within the school.

Policy, at primary and second levels, is that of bringing about schools which are truly co-educational. Such schools create the most favourable climate for achieving the necessary balance in subject provision and subject choice.

Changes are required in higher education also. For example, there are gender imbalances in many third-level courses. A further problem, related to differential patterns of career development, is that at postgraduate level, in many areas, women are poorly represented in comparison to men.

Women in Management in Education

Women have been, and still are, very poorly represented in positions of authority and power in Irish society. Within Ireland's educational system, women are poorly represented in management positions in schools, higher educational institutions and educational administration. While the concentration of women in the lower echelons is characteristic of almost all sectors of education, it is especially obvious at primary and second level, where women form the majority of the teaching profession. In higher education, women are under-represented at all staffing levels, but particularly so at senior academic and administrative levels.

Girls and young women need appropriate role-models if they are to develop themselves to their full potential. Consequently, there is a great opportunity for the educational system to provide leadership within society. At this time of rapid educational change, educational authorities and appointment boards should create a climate where suitably qualified women will feel encouraged to apply, with prospects of success equal to that of their male colleagues, for management and other senior positions in schools, higher education and educational administration.

A Campaign for Gender Equity in Education

- All educational institutions, at primary, second and third levels will develop and publish an active policy to promote gender equity. Their progress in implementing this policy will be reported on in their annual reports.

- All Boards of Management in schools will aim at a gender balance in their membership and to have not less than a minimum representation of each sex. These requirements will also apply to staff selection committees.
- A review of all teaching materials in use in schools will be undertaken on a regular basis and action will be taken to ensure that unsuitable material will be withdrawn or adapted. Priority will be given, in this regard, to the review of materials for younger students.
- Second-level schools will ensure that their full range of course options is available to students, irrespective of sex. Small and single-sex schools will be encouraged to share resources with other schools in order to make this possible.
- Co-education will be encouraged as the norm at both primary and second level. Steps will be taken to ensure that all primary schools become co-educational as soon as is practicable.
- The Department of Education will bring about a greater participation by women in management at all levels of the Department, including a greater participation by women in the Inspectorate.

Chapter 3

IRISH
EDUCATION
in the
EUROPEAN
COMMUNITY

Chapter 3

IRISH EDUCATION IN THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The prospect of increasing integration within the European Community and the developments towards economic, monetary and political union, which will take place in the 1990s, will have enormous significance for Irish society and for the education system, which must prepare young people for the living and working environment that closer European integration will create. Irish education policy must seek to ensure that our young people acquire a keen awareness of their own heritage and identity, as well as a genuine sense of European citizenship.

On the threshold of the twenty-first century, Ireland, as a sovereign state in a world community of interdependent nations, must also ensure that its system of education can prepare its young people for the challenges facing people everywhere in this era — in particular, the protection of the global environment, education for human rights and peace, and the needs of the Third World and its development. Ireland's education policies must make it clear that the modern world is a single entity, and that many of its problems call for a global approach.

In this Chapter, the following topics are examined: North-South co-operation in education; European co-operation in education; participation in the EC Structural Funds; and Ireland's approach to the Structural Funds for the post-1993 period.

3.2 NORTH-SOUTH CO-OPERATION IN EDUCATION

Irish schools in the North and South, as well as schools in England, have worked together in the European Studies Project for several years. The aim of the project is to encourage students in the participating schools to explore the shared elements and the rich diversity in their heritage in both a local and a wider European context. The project is jointly funded by the Irish and British

governments and support is also provided by the Commission of the European Communities.

A joint North-South project on Environmental Education, involving 24 schools from North and South, was established in 1991, as was a pilot programme of teacher exchanges between North and South.

Many young people at school participate in cross-border exchanges under the schemes administered by the Youth Exchange Bureau, and funding is provided to Co-operation North towards the cost of their youth links and school links exchange schemes. These exchange programmes make a valuable contribution to mutual respect and understanding between North and South. It is intended to continue to support activities of this kind and, with the Department of Education in Northern Ireland, to identify other matters in which cross-border co-operation and contact between students and teachers can be improved.

3.3 AN EDUCATION POLICY FOR EUROPE

In the Programme for Economic and Social Progress, the Government and the social partners have agreed that Ireland will continue to pursue a clear national strategy directed to promoting full and balanced European integration in the economic, monetary and social spheres, within the framework of the evolving political union. Essential to this process must be a Community commitment, backed by practical and strengthened action, to ensure major progress towards the achievement of economic and social cohesion.

The Programme states that, over the coming decade, Irish policy will be directed to promoting the achievement of economic and social cohesion by the Community, which would complement and reinforce the efforts of the less developed member states and regions themselves, including:

- A further strengthening of structural policy, implemented primarily through the Structural Funds, suitably extended and reformed.
- The targeted and, as necessary, regionally differentiated application of other Community policies and actions in relation to the development of

agriculture and trade, the regulation of competition and state aids, the development of transport and trans-European networks, and support for education, training, innovation, and research and development.

The growing integration in the European Community offers increasing opportunities to Ireland, but also poses a major challenge. To reap in full the potential benefits, it will be necessary to ensure that we identify and pursue to the maximum the areas where Community policies and actions can contribute to our objectives, including areas where these policies or actions need to be extended. This is the context in which educational policy in relation to Europe must be framed. Education policy for Europe has two major aspects: European co-operation in the field of education, and the development of education and training with the support of the Structural Funds.

3.4 EUROPEAN CO-OPERATION IN EDUCATION

Co-operation in education has been growing in the European Community since the resolution of the Council of Education Ministers of 9 February 1976 on an action programme in the field of education was agreed.

In the years following the 1976 resolution, the Community has developed a range of programmes and projects in education and training, the main ones being ARION, COMETT, ERASMUS, EUROFORM, EURYDICE, HELIOS, LINGUA and PETRA, and programmes to do with youth exchanges and young workers. In general, Ireland has participated fully in all existing programmes, with very positive results.

Irish policy in the future will build on the success of the existing EC co-operation programmes and will seek an expansion and extension of these programmes. In particular, programmes aimed at promoting the learning of modern continental languages are a special priority for this country.

In order to ensure that schools and colleges in Ireland can participate as fully as possible in these programmes, as well as in the work of the other international bodies concerned with education, such as the Council of Europe,

the OECD and UNESCO, the possibility of centralising the distribution of information about these activities will be examined.

In the existing EC Treaties, there are no specific provisions relating to education as such, although Article 128 of the Treaty of Rome confers powers on the Community in relation to laying down general principles for implementing a common vocational training policy. However, the distinction or dividing line between "education" and "vocational training" has always been difficult to determine, especially in higher education, though the practice of the institutions concerned has allowed the Community to support a wide range of actions in the field of education.

In line with an Irish proposal in the Intergovernmental Conference on Political Union, specific provisions on education have been included in the revised treaty, as agreed at Maastricht. The new provisions, which explicitly respect the responsibility of member states for the content of teaching and the organisation of their education systems, will provide a more explicit basis for Community support for actions by member states in the broad area of what could be regarded as "school-based education", including activities such as exchanges of young people in second-level education, promoting the European dimension in education and developing European-wide efforts to solve problems such as school failure and illiteracy.

In the past year, an exchange scheme has been initiated for principals of schools in Ireland and the UK. This scheme, which has considerable potential for improving our schools' understanding and appreciation of education systems in other countries, will be extended, on a bilateral basis, to other European countries, commencing in 1993.

It is also of considerable importance to ensure that teachers can prepare young people for the new Europe of which we are a part and, consequently, those involved in the initial and in-career training of teachers will be supported and encouraged to promote an understanding of European education and culture as part of their teacher training programmes.

3.5 THE ROLE OF THE STRUCTURAL FUNDS

Article 130a of the Treaty, as amended by the Single European Act, defines the broad objective of economic and social cohesion for the Community: namely the harmonious development of the Community and a reduction in disparities between the various regions. The Structural Funds are a major instrument in the Community's progress towards full economic and monetary union.

The essential objective of the Structural Funds is to reduce disparities between less developed regions and the rest of the Community. The application of the Funds must serve that objective and their success will be measured by the extent to which they facilitate progress towards it. Moreover, lessons drawn from the current phase of the operation of the Funds will be taken into account when decisions are taken regarding the effectiveness of this approach to resource reallocation after 1993.

3.6 THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S PARTICIPATION IN THE STRUCTURAL FUNDS

European Social Fund aid for Department of Education activities comes to over £100m for each of the five years of the current programme ending in 1993. This covers a range of training measures in institutions under the Department's aegis for young people who have completed compulsory schooling. These include the Vocational Preparation and Training programmes, which are a range of 1-year courses with a specific vocational orientation, run at the second level of the education system, and other certificate and diploma courses provided in third-level institutions. In addition, some postgraduate courses in universities are aided by the Fund, as are some important initiatives for the long-term unemployed and for young people who leave school without qualifications.

In order that young people in this country should have the widest possible range of work opportunities open to them, bodies certifying these courses and, especially, the recently established National Council for Vocational Awards and its proposed successor, the Council for Educational and Vocational Awards (CEVA) (see Chapter 4), will have a particular role to play in ensuring that its

qualifications are fully compatible with and of equal, or higher, standard to those in other European countries. In addition, it would be important to ensure that these courses provide participants with full and accurate information about vocational training and employment systems elsewhere in Europe, as well as improving their knowledge of the wider aspects of European culture and traditions.

Structural Fund Aid after 1993

The present 5-year programme of Structural Funds comes to an end in December 1993. In the section entitled "European Community Dimension", the Programme for Economic and Social Progress states:

Over the coming decade, Irish policy will be directed to promoting the development and application of a comprehensive and effective policy approach by the Community to the achievement of economic and social cohesion, complementing and reinforcing the primary efforts of the less-developed member states and regions themselves and embracing ... a further strengthening of structural policy, implemented primarily through the Structural Funds, suitably extended and reformed ... (p. 80)

The need for the Structural Funds to help the less developed regions of the Community of course will continue after 1993 and Ireland will press for a substantial increase in these funds, in real terms. The revised treaty, as approved at Maastricht, contains strengthened provisions relating to economic and social cohesion as a goal of the Community. A protocol attached to the treaty emphasises that the Structural Funds will continue to play a significant part in achieving this cohesion. This protocol also indicates that greater flexibility will be introduced, to allow the Structural Funds to cover specific needs not covered under the present regulations for the Funds.

In its proposals on the Financial Perspectives for the Community for the period 1993 to 1997, the Commission has proposed major increases in the Structural Funds, as well as for a new Cohesion Fund. It also envisages that the Structural Funds, as foreseen by the Maastricht protocol, will be extended in range and that this flexibility will include, in particular, wider applications in the field of education.

An Approach to the Development of the Structural Funds

Ireland is fortunate in having a still-expanding young population that actively seeks high quality education and training, which will enable us to take advantage of the economic opportunities provided in a more closely integrated Community. In addition, over the past 25 years, Ireland has developed a training infrastructure capable of making a quick and effective response to new training needs. These will be the essential elements in our approach to the development of the Structural Funds after 1993.

One of the main objectives of human resources development is to provide the skills needed by the economy now and in the foreseeable future. Programmes of initial and recurrent training are designed with this objective in mind. In the past, the immediate needs of the Irish economy were the main focus of Irish training policy. That will continue but, in the context of ever-increasing integration, individual member states will also have to become more conscious of the skill needs of the Community as a whole. Negotiations on human resource development after 1993 will be conducted against this broader perspective of the economic status of the Community as a trading entity on the world market.

Any development of the Funds should be consistent with national priorities and should be seen clearly to be in support of economic and social cohesion within the Community. In this respect, the firm commitment in the Programme for Economic and Social Progress to the achievement of economic and social cohesion will ensure the complementarity of national and Community goals.

The effective delivery of relevant training is accepted as an essential element in maintaining and improving the competitive position of the Community and in promoting greater social cohesion within and between the various regions of the Community. Because of the increased potential for worker mobility between member states after the completion of the Single Market, as well as more integration between the industrial and commercial structures of the member states, there is also likely to be a greater convergence in training policy and practice between member states.

Equally important is the existence of integrated and coherent structures for the provision and monitoring of programmes supported from Community funds. The Commission acknowledges the high quality of European Social Fund (ESF)-aided courses in Regional Technical Colleges and the Colleges of Technology. These courses lead to internationally recognised qualifications. The establishment of the Council for Educational and Vocational Awards will ensure that all existing programmes, including those at second level, are of the highest standard, and that appropriate certification, to Community standards, is available to all participants.

Reflecting the national priorities in the area of vocational education and training, the initiatives for which support will be sought from the Structural Funds post-1993 will include:

- Developing and expanding existing provision and significantly upgrading the training infrastructure, including the establishment of technology centres.
- Targeting the needs of disadvantaged persons, especially early school-leavers and those needing second chance vocational education and training.
- Providing increased access to further skill training for those in need of re-training or upgrading of skills.
- Establishing formal links between programme providers and the social partners, especially industry and business, in programme development and provision, with particular reference to the promotion of a culture of enterprise in all vocational education and training programmes.
- Developing vocational education and training, including certification and the harmonisation of qualifications.
- Expanding the range of eligible courses, especially at third level, to include many currently not eligible for support from the Funds.

Chapter 4

BROADENING
EDUCATION

Chapter 4

BROADENING EDUCATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION: THE NEED TO BROADEN

Educating for Work

Irish education, particularly now, must equip students so that they have the best chance of entering employment or of making a successful career in self-employment.

In the business world there is wide recognition that many Irish young people tend to lack:

- The range of technical skills needed in today's industry.
- The communication and other interpersonal skills sought by employers.
- The critical thinking, problem-solving ability and individual initiative that an enterprise culture requires.
- The language skills to work and win markets across the EC, and to take part in tourism-related activities.

Educating for Life

The emphasis on acquisition of facts rather than critical thinking hinders young people in preparing for both work and life. There is, therefore, a need for the education system to develop in the student:

- An ability to manage oneself and to make the most use of personal resources.
- An ability to express one's own viewpoint rationally.
- An ability to relate effectively to other people.

The second-level programme, in which nearly all now take part, was traditionally geared towards entering third level and to selecting the minority of academic high-achievers. Even after the many changes of recent years, it is clearly still not suited to all.

Many students complete a dozen years of schooling without having developed their own individual strengths, while some lack the basic literacy and numeracy skills necessary for everyday life.

Educating for European Citizenship

Until now, Irish education was concerned only with educating Irish citizens. Now, as the pace gathers towards European Union, it must educate Irish young people to be European citizens as well.

Introducing a European dimension into Irish education means more than spreading a greater knowledge of European languages, vital though that is. It also involves the need to develop an awareness of the European heritage and values that we share in addition to our distinctive Irish identity and culture.

Greater awareness of the wider political and social framework of which we are now a part is another aspect of educating for European citizenship.

Broadening through the Curriculum

The term "curriculum" embraces the content, structure and processes of teaching and learning which the school provides in accordance with its educational objectives and values. It includes specific and implicit elements. The specific elements are those concepts, skills, areas of knowledge and attitudes which children learn at school as part of their personal and social development. The implicit elements are those factors that make up the ethos and general environment of the school.

The curriculum includes a range of activities to develop students' potential and to promote their moral and spiritual values. The aim is to provide a broad general education up to the end of the senior cycle, including the areas of language, mathematics, science and technology, the human environment, the arts, physical education, and political and social awareness.

Continuity in content and approach between the curriculum of the primary school and that of the junior cycle of the second-level school will continue to be a central policy consideration. At the senior cycle, a combination of an effective

foundation of general education and a strengthened vocational orientation will form the basis for development.

4.2 PRIMARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

The curricular policy introduced in 1971 has won widespread acceptance among teachers, parents and personnel in colleges of education. The most recent report, that of the Review Body on the Primary Curriculum (May 1990), as well as endorsing the underlying principles, sets forth what is involved in the application of these principles in the classroom. Emphasis on the child and the child's needs is the central feature of the system. This, together with the delegation to teachers and schools of the responsibility for meeting the individual needs of children, activity and guided discovery methods of learning and an integrated approach to teaching, will remain the basis for curricular reform in the future.

The aims of the primary curriculum are to enable students to:

- Communicate with clarity and confidence through speech, reading and writing in their first language.
- Acquire a mastery of a second language (English in Gaeltacht areas, Gaeilge in Galltacht areas) appropriate to their abilities and their everyday requirements.
- Develop an understanding of mathematical concepts and acquire the basic numeracy skills.
- Gain an understanding of scientific ideas and an appreciation of and interest in the world around them, through exploration of its physical, historical, geographical, social and cultural characteristics and with particular emphasis on their own immediate environment.
- Acquire an appreciation of the arts and participate in and enjoy creative activity.
- Develop an understanding of their own religious beliefs and a tolerance for the beliefs of others.
- Acquire a knowledge of their bodies and a sense of responsibility for

their own health, and to develop their physical ability through creative activities and sport.

Literacy and Numeracy

It is a central objective of the primary school that children acquire a level of literacy and numeracy that will be essential for their further education and their development as individuals who are able to function effectively in society.

The available evidence indicates that a minority of students, which are a significant number in disadvantaged areas, do not achieve their potential in literacy and numeracy by the end of their primary schooling. While the causes may lie outside the school, a variety of interrelated actions are required within the school to help these students overcome their difficulties.

Early identification of those in need of additional help is essential, and appropriate assessment methods are proposed in Chapter 7 to assist teachers with this work. As the school psychological service is expanded progressively, it will also provide backup in pinpointing the causes of learning problems. At the same time, the expanded home-school links programme will provide the opportunity to take account of adverse factors arising from inadequate home support.

On a broader front, in-career training programmes will place particular emphasis on teaching reading and mathematics in a structured way. Schools will be encouraged to examine their reading programmes critically, including methods and materials and the deployment of staff, with the primary objective of ensuring that the particular needs of all students are being met.

Science in the Primary School

The study of the rudiments of science is essential in helping students to understand the world around them. In endorsing this view, the Review Body on the Primary Curriculum recommended that the existing nature study and elementary science programmes be integrated to form a new science programme. The aim of the new programme for primary schools would be to develop a scientific approach to problem-solving, which would emphasise

understanding and constructive thinking and would be suitable for the ages and level of maturity of the students.

The process through which this understanding is achieved involves exploration, observation, recording and reporting. The skills, attitudes and techniques acquired through these activities have application in other aspects of study. Schools will be encouraged and supported to place greater emphasis on the science element in the social and environmental studies part of the curriculum, particularly in the senior classes. Experience with two pilot projects provides a firm basis for these developments.

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) will be asked to provide suitable guidelines for schools to assist them in their curricular planning for basic science, and discussions will be held with the colleges of education concerning the initial training of teachers in this subject. The Department will include training in science education within the in-career training programme.

Modern European Languages at Primary Level

To provide orientation to such languages at the earliest possible stage, an awareness programme will be introduced for senior classes in primary schools. The awareness might vary from introducing children to the diversity of languages that exists in mainland Europe, to a focus on a simple introduction to a selected language, with particular reference to aural comprehension and simple conversation. The arguments advanced by the Primary Curriculum Review Body against the introduction of a foreign language into primary schools, because of the other demands on the curriculum and which already includes two languages, are appreciated. However, a number of primary schools already provide programmes in foreign languages, notably the all-Irish schools. It is proposed to review the experience of those schools to establish to what extent it is possible to extend the practice.

Physical Education in the Primary School

A new momentum in Physical Education, linked to diet and hygiene, will be an important element in a programme to enhance the health and physical well-being of children. The emphasis will be on health-related fitness and the

development of an interest in physical activity as an essential component of an active and healthy lifestyle. It will seek to involve parents and communities in promoting and developing the health and fitness of children.

The approach will be based on:

- A syllabus which it will be possible to implement with limited facilities.
- A "holistic" approach, including addressing questions of diet, hygiene, posture, flexibility and a healthy lifestyle.
- A daily period of 30 minutes devoted to these activities.
- A balanced physical education programme based on motor skills and aerobic fitness.
- The availability of services of specialist teachers of physical education to provide guidance to primary teachers.
- Special attention to physical education during preservice training, together with in-career training in physical education for teachers.
- Continuity in physical education provision between first and second level and continued emphasis, at all levels, on fitness, as underpinning sports activities.
- Research to produce programmes and materials to suit the specific needs of Irish schoolchildren and continuous evaluation to ensure effectiveness of the programmes.

Consultation will take place with the NCCA to develop a programme for schools reflecting the above approach. Inspectors with special expertise in physical education, in association with physical education staff in the University of Limerick, will co-ordinate the implementation of the programme.

Religious Education

Provision is made in the curriculum and the school timetable for religious instruction. Various changes made to the *Rules for National Schools* over time, and embodied in the *Rules* published in 1965, could be seen to have the effect of weakening the protections that existed for children of religious beliefs different to those of the majority in the schools. The general review of the *Rules for National Schools*, recommended by the Primary Education Review Body, will

seek also to ensure that all aspects of the *Rules* fully reflect the relevant articles of the Constitution. Furthermore, the 1971 *Teachers' Handbook for the Primary School*, as part of its promotion of an integrated curriculum, also sought to integrate religious and secular instruction. The *Handbook* will be reviewed to ensure that the constitutional rights of children are fully safeguarded.

Review of the Curriculum

Within the framework of the basic principles of the primary curriculum outlined above, the Department, in consultation with the NCCA, will continue to keep the curriculum under review. The first phase of this review was begun in autumn 1991.

The curriculum, devised in 1971, specified objectives in broad terms. The NCCA, in its work on curriculum review, will undertake the task of delineating objectives more clearly. National curriculum guidelines will be provided on various aspects of the curriculum. In these guidelines, curricular content will be graded and learning sequences described so that progress from stage to stage can be easily identified easily by the teacher.

Size of Primary Schools

There is a broad consensus among educators and parents that the ideal primary school organisation is one in which each teacher should have responsibility for one grade. The optimum school unit would thus be an 8-teacher school with an administrative principal, which would allow a class teacher for each standard from junior infants to sixth class. A 4-teacher school provides a teacher for each of the four segments of the curriculum, with each teacher having two standards.

There are geographical and other factors which may militate against achieving a school of at least four teachers in certain cases. On purely educational grounds, however, there are disadvantages in smaller schools. Teachers require an exceptional degree of skill to successfully organise the learning of children whose differences in ages could range from three to eight years. While many teachers have succeeded in achieving high standards in

smaller schools, it is undesirable that undue reliance should be placed on the skill and dedication of individual teachers.

Following the publication of the OECD Report, *Investment in Education*, in 1964, a policy of achieving, where feasible, schools of four teachers or more through amalgamation of smaller schools was pursued in consultation with local interests. As a result, the number of schools with three teachers or less has been reduced by 65%, from 3,934 in 1965 to 1,380 at present. Over the same period, the total number of schools has been reduced by 32%, from 4,743 to 3,224.

Number of Schools

	1965	1992	% Decrease
<i>Total</i>	4,743	3,224	32%
<i>3 Teachers or Less</i>	3,934	1,380	65%

Despite these efforts, the current position is that 43% of the present total number of national schools have fewer than four teachers. The downward demographic trends, if the overall reductions were to be evenly distributed, would lead to an increase in the number of such schools to 1,810 by the year 2004/5 (an increase of 430), representing 56% of the total number of schools. As small schools tend to be in rural areas, where the demographic decline is likely to be highest, the incidence of small schools will probably be even higher than that indicated above.

The need for the reorganisation of national school facilities will become increasingly relevant as a result of this sharp increase in the number of small schools. The overall aim of policy in this regard will be to maximise the number of schools of four teachers and more in rural areas and schools of eight teachers or more in urban areas.

Amalgamation of schools will be considered, in consultation with local interests, in a way that will weigh the capital and transport costs and the longer

journeys to school against the educational benefits accruing from larger school units. Where schools are closed in rural areas, the continued use of the vacated school buildings for desirable community purposes will be supported.

Where separate junior and senior schools and separate boys' and girls' schools continue to exist, mainly in urban areas, amalgamations will be sought to create single co-educational schools to serve particular areas. The more effective use of school buildings operating significantly below their capacity will also be reviewed.

The creation of school units of four teachers or more in rural areas would facilitate the provision of remedial and other specialist services in those schools and the development of backup and support services for their teachers, Boards of Management and parents. Similarly, the more efficient distribution of teaching resources that can be achieved by having larger school units in urban areas would release teaching posts for targeting disadvantage, reducing large classes and providing remedial teachers.

4.3 SECOND-LEVEL SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Historically, in Ireland, as in many other countries, the curriculum in second-level schools emerged as an amalgam of the traditional academic curriculum of the second-level schools and the practical/technical curriculum of the vocational schools. For many years now, students in all types of second-level schools have had increasing access to a broadly similar range of options.

Junior Cycle

The primary objective of the junior cycle is that students should complete a broad and balanced course of study in a variety of subjects relevant to their own personal development, the world of work and the enjoyment of their leisure and recreation. They will have achieved a level of competence in the various subjects which will enable them to proceed to senior cycle education.

By this year, all syllabuses for the new junior cycle will have been revised and introduced into the schools. All subjects will be provided at higher and

ordinary levels. In addition, in Irish, English and Mathematics there will be a third, foundation, level for those students for whom neither of one other two levels is suitable.

The following key principles underlie these developments in the curriculum:

- A recognition that broadly based programmes must be available for all students at levels appropriate to their abilities.
- Greater freedom for individual schools in selecting curriculum content, to allow for better adjustment to students' individual aptitudes and local circumstances.
- The development of a wider repertoire of learning and teaching strategies to allow for a more active involvement of students and for co-operative and group teaching methods.

In its recent review of the curriculum for the junior cycle, the NCCA advised that the programme for all students should include, as core subjects, Irish, English, Mathematics, History and Geography or Environmental and Social Studies (which combines elements of History, Geography and Social and Political Education) and Science or a Technological Subject.

In view of the demands on young people of an increasingly sophisticated and technological environment, it is seen as important that all students should receive a foundation in Science, augmenting the introduction to Science proposed for primary schools, and complemented by an increased awareness of both Technology and Enterprise. It is proposed, therefore, that both these elements should form part of the core programme for all students.

Science

A new syllabus in Science, prepared by the NCCA, was introduced into schools in 1989. It will be subject to ongoing review and updating by the NCCA to ensure that it provides an appropriate foundation programme in Science at different levels suitable for the needs of all students.

Enterprise and Technology

An enterprise dimension will be introduced into business studies programmes progressively through the junior and senior cycles. It will also be given particular expression through a proposed new subject, Enterprise and Technology Studies, drawing on successful experience with the pilot programme in Technology. While education for enterprise is essentially a cross-curricular theme, its association with Technology provides a unique opportunity for its development through the subject's emphasis on problem-solving and task completion. Group work and active participation by students, which are integral to a Technology programme, also form the core of successful enterprise education.

The new subject would be obligatory for all students, initially in the junior cycle and extending to the Leaving Certificate. It would offer exciting and stimulating challenges to students, being comprised of interrelated modules aimed at developing their capabilities and skills in the design and making of products using a variety of materials — Wood, Metal, Plastics and Textiles, in addition to including graphics, basic electronics, computer literacy and computer-aided design.

Students, regardless of gender or ability level, would take all the core modules of the programme. It is envisaged that, for those wishing to take specific aspects in more depth, additional modules in those aspects would be available. This provision would meet the needs of those young people who traditionally chose a number of practical subjects at junior cycle. However, since the proposed core programme, excluding a modern European language, would contain six subjects, such a choice no longer appears to be a realistic option.

Discussions will take place with the NCCA on the detailed development and implementation of the new subject and its linkage with other technical subjects of the curriculum. A staff development programme related to the new subject will be implemented.

Other Curricular Requirements

A key element of the core programme must be a continued emphasis on oral and written communications skills and numeracy, underpinning efforts in all

curricular areas. In addition to a renewed emphasis on communications skills in both Irish and English, schools will be supported in ensuring that all students have the possibility of taking a modern European language. As noted elsewhere, considerable progress has been made in this area, with virtually all the intake into second-level education taking at least one modern continental language.

Religious Education should form part of the available programme for all students, with due regard to the constitutional rights of parents related to the participation of their children. Physical Education should also form part of the curriculum and will receive increased emphasis as a continuation of initiatives at the primary level, and in the particular context of fostering the "Health-Promoting School" (see below). Similarly, it is desirable that students are exposed to subjects, such as Art and Music, that would develop their expressive abilities.

Finally, developing social and political awareness, with the aim of creating knowledgeable, responsible and caring citizens, is an important school objective. This dimension would be enhanced by the proposal, described in Chapter 5, that all second-level schools have a representative council for students. As well as giving students a greater say in the running of their school, this council would give students experience in public discussion and mutual persuasion. Environmental and Social Studies, also, will have social and political education as an important element. For those not pursuing that subject, the NCCA is currently reviewing the provision for Civics, to encompass social and political education, with a view to developing a new syllabus. Experience with Civics has not been a successful one and the topic has not always received the attention it deserves. It needs to be supported on a broader basis within the overall life of the school. Democracy in action may be seen as one of the primary aims of seeking greater and responsible involvement of students through the establishment of Students' Councils. Such active involvement in the life of the school may provide a better focus for achieving social and political awareness.

Special Programmes

Despite the comprehensive nature of provision within the junior cycle, a small minority of students is likely to remain whose special needs cannot be

met effectively within the mainstream programmes. Such students may be those who, for a variety of causes, have learning difficulties, or whose level of achievement at primary level, again for a variety of reasons, does not enable them to follow the Junior Certificate courses at any level.

The incidence of this latter problem, particularly in certain disadvantaged areas, gives cause for serious concern and will be addressed through specially targeted efforts and programmes, in collaboration with the NCCA. In addition, earlier intervention and intensive remedial and guidance provision will be needed to ensure that these students are provided with basic standards of literacy, numeracy and other relevant competences before leaving the education system.

On a more general basis, it is proposed to provide support for school initiatives for those children who need special programmes. This support would relate to the preparation of such programmes, arrangements for the provision of the programmes in the context of the particular schools involved, and the form of certification which it may be possible to provide for them. Experience with the Humanities Programme of the Curriculum Unit of the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee, in particular, would be reflected in any arrangements made to meet special needs.

Senior Cycle

One of the major objectives of educational policy is to encourage and facilitate as many students as possible to continue in full-time education after the end of the compulsory period. In practice, this means that a major objective for the 1990s will be that 90% of the age-group would complete Senior Cycle. Currently, almost 73% of all students complete the senior cycle and about 85% of all senior cycle students are following the Leaving Certificate course. Given the very wide spread of ability levels and aptitudes of students who are now following the senior cycle, it is increasingly necessary to ensure that the provision at that level is appropriate and beneficial to all students.

The Leaving Certificate results reveal that there are many students for whom the examination, as constituted at present, is unsuitable. Of all the second-level

students presenting at least five subjects in the Leaving Certificate in 1991, some 15% failed to obtain five Grade Ds. The seriousness of this problem was further emphasised in the findings of the survey, *Low Achievement at Senior Cycle — A Survey of Principals of Voluntary Secondary Schools*, carried out on behalf of the Joint Managerial Body, which indicated a considerable amount of dissatisfaction among principals of second-level schools with the suitability and relevance of the existing senior cycle programme for low-achieving students. The vocational school authorities, also, have consistently indicated that there are inherent problems in catering for such students within the current Leaving Certificate.

The Economic and Social Research Institute's report, *The Quality of their Education: School Leavers' Views of Educational Objectives and Outcomes* (October 1991), further confirms the need for change, as articulated by students. The study found considerable dissatisfaction, not only among those who had performed badly, but, more generally, among those who had followed a broad general education at what might be described as "pass" level. On the other hand, those who had followed a "pass" level, but with vocational or technical options, were almost as satisfied as those who performed well at honours level in academic subjects.

In seeking to address these concerns, regard must be had also to the need, within a broadly based education for all, to maintain and enhance standards of general education as an essential basis for the development of higher level skills and competences. The OECD, in its report, *Education and Economy in a Changing Society*, states that "a high quality of basic education is an essential prerequisite for a vocationally skilled and adaptable labour force." (p. 11)

Clarification of industry's priorities, in relation to second-level education, is contained in a recent Confederation of Irish Industry survey, which emphasised the importance of improved oral and written communication skills, numeracy and foreign language skills, together with problem-solving, enterprise, initiative and creativity. The need to enhance the quality of preparation for the work environment, to include an awareness of the economic and social factors that have an impact on the operation of business and industry, was also seen as vital. International experience reinforces the view that the most important

work-related competences are the ability to communicate clearly orally and in writing and to use mathematical and scientific skills to analyse and solve problems.

Reflecting the priorities mentioned and the various findings quoted above, a combination of an effective foundation of general education and a strengthened and expanded vocational orientation will form the basis for the development of programmes within a revised senior cycle structure, as outlined below.

The NCCA's Proposed Future Structure for the Senior Cycle

Following consultation with a wide variety of educational interests, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment has recommended the following senior cycle structure:

- Students would take courses from within two national programmes — the Leaving Certificate and the Senior Certificate.
- The Leaving Certificate would continue to be a 2-year programme.
- The Senior Certificate programme would also continue to be a 2-year programme, constructed in two modules of one year each and with certification available at the end of each year. It would incorporate the VPT1 programme, as currently operated.
- Students would be allowed to choose courses from both the Leaving Certificate and Senior Certificate in any one year.
- A number of options would be available to students progressing through the senior cycle.

The NCCA recommended that there should be a Certificate of Senior Cycle Education which would record the achievements of students under the Leaving Certificate and/or the Senior Certificate.

Future Developments at Senior Cycle

The NCCA's proposals provide a basis for the development of the Senior Cycle. However, in view of the strong traditional attachment of parents and students to the Leaving Certificate, there is merit also in providing for all options and all ability levels within the Leaving Certificate, rather than

through the alternatives of Leaving Certificate and Senior Certificate. Such an approach would also help to alleviate the practical problems that are likely to emerge in seeking to implement a range of options within two alternative streams.

It does not appear feasible to provide for the range of options and abilities within two levels for all subjects of the Leaving Certificate examination, especially since both levels provide a basis for admission to higher education. The NCCA considered but rejected a third or foundation level for the Leaving Certificate; one reason for this was that such an arrangement would not, in itself, provide for those who currently find the Leaving Certificate unsuitable. This view is particularly valid if a foundation course were to be constructed simply as a lower version of the ordinary syllabus.

Any alternative provision to be made within the scope of the Leaving Certificate would need to be in the form of less academic courses. The NCCA has already provided a syllabus for such a course in senior cycle Mathematics, which is for examination in 1992. Based on the experience of this new syllabus, the further advice of the NCCA will be sought as to the desirability of developing alternative Leaving Certificate courses, in lieu of Senior Certificate courses, in other core subject areas.

Neither the Senior Certificate nor alternative Leaving Certificate courses, where they arise, would normally form a basis for third-level entry. However, they would provide a basis for proceeding to appropriate vocational education and training programmes. Within such programmes, an avenue would be available for more successful participants to progress to third-level courses, with access courses provided where necessary, within the framework outlined in Chapter 8.

3-year Senior Cycle Option

The availability of the option of a 3-year senior cycle for all students entering second-level education from 1991 onwards presents new possibilities. While maintaining the Leaving Certificate as a 2-year programme, it is intended that

schools should have the maximum flexibility and options in the way they operate the senior cycle. The 3-year cycle may include a transition year, or it may include a student spending three years on a Leaving Certificate course which embodies elements of the transition year or which is otherwise organised to meet the needs of the individual student. While a repeat Leaving Certificate year would not be excluded, this was not the objective in providing a 3-year senior cycle option, and it is to be hoped that such an option would be the exception in any school.

Leaving Certificate Modules

The 3-year option also provides the opportunity to offer additional subject modules in circumstances where it would not be feasible, nor perhaps necessary in many cases, for students to take up the full subject. Examples of this would be a module in a modern continental language with a commercial focus, or a foundation module in a second continental language for students who had not previously followed a course in that language. Other examples would be a module in Political and Social Studies and additional modules to complement those in the subject Enterprise and Technology Studies, for students who wished to pursue them in more depth. Such choices will be further expanded and facilitated as particular subjects of the Leaving Certificate are developed on a more modular basis.

Review of Subject Options

In combination with the various initiatives that are proposed at both junior and senior cycle levels, it will be necessary to examine and rationalise the current diversity of provision, particularly within related subject areas, so that students can more easily follow a broadly based programme within the constraints of available time.

The NCCA will be asked to undertake such a review, while taking account of the introduction of Enterprise and Technology Studies and the scope available from the provision of subject modules, on which proposals are also being sought from the NCCA.

Vocational/Technical Options

The recent report of the Industrial Policy Review Group, *A Time for Change: Industrial Policy for the 1990s*, states that

... there is not enough emphasis in Irish second level education on technical and vocational training. Over the years the prestige of the academic Leaving Certificate programme has diverted students who would be much better adapted to technical training What is needed is a parallel stream of non-academic, vocationally-oriented education at second level which commands widespread recognition, respect and support. (pp. 53, 54)

The Review Group gave as examples the systems of vocational education and training in such countries as Germany and Switzerland.

On the other hand, in Sweden and Japan, vocational training is normally begun after the age of 18, and this appears to be an emerging trend in other countries also, including Germany.

The need for an improved vocational and technical orientation to education at the second level, with strengthened links to the business world, is reinforced by the studies previously mentioned. There is a strong possibility, however, that to seek to do so through a separate non-academic vocational stream would be regarded as providing only for less able children, and would not meet the objective of ensuring a broadly based education for all, with vocational options and orientation, up to the completion of the second-level stage.

It is proposed, instead, to build on and expand the range of vocational options within the existing Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), with the intention of expanding the numbers of Leaving Certificate participants in that programme from its present 5% of the total to at least 30% from 1994. A review of the nature and content of the vocational/technical subjects which could be included in this programme will be undertaken with the NCCA and the proposed new Council for Educational and Vocational Awards (see below). The programme's vocational orientation and options would be further reinforced in the Senior Certificate, or in any alternative Leaving Certificate courses that would be developed in the future.

To strengthen the vocational orientation and relevance of the vocational subject options, it is proposed that vocational modules, coupled, wherever possible, with a work experience module, would be prepared by the NCVA¹. Certification of the skill modules would be provided initially by the NCVA, for inclusion in the Leaving Certificate or in the Senior Certificate, as appropriate.

On a broader front, in relation to school programmes generally, the active involvement of industry will be sought in a variety of ways, through participation in the Council for Educational and Vocational Awards (CEVA) and, wherever possible, in Boards of Management. The aim will be to create an environment in the school in which students will develop a more informed awareness of the world of work and in which a spirit of enterprise and initiative will be fostered. This aim will be reflected also in the development of the vocational modules and of programmes generally.

Modern Continental Languages

Real progress has been made in recent years in the provision of modern continental languages at second level. The increase in the take-up of German has been particularly impressive, with more than a third of those who entered second-level education in 1989 taking the subject — a 25% increase since 1986. French has traditionally been the predominant foreign language of choice and about 80% of the 1989 intake are following a course in French. Allowing for a minority who took the two languages, it is clear that the great majority of students entering second-level education are now studying at least one modern continental language. This compares with about 75% five years previously. However, the numbers taking other languages, such as Spanish and Italian, remain small.

It is particularly important in the context of an integrated Europe that proficiency in foreign languages is seen not only as enhancing our understanding of the social and cultural background of our European partners but as a usable and practical skill for communication with other Europeans in all aspects of life.

¹ Pending the establishment of the Council for Educational and Vocational Awards (CEVA).

The major focus, therefore, will be on improving communication skills in the language, with emphasis on both aural comprehension and oral skills. Efforts will also be continued to encourage schools to offer a second continental language, building on the progress already made in this area. These aims will be pursued through a variety of measures which are described below.

It is generally recognised that acquiring and maintaining a mastery in a foreign language, particularly in communication skills, requires exposure to and use of the language on an ongoing basis outside the classroom. Ireland's geographic location is clearly an inhibiting factor for most in seeking to use a European language within an environment where it is a spoken language. The LINGUA programme facilitates and supports exchanges, visits and co-operative initiatives and we shall be taking up fully our entitlements under that programme. A case will be made to the EC Commission for more favoured treatment for Ireland, in view of our peripheral location in the Community.

Only a minority of students would be accommodated in any such programme or in any arrangements for visits abroad. To support such efforts, building on the success of summer schools in Irish, the establishment of intensive residential summer schools in modern continental languages will be encouraged, with a view to creating an environment in which the language would be used in ordinary day-to-day living. The assistance of native teachers would be sought through the cultural services of the relevant countries.

The main emphasis in testing and in examinations will be on the oral/aural components, and the marks for this aspect will be not less than 60% of the total. It is recognised that, particularly because of the rapid growth in the number of students taking a modern European language, difficulties will continue to be experienced in ensuring a supply of teachers with full oral proficiency. The use of tapes or videos will be helpful in promoting the primary requirement of aural comprehension. Efforts will be made to expand the number of "native teacher assistants" under cultural agreements with the countries concerned and to target them to schools which are most in need.

The proposed summer schools and student and teacher exchanges will further support the development of oral proficiency. In-career training of

foreign language teachers will also stress oral proficiency, while discussions will take place with the Teachers' Registration Council with a view to making oral proficiency a requirement for all future teachers of foreign languages.

The successful arrangements will be continued under which part-time hours over the quota are allowable to second-level schools, to permit them to commence a second foreign language. Its scope will be enhanced through more flexible arrangements regarding foreign languages within the curriculum. Currently, a student may take a junior cycle course in a foreign language as part of his or her senior cycle programme. This facility will be extended through the development of *ab initio* senior cycle programmes or modules in modern continental languages to meet a variety of needs. A modern continental language will continue to be a required subject for the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.

It is hoped through these various measures, building on what has already been achieved, to reach a stage where Ireland will be on a par with its EC partners in terms of its ability to communicate in other languages of the Community.

Curricular Needs and School Size

In seeking to put in place the proposed new framework for the junior cycle and, more particularly, for the senior cycle, there are particular implications for school size and for future policy in the rationalisation of second-level schools. A programme of rationalisation has been pursued for many years; its main objective has been to create schools of adequate size to offer a balanced programme of academic and practical subjects. The new curricular proposals accentuate the need to expand and intensify this programme so that schools may be large enough to offer the proposed range of options.

The process of rationalisation is likely to be accentuated by a variety of other factors, including declining enrolments in particular areas and the continuing decrease in the involvement of the religious in the ownership and management of schools. Current indications suggest that the present number of

approximately 800 schools may decline to 500-600 over the next decade, as a result of closures or amalgamations.

The policy of rationalisation will continue to be pursued by seeking consensus between interested parties. Where amalgamations are in question, local interests will need to take account of the greater range of curricular options that can be made available to students as a result of amalgamating small schools. Priority will continue to be given to implementing a phased programme of rationalisation, within available resources. Realistically, it may be necessary for schools being amalgamated to operate on the basis of a dual campus until full accommodation can be provided on one site.

For many years, it has been the practice to advocate co-operation between the schools in multi-school centres. Through such co-operation and the pooling of resources, the shortcomings in one school can be met from the resources of the other, or others. This policy has met with only limited success to date, but it is essential that far greater emphasis be placed on local co-operation in future, thereby complementing rationalisation initiatives and maximising the availability of resources for all students.

Such co-operation will be particularly critical at the senior cycle level, not only between schools in multi-school centres, but also between schools in adjacent small centres. Offering a range of academic and vocational or practical options, at different levels, or choices between Leaving Certificate and Senior Certificate, would not be feasible except on the basis of a well-organised collaboration between schools in a local area.

Physical Resource Needs for Vocational Options

The proposed enhanced provision of vocational and practical options, combined with an anticipated expansion in the provision for vocational education and training, and including second-chance education and training, will have resource implications for the second-level sector. The nature of these implications serves to emphasise the need for optimum use of these resources through maximum collaboration at the local level.

Planning of provision of technical resources, which will form an important element in the programme for which EC support will be sought for the post-1993 period, will be on an area rather than an institutional basis. A key element will be the development of a network of technology centres to serve a variety of needs in each catchment area. Existing facilities will also be examined with a view to adaptation or upgrading and equipping as required.

Student Guidance

Guidance in schools may be seen as all the services, programmes and activities within a school which are aimed at helping students to achieve an understanding of themselves and their potential. In this, the school works with parents to help their children to develop positive attitudes and behaviour and to make satisfying and fulfilling educational and career choices.

While guidance counsellors have a central role to play in this process, it is important that the provision of guidance should be seen as a school-wide responsibility, involving the collaboration of the school administration, the guidance counsellor and the other teachers.

Because a school's guidance provision is intended to be both ongoing and developmental, it should include:

- *Appraisal and assessment*, which would enable the school to understand the needs of the student, as well as helping students and their parents understand themselves better.
- *Information* that would enable students to make informed decisions about educational, vocational and career choices.
- *Counselling*, which would be available to all students, but particularly to those experiencing learning or personal difficulties and those in special situations in the school (such as the disadvantaged or those with disabilities, potential early school-leavers and those at significant transition points within their school careers).

The provision of guidance counsellors in schools, especially in areas of significant disadvantage, will be improved progressively as resources become

available. In addition, the School Guidance Committee of the Department of Education has been given the remit of preparing guidelines for guidance provision and an action plan for the development of guidance in education.

Links between Schools and the World of Work

The recent report from the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI), entitled *Schools and Business: A New Partnership* (Paris, 1992), states that:

In the past ten years, partnerships between business and schools have started to play a significant part in educational change The 1990s will determine whether partnerships prove to be a passing fad, or whether they consolidate their position, to become a permanent, integral part of the education process. That will depend partly on the extent to which those involved in education, from Ministers to teachers, accept the regular involvement of business and other employers in developing curriculum, teaching methods and other aspects of schooling. (p. 49)

Work experience, enterprise education programmes and a variety of links (formal and informal) between schools and the world of work are more and more widely used as a means of helping young people to develop personal, social and vocational skills. Offering young people an experience of the working world, while they are still at school, can make a powerful contribution to their learning and development. Education for enterprise is a means of developing in young people those qualities of problem-solving, personal resourcefulness, and the ability to communicate and relate to others, essential both to the promotion of a spirit of enterprise and to enhance the quality of adult living.

Over the years, many schools have developed links with employers and community agencies in their localities. These links have served to provide the schools with work experience opportunities and support in the provision of work-related programmes, and have helped schools to become more aware of and open to the expectations and needs of the world of work. Representatives of local business and other local interests can now have a formal role in the management of schools, through membership of the proposed Boards of Management. However, there is a need for schools to go further and, either singly or (better) collectively in a locality, establish appropriate linkages with

local employment and training interests, including the use of visiting teachers from industry.

A number of schools/industry links schemes exist throughout the country and it is intended to actively promote the establishment of further schemes of this kind. Schools will also be encouraged to offer enterprise education, work simulation and minicompany programmes, as valuable means of making young people aware of the challenges and opportunities of the world of work.

The development of active partnerships between industry and education, integrated into the process of educational change, can improve the learning experiences of students and be of benefit to them and their future employers.

4.4 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The beginnings of vocational education and training in Ireland may be traced to the introduction of the Technical Instruction Acts of 1891 and 1899, empowering local authorities to initiate programmes of commercial and technical instruction which, in some cases, evolved into forms of local apprenticeships. The Vocational Education Act of 1930 provided for the setting up of 38 Vocational Education Committees whose remit included the provision of vocational and technical education in their respective areas. Since that time, the Vocational Education Committees have played the major role in the expansion and development of vocational education throughout the country. A further impetus was given to training and its links with industrial development needs with the enactment of the Industrial Training Act in 1967 and the setting up of AnCO and, subsequently, FÁS, as the national industrial training authority.

It is generally recognised that the achievement of economic growth and industrial development is dependent, to a significant degree, on the availability of qualified personnel with the necessary technical and vocational skills and competences. The availability of skilled personnel is, in turn, dependent on the efficiency and effectiveness of the vocational education and training system. Within the European Community, it is evident that, to a significant extent, the

relatively high rate of economic development in countries such as Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands is due to their well-developed vocational education and training systems.

The OECD, in its report *Education and Economy in a Changing Society*, placed emphasis on the need for

... a high quality of basic education [as] an essential prerequisite for a vocationally skilled and adaptable labour force the role played by initial education and training in OECD countries is crucial for the successful performance of their economies and, in broader terms, their full functioning as democratic societies. It is in the early years of each citizen's life that the main base, both of knowledge and skills, and of attitudes and values, are laid. (pp. 11 and 38)

Policies in Vocational Education and Training

In a changing economic environment of rapid and pervasive scientific and technological developments, requiring a great level of flexibility in the labour force, it is essential that all young people receive a broad general education through which they acquire a wide base of transferable skills. These skills will enable those participating in the education system to adapt to the constantly changing circumstances, which will be an increasingly necessary requirement in tomorrow's world.

The recent report of the Industrial Policy Review Group, *A Time for Change: Industrial Policy for the 1990s* (1992), stressed that, at all educational levels, the contribution of productive enterprise should be an issue of primary importance and that a higher priority must be attached to the acquisition of usable and marketable skills. The report recommended the development of high quality technical and vocational education.

These considerations will form an important element in future developments in the education system. While the changes proposed for the senior cycle are intended to provide a sound basis of general education for all students, the vocational orientation and provision for technical subjects within programmes at this level will be reinforced and expanded.

Provision for vocational education and training outside the senior cycle, which has seen rapid growth over the past five years, is projected to expand further within a cohesive, restructured and reoriented system, described below. The report of the Industrial Policy Review Group will be an important influence on future progress in this field, which will also reflect recent developments in vocational training elsewhere in Europe, particularly drawing on the approach to vocational training in Germany, as described in a recent paper:

... the emphasis in the vocational training process is not to give trainees narrowly defined skills. It is more to give a broad occupational training with stress on theoretical understanding as well as practical skills, which will provide the basis for subsequent further training as skill requirements change and become more complex. The idea is to enable skilled workers both to meet current needs and be capable of adapting to the uncertain needs of the future ... There are two implications here: that the theoretical content of training is accorded importance. And that the role of education proper, as opposed to vocational training, is reasserted. Increasingly both implications are being realised in education and training in the northern European countries. (David Soskice; paper presented at a conference on *Skills in a Changing World*, published in *Arena*, January 1992, p.28).

Based on the above, the following approach to vocational education and training is proposed:

- Training to be broad-based, rather than job specific, and such as to encourage the development of a spirit of enterprise and a flexibility of approach to problem-solving.
- Standards of general education to be maintained and enhanced, as an essential basis for the development of higher level skills and competences.
- The overall aim to be that of promoting the achievement of high skill levels.
- The relationship between the education and training systems, and the economy they serve, to be strengthened in order to ensure that the providers of education and training programmes can obtain immediate and clear information on the nature, scope and extent of skills required for economic growth and development.

However, it is important to ensure that skills training is not solely related to present levels of demand for trained personnel, but, would be such as would contribute to enhancing the potential demand for training. In the words of the report of the Industrial Policy Review Group, *"The perception of many managers that there is not a skill shortage may itself be part of the skills problem facing Irish industry."* (p.54)

Current Provision for Vocational Education and Training

The position has now been reached where vocational education and training is provided in a variety of forms. Excluding those provided within the third-level sector, described in Chapter 8, the following programmes are available:

- Vocational Preparation and Training programmes (VPT), principally post-Leaving Certificate (VPT2), for young people wishing to obtain vocational education and training before entering employment. Almost 50% of the time spent on these programmes is devoted to skill training related to employment; a further 25% is spent in relevant work-based experience. Some 19,000 young people avail of these programmes each year, 13,000 on VPT2 programmes and 6,000 on the VPT1 programme, for young people leaving immediately after completing their compulsory education. (The number of young people on the latter programme will continue to decline, as an increasing percentage of the age-group remain to complete senior cycle.)
- Apprenticeship in designated trades, which is regulated by FÁS and for which the off-the-job training is delivered in a variety of block-release and day-release forms in VEC schools and colleges and in FÁS training centres. Each year, almost 10,000 apprentices attend day and block-release courses in VEC schools and colleges. Arrangements for a new apprenticeship system, based on standards reached rather than on time served, have now been agreed and will be initiated in 1993.
- Training courses for first-time job-seekers and the unemployed, related to specific job training provided by FÁS.
- FÁS/VEC Youthreach programme, involving Community Training Workshops and including Travellers' Training Workshops.

- Under the Tourism Operational Programme, full-time and block-release training, at craft and managerial level, is provided by CERT and the VECs in VEC colleges and in other education and training institutions.
- Vocational Education and Training programmes provided by the VECs under the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme for long-term unemployed (administered in conjunction with the Department of Social Welfare).

Proposed Developments in Vocational Education and Training

Starting from a more vocationally oriented base within the school system, as previously described, it is proposed to bring the various elements of vocational education and training together into a more cohesive, modularised and graduated system, which would include employer and trade union interests and which would provide the opportunity for all participants to develop progressively their vocational skills. An essential feature of such a system would be a co-ordinated set of national arrangements for the provision of vocational education and training programmes and for the assessment, certification and accreditation of levels of knowledge, skills and competences attained. Such arrangements will enhance the transfer of students between programmes, the credibility and acceptability of qualifications, and the mobility of personnel in the wider European labour market. To achieve this objective, proposals related to improvements in the development and certification of vocational training are set out below, as a basis for discussion with all the concerned interests.

Development of Vocational Training

It is proposed that, within the broad categories of vocational preparation and training programmes, all vocational training programmes should be reconstituted progressively under an extended training system, modelled on the Dual System² operated effectively by countries such as Germany. The basis for such an extension is already in place through the development work on VPT courses, combining on and off-the-job training, since the mid-1980s, particularly for post-Leaving Certificate participants. Some examples of work that has taken

² In the Dual System, practical vocational training is given at work, backed up by theoretical training and general education provided in vocational training schools.

place are office information systems, animation and film/video production, desk-top publishing, horticulture and food technology.

It is proposed that further development of these types of programmes would take place within the extended training system referred to and that existing courses would be adapted to provide the necessary work-based experience elements of such a system. While courses would be designed so that participants achieved usable and marketable skills, they would also provide for the transfer of students with the necessary aptitudes and motivation to the appropriate technical and professional programmes. The pace of change will be dependent on the development of a significant capacity for the provision of training by employers. Courses at lower levels than those of the programmes referred to above would be reorganised as potential stepping stones to higher levels for successful trainees, within the graduated certification system described below.

In terms of the designated trades coming within the apprenticeship system, the education sector will continue to collaborate with FÁS in the planning, course development and delivery of off-the-job training. It is particularly important that arrangements for collaboration should enable the education agencies concerned to play an effective role in ensuring a sound educational and theoretical underpinning for the training.

More generally, there is a need to ensure that programmes provided by FÁS and the education sector are complementary and that unnecessary duplication is avoided. An Action Group, consisting of representatives of the Departments of Education and Labour and of FÁS and the vocational education sector, will be established to define and clarify the respective roles of FÁS and the VECs in relation to initial vocational education and training, including apprenticeship training. It will report later in 1992.

In addition to those proceeding to vocational education and training on completion of formal schooling, the system will provide flexibly for those seeking second-chance education and training. Furthermore, it is anticipated that the need and demand for continuing vocational training and regrading of

skills is also likely to expand significantly. This type of training would be provided in-company by employers, assisted by either education or training institutions, where specialist facilities and expertise were required.

Certification

There is now general acceptance of the need for an effective system of certification, which would ensure satisfactory standards and their comparability within a graded system. Such a system is seen as important because of the credibility attached to the certification by employers and trainees both in Ireland and elsewhere in Europe. It is vital that we develop a national framework of certification for our various vocational education and training programmes, involving both the education and training agencies and the social partners, which would facilitate the mobility of our young people both at home and in the wider European context.

The recent establishment, on an ad hoc basis, of the National Council for Vocational Awards has resulted in the initiation of work on such a comprehensive system of national certification and validation of standards for all vocational education and training programmes in the second-level and post-second-level education sectors. The composition of the NCVA includes participation by the relevant educational interests, FÁS and CERT, as well as by employer and trade union interests, reflecting the need to involve such interests in course development and validation and in the certification process.

It is proposed, following this initial developmental phase, to constitute a new Council on a statutory basis, to include also the functions of the National Council for Educational Awards. The new body, the Council for Educational and Vocational Awards (CEVA) would bring together all concerned education, training and business interests, including the social partners. The CEVA would have a wide remit covering all aspects of vocational training provided by both the education and training agencies, including apprenticeship training, as well as taking over the role of the NCEA in relation to third-level courses outside the university sector.

In this way, a common certification system, with national and international standing, would be established for all levels and aspects of vocational training,

complementing the well-established certification structures for third-level courses. Such a system would cater both for those seeking vocational training following completion of their formal schooling, and for mature students seeking to develop and improve their skills. Course structures would be modular, graded by levels, and standards-based; in addition, a credit transfer system will be developed. Accordingly, all those proceeding to such programmes will have the opportunity to achieve appropriate certification and credit to enter employment or advance to higher levels of education or training.

4.5 YOUTH WORK SERVICES

Youth Work as Informal Education

The educational development of the individual takes place in both formal and informal settings. Many of the issues raised in this paper relate to formal education. There is no wish, however, to minimise the personal development that can take place in an informal setting or the important contribution that youth work can make to this process.

A Report of the National Youth Policy Committee, which was published in 1984, proposed that the main task of the Youth Service was to

... offer young people, on the basis of their voluntary involvement, developmental and educational experience which will equip them to play an active part in a democratic society, as well as meeting their own personal developmental needs.(p. 114)

Youth work provides opportunities for young people to recognise and develop their talents and skills in a process of learning by doing and reflecting on the experiences created. Key features of effective youth work are:

- Creating a non-judgemental atmosphere in which youth work will take place.
- The voluntary association of young people with youth workers.
- The involvement of adults and young people in an equal partnership.

- The involvement of young people in determining the content and direction of programmes.
- The constructive intervention by adults in the lives of individual young people.

This Report of the National Youth Policy Committee is the main basis for the programme of youth work. This programme is supported by the Department by way of financial assistance to a wide range of voluntary youth organisations which satisfy educational and other criteria, including voluntary adult involvement and the active participation of young people in the running of the organisation.

Developments to Date

There have been significant developments since the publication of the National Youth Policy Committee report. With the advent of the National Lottery, the scale of financial assistance has increased from 2.9m in 1985 to 10.8m in 1992.

While the Department has encouraged youth organisations to extend their activities to provide suitable opportunities to all young people, it has given particular support, under a separate scheme, for out-of-school, community-based initiatives. These youth intervention initiatives seek to support local communities in responding to the needs of young people who are perceived to be disadvantaged because of such factors as unemployment, social isolation, substance abuse, homelessness and the inadequate take-up of formal education and training opportunities. Some 200 projects around the country are now aided in this way. These initiatives have highlighted the contribution that youth work can make to the lives of young people in disadvantaged communities, whose experience of the formal systems of education and training is frequently either partly or wholly negative. Youth workers can build on the main features of effective youth work to counteract the experience of alienation, to restore a sense of self-esteem and to support positive action to develop potential. Return to the formal education or training systems is an important objective.

A number of agencies have evolved which provide broad support services for all the organisations involved in the delivery of youth work in a particular area,

with funding provided through the Vocational Education Committees. These support services serve to improve the effectiveness of local communities and youth organisations in responding to the needs of young people and include training, programme development, information and advice. These area youth services have also been involved in the special response to the needs of young people in areas of disadvantage.

Resources have been provided for the development of a network of youth information centres offering services to young people in youth groups, and to schools and colleges at community level.

Local voluntary youth councils have been established in 11 areas to provide a mechanism under which voluntary youth groups and statutory agencies can better assess the needs of young people and co-ordinate appropriate responses.

The grant-aided Youth Exchange Bureau, established in 1986, is devoted to the development and promotion of high-quality youth exchanges. The Bureau acts as the Irish support agency for European Community exchange programmes such as Youth for Europe, PETRA, EUROFORM, LINGUA, and other international programmes.

Gaisce, the President's Award has been established to support the informal learning opportunities of young people by recognising the achievements of individual young people in a range of areas, such as community involvement, personal skills, physical recreation and adventure projects.

A 3-year part-time in-career course for youth workers, leading to a professionally recognised Youth and Community Work diploma, has been developed in St. Patrick's College, Maynooth.

At Council of Europe and European Community level, Ministers responsible for youth affairs have agreed to meet on a regular basis to exchange information on issues of importance to young people in their member states and to develop co-operation in the youth work field. Specific areas to be further

developed include youth information, training for youth workers, youth exchanges and special initiatives for disadvantaged young people.

Future Developments

Building on the achievements to date, the Department will promote the development of a comprehensive integrated youth work provision across the country while also targeting resources on and promoting the adaptation of programmes for disadvantaged young people, based on a framework for youth work services for the future which would have the following features:

- A more precise definition of youth work, to promote good youth work practice and to facilitate interlinking with other forms of social work directed at young people.
- Greater specification of youth work support services and guidelines to promote equality of standards and continuity.
- A major role for the Vocational Education Committees in the co-ordination, development and financing of youth work and youth work support services. This will include the progressive devolution to the VECs, in accordance with mechanisms to be agreed, of much of the resource allocation function now exercised centrally by the Department.
- The development of improved mechanisms for grant-aiding national youth organisation head offices and specialist or special interest national youth organisations which will preserve the benefits of diversity of approach while minimising or eliminating overlap and duplication. This would be achieved through relating grants to specific programmes of support which could not be met through the general support services to be funded through the VECs.
- Agreed mechanisms for the monitoring and evaluation of youth work and of youth work support services, including the identification of criteria of excellence. This will facilitate the establishment of priorities and assist in resource allocation. The appointment of a full-time assessor on a limited contract is a first step towards achieving this objective.
- Extension nationwide, within the resources available, of the arrangements, now limited to a few areas, under which grant-aid may be given to local voluntary groups engaged directly in youth work with young

people. In order to ensure standards, it is envisaged that this grant-aid would be related to a simple but formal contract between club or group and the local VEC.

- Greater integration of initiatives directed towards disadvantaged young people into the overall youth work provision while maintaining the targeting of additional funding.
- The development of effective networking at local level between community, voluntary and statutory interests involved in youth work and between those involved in youth work and other services, such as adult education, sports and recreation, the home/school links scheme, and other social services. To that end, the network of local voluntary youth councils will be expanded and new operational guidelines introduced.
- Improving and accrediting in-career training for voluntary youth workers.
- Effective co-operation at EC and Council of Europe level in the provision of youth information, facilitating youth mobility, research, and the training of youth workers.
- Effective youth information services, making full use of new information technology.

4.6 THE IRISH LANGUAGE

Irish in the Community

The promotion of the Irish language has been strongly supported by every Irish government since the foundation of the state. The language holds a central place in the heritage and culture of our people and is designated as the first official language in Bunreacht na hÉireann. The ultimate national goal in relation to the language is that our people generally will be truly bilingual. In the furtherance of this aim, Irish is of central importance in school curriculum development and implementation. The national aim in relation to the language cannot be achieved, however, solely or even principally through the unaided efforts of the school system.

In a report, published by Bord na Gaeilge, the statutory body established to extend the use of Irish, it is argued that

... the immediately critical issue is that of achieving greater spoken use of the language To maintain [the language], the priority policy issue must be a concern with the problems associated with increasing the use of the language ... it is the community use of the language which provides the rationale for other promotional measures, especially for policies aimed at generating abilities. (*The Irish Language in a Changing Society* (1987), p. xii)

Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann, in *Teaching Irish in the Schools: Towards a Language Policy for 1992*, argues that

... a common theme ... is the importance of factors beyond the control of the teacher. These include the position of Irish in the home and the community, and, in the case of the post-primary schools, the importance of Irish for employment and entry to third-level education. (pp. 31-32)

It is the function of the educational system to provide the means for students to learn the Irish language. The outcome, in terms of students' command of the language, is crucially related to their motivation and the opportunities for them to use the language outside the classroom. These, in turn, depend on the attitudes of parents and the community, how far the home encourages the learning of Irish and how far Irish is used, or its use encouraged, in the community. Without significant support from both home and community, even the best language programmes and pedagogical methods will have limited success.

Substantial strides have been made. A considerable proportion of the population possesses a degree of competence in the language. Competence in Irish is a basic requirement for many posts in education, the public service, broadcasting etc., both within the Gaeltacht and to meet the needs of Irish speakers throughout the country. More parents wish to have their children educated in all-Irish schools. Developments within the European Community have stressed the need for regional development, for the fostering of minority languages and for the promotion of the richness and diversity of the various strands of European culture. We are not unique in trying to foster and develop our language and culture, and Irish is valued as a vital part of the European identity.

The Role of Parents

Parents have a crucial role to play in forming the attitudes of their children towards all facets of life. Perhaps the importance of parents in promoting Irish as a means of communication has been underrated in the past. As the curriculum in Irish is developed at all levels, and particularly in the early years, each school should have a policy of harnessing parental support for the language. Specifically, parent associations should examine energetically and imaginatively various ways of promoting the speaking of Irish in communities in order to provide parents and students with regular opportunities to use Irish outside the formal school setting.

The Role of the School

Bord na Gaeilge, in the report referred to earlier, while emphasising that *"schools, by themselves, cannot significantly advance a bilingual society"*, (p. 104) asserts that, with the continuing decline in the numbers who acquire Irish in the home, *"the role of the education system in encouraging proficiency in the language amongst successive generations is becoming increasingly important."* (p. 104)

It is essential that maintaining and increasing the knowledge of Irish should continue to enjoy a high priority within the education system. This requires that teaching methods are kept under constant review and that curricula are planned in structured stages and progress assessed regularly. This work is already being undertaken by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

Equally important, however, are the attitudes cultivated and developed within the school. Irish must not be seen just as another school subject, but should be used as a means of communication during the school day. Where, as is the case in most schools, Irish is taught as a subject only, encouragement should be given to introducing Irish into other parts of the curriculum. Positive measures should be planned to harness the support of the parents. At second level, the task of promoting the use of Irish should fall not just on the teachers who have a particular responsibility for Irish, but on all staff members.

Each school will be required to develop a policy on the promotion and use of Irish within the school. In addition, schools will be encouraged to organise

courses in Irish, with particular emphasis on developing oral competence, during the summer months. Such courses would complement courses and summer camps currently operated within the Gaeltacht, and schools should encourage students to avail to the greatest extent possible of such programmes.

The measures to achieve these aims should be worked out on a planned basis and should be enunciated in the School Plan (see Chapter 5) and progress reported annually. The targets set out in the School Plan should increase as the students grow in confidence and maturity. The particular circumstances of each school and the stages of development of the students will determine the extent to which Irish will be used as a means of communication.

Primary Education

At primary level, the aim is that students, on completion of primary education, will have acquired a basic knowledge of the structures of the language and that they will be able to conduct a simple conversation on everyday matters in Irish. There will, of course, be considerable divergence in the degree of success achieved by individual students at various stages, given the wide range of ability and aptitudes of students for language learning. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment has been given the task of submitting proposals for new courses. The first courses, covering the earliest stages, will be available by 1993. In drawing up these new courses, the following criteria will be met:

- The main aim for the primary school will be the development of oral competence.
- Objectives for each stage of learning will be specified clearly, with appropriate modes of assessment.
- Each stage will have clear guidelines on how the use of Irish will be integrated into everyday communication in school.
- New course materials and visual/audio aids will be prepared with the assistance of publishers and media.
- Special support materials for parents will be prepared in consultation with Bord na Gaeilge and the mass media.

Second-Level Education

Continuity in the teaching of Irish is particularly important between primary and second-level education. The revised courses for Junior Certificate offer Irish at three levels — Foundation, Ordinary and Advanced. The aim is to build on the knowledge and fluency developed during the primary years, in order to be able to conduct a conversation on everyday matters in Irish, at a level appropriate to the competence of the student. At this stage also, students will be expected to read and write in Irish and to have been introduced to Irish literature. The three levels of Irish make it possible for the first time for all students to have a degree of success and satisfaction in learning Irish.

At senior cycle, aims will be related to the diverse courses available. At the highest level, students should be competent in oral communication on more complex topics. They should also have reached an adult level of competence in reading and writing.

There is, however, a need for a special initiative to further develop oral competence in the language. As a practical way of encouraging this to happen quickly, it is proposed to increase dramatically the proportion of marks given in certificate examinations to oral and comprehension abilities. Together these would account for at least 60% of the total marks (compared to 25% at present).

In addition, it is proposed, in consultation with the training institutions, to introduce a more rigorous oral/aural examination for all new teachers of Irish or those wishing to teach through Irish at either primary or second level.

An integral part of the teaching of Irish at second level must be an appreciation of the importance of the language to Ireland's heritage and culture. This is more likely to be fostered where there is a conscious and planned approach to the use of Irish as an integral part of the life of the school, in administration and organisation and through the partial use of Irish as a means of instruction.

Schools in Gaeltacht Areas

Particular attention will be given to the needs of schools in Gaeltacht areas. Although the majority of the students in these areas have Irish as their first

language, an increasing number come from families where only one parent has Irish as a first language or where parents have changed from using Irish as a first language with their children. The Muintearas project in selected areas in the Gaeltacht has been directed towards motivating parents to foster and develop the competence of their children in Irish. Building on this experience and in co-operation with the agencies reporting to Roinn na Gaeltachta, special initiatives will be needed to provide more structured help and support for the schools in their communities. As recommended by the Review Body on the Primary Curriculum, the new courses being devised will be sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of schools in the Gaeltacht. At second level, such flexibility already exists, through the provision of three course levels in the junior cycle and two in the senior cycle.

All-Irish Schools

The past 20 years have seen the foundation of over 40 all-Irish primary schools outside the Gaeltacht. There is provision in the present rules for the establishment of such schools, where the Department is satisfied that there is sufficient demand. The development of all-Irish schools has been a very encouraging one and is greatly helping to strengthen the position of Irish in the education system.

A resurgence in demand for education through Irish at second level has been evident in recent times, mainly because of the expansion of all-Irish primary schools. Many of those who leave the all-Irish primary school wish to continue their education through Irish and, indeed, some students who have been at ordinary primary schools choose to learn through Irish in second-level schools.

The all-Irish schools are not just supported by Irish-speaking families. Many parents who have themselves only a limited knowledge of Irish are sending their children to these schools. The Department of Education will co-operate with initiatives being planned by Bord na Gaeilge to keep parents generally informed of the facilities for education through the medium of Irish.

The further growth of all-Irish primary schools will be determined largely by the extent of parental demand. It is not yet clear whether current growth

patterns reflect a large untapped potential for education entirely through Irish, or whether, in due course, demand for such education will level out as a minority preference.

In the case of all-Irish second-level schools, the demands of the curriculum mean that a school must be of a significant size if it is to be able to provide courses across an acceptable range of subjects and levels. In practice, this arrangement may require the existence of an adequate number of feeder all-Irish schools in the catchment area of the second-level school. In some cases, the options of an all-Irish unit within the structure of an existing school, or of an all-Irish stream within an ordinary school, will need to be explored, where an all-Irish school, as an independent unit, is not viable.

The provision of high quality Irish-language textbooks in a wide range of subjects for a relatively small market of users is a difficult task. Most of these textbooks are published through An Gúm, the Department's publications branch. Texts in Irish for the new Junior Certificate have recently been published by An Gúm. The Department will continue to subsidise the provision of such textbooks and materials so that they can be made available in a timely manner and at reasonable prices. The question as to the extent to which commercial publishers may be assisted to become involved in publishing Irish textbooks and whether the present arrangement — whereby An Gúm operates directly under the Department — is the most suitable and effective will be examined.

Third-Level Education

A pass in Irish in the Leaving Certificate is a requirement for admission to any of the colleges of the National University of Ireland. Other universities do not have such a requirement. However, the University of Limerick Act 1991 includes a provision that the university shall have due regard to the preservation, promotion and use of the Irish language, and a similar provision is included in the legislation for the Dublin Institute of Technology and the Regional Technical Colleges.

The Higher Education Authority (HEA) has a particular remit in relation to the national aims of restoring the Irish language and preserving and developing

the national culture. The Department and the HEA will co-operate in seeking to develop Irish in third-level colleges generally, in the spirit of the provisions contained in the University of Limerick Act, and the VEC Colleges Bills. It is envisaged that each third-level college will develop an explicit policy for the promotion, development and use of Irish among staff and students on its campus and report annually on progress.

Courses currently available to ensure the provision of teachers competent to teach through Irish will be reviewed.

A number of university scholarships are awarded annually to candidates from Gaeltacht areas and, since 1929, there have been provisions for taking certain courses through the medium of Irish at University College, Galway. The operation of the schemes will be reviewed, to ensure that their original aims are being achieved. In addition, present administrative arrangements will be examined also, with a view to increased delegation to college level of the operation of the revised schemes.

Co-ordination and Liaison

Within the Department, a working party is charged with the task of co-ordinating the provision for Irish in the educational system. The Department has also established consultative processes with a large number of organisations, both statutory and voluntary, dealing with the Irish language. A joint committee exists with Bord na Gaeilge in relation to matters concerning Irish in the educational system. The Department has regular consultations with Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge and also with Gaelscoileanna, the organisation representing all-Irish schools. The Department liaises on relevant matters with Roinn na Gaeltachta and Údarás na Gaeltachta.

These contacts play a positive role in ensuring that policy and its implementation respond to needs perceived by those most directly involved. The Department will explore the question of whether a forum of interested parties, meeting regularly, would more effectively further the process of consultation.

Working on the approaches outlined above, considerable progress in raising levels of competence can be achieved, with the co-operation of all who are committed to the promotion of Irish in schools. The overriding need is to make the learning of Irish attractive and rewarding for students.

Irish Language Action-Plan

The development of competence in the Irish language needs to be tackled at a number of levels, viz. in the formal school curriculum, in a whole school context, and in the context of the wider community. A number of important initiatives are proposed to re-focus the nature of curricular provision and create support for Irish outside the formal curriculum:

- The proportion of marks available for oral and comprehension competences will be substantially increased to 60% in the Certificate Examinations.
- Schools will be encouraged and supported in the development of summer schools on school premises, to complement summer schools in the Gaeltacht.
- Schools will be asked to develop specific policies/initiatives for the use of Irish outside the formal curriculum.
- Parents' associations in each school will be asked to develop initiatives in the wider community outside the school to provide regular opportunities for adults and students to use Irish.
- Each third-level institution will be required to formulate a policy on the development and use of Irish among students and staff.
- Support for all-Irish schools will continue.
- The obligation of all other teachers to have a basic oral competence will be maintained and strengthened in order to facilitate teachers in using Irish in the wider school context.
- A new oral/aural examination will be introduced for all new teachers of Irish.
- In-career courses will place particular emphasis on teaching methodology and use of most up-to-date language teaching techniques and language enrichment for teachers.

- A renewed emphasis on oral competence at primary level, with more clearly defined learning objectives for different age-levels.

4.7 THE ROLE OF SCHOOLS IN PROMOTING HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

The personal and social development of students must be a central concern of the school. The school as a whole, including its environment and climate, its curriculum and its participation in the community, has a significant influence on all aspects of the growth and development of its students. Because of this, it is essential that schools should respect the personal identity and background of all students, to provide experiences which build their self-esteem and provide opportunities to learn basic personal and social skills which help students become young persons who are honest, direct and self-confident, yet sensitive to the feelings and rights of others. The achievement of these objectives for all students will be influenced by the climate of the school and classroom, by the organisation and teaching methods used, the school's approach to students' personal difficulties, as well as by the wider educational and spiritual values transmitted by the school. The approach should be developmental, throughout all the young person's time in school, and should emphasise the role of parents as primary educators and the need for a continuing partnership between parents and schools.

There are also examples of Health Education projects at both primary and second levels, involving co-operation between schools and Regional Health Boards and voluntary agencies. At national level, the Department of Education has co-operated with the Department of Health in developing educational resource materials and associated in-career training on HIV/AIDS. More recently, the Departments of Education and Health have initiated a development project on the misuse of substances, with the co-operation of the Mater Dei Student Counselling Centre (Dublin) and a number of schools.

The Health-Promoting School

A positive approach to the promotion of the personal and social development of students can be summed up in the concept of the Health-Promoting School. Such a school can be defined in terms of three main features:

(i) **School climate**, which is reflected in the relationships between all members of the school community, codes of behaviour, the extent to which all students are valued and the general environment of the school. School managements would review the extent to which their schools:

- Promote self-esteem in all students.
- Develop good relationships between staff and students.
- Encourage an exemplar role for staff in health-related issues.
- Ensure that staff are enabled to identify students at risk of abuse in any form.

(ii) A willingness to **involve and consult with parents and the wider community** which would both draw on the support of the community and also play its part in promoting the welfare of that community. In developing and implementing their programmes, schools would work closely with all the community agencies concerned with the health and welfare of their students and families, including:

- Consultation with parents on the development of school policy.
- In disadvantaged areas, the home/school liaison programme, which offers a means of enhancing parental involvement.
- Co-operation with voluntary agencies in initiatives relating to lifestyle-influenced diseases such as cancer, heart disease and HIV/AIDS.
- Co-operation with agencies concerned with safety and the environment.

(iii) A willingness to **intervene positively** to promote the physical and mental welfare of its students, with due regard to their family and social circumstances. Such intervention would include:

- A Physical Education programme, beginning at the early stages of primary education, that would promote the physical well-being of all students in a non-competitive way and linked, where appropriate, to education on hygiene and diet.
- The provision of a systematic health screening programme, including the provision of medical and dental services to students, linked to support and advice for families of young people in need. This provision will be reviewed in collaboration with the Department of Health.

- Developing a school policy on personal and social education in consultation with staff and parents.
- The provision of a sexuality education programme, appropriate to all levels of students, beginning in the early stages of primary education.
- At the appropriate level, programmes relating to substance abuse and the promotion of a healthy lifestyle.
- Ensuring the appropriate allocation and training of teachers for work in this area.

An identified minimum curriculum, including content and methodology, should be included in the pre-service training of all teachers, to furnish them with an understanding of the aims, principles and practice of work in this area. In-career provision should be made available to teachers who wish to take a role in this work and would be a priority for those for whom this area would be a major responsibility. These will include, for example, the co-ordinator at school level, school counsellors and other teachers with special areas of responsibility.

The Health-Promoting School Project

Together with the Department of Health and the school authorities, a major initiative is being undertaken to foster the development of health-promoting schools. This initiative, which is being supported by the EC, will begin in ten schools in 1992. The programme in Ireland is part of a network of schools throughout Europe. In the first phase, the following activities will be at the core of the project:

- A National Centre will be established to support the project and undertake ongoing evaluation.
- Baseline data on current practice in schools will be collected and analysed.
- Guidelines on key issues and objectives appropriate to the various stages of development will be formulated.
- A framework will be established to enable schools to undertake a school review and assessment of their needs in this area.

- In-career training for personnel will be provided at local and national level.
- Local and national support for the development of materials and programmes and for the active involvement of parents, community bodies and voluntary health agencies will be provided.
- The project will seek to involve relevant community health personnel, with particular emphasis on the prevention of lifestyle diseases.

Other Health Education Projects

In addition to the Health-Promoting School Project, the Departments of Education and Health are co-operating on other projects concerned with the promotion of a healthy lifestyle in young people:

- The development of educational resource materials and associated in-career training for teachers concerning *HIV/AIDS*. These materials have been made available to all second-level schools, and in-career training has been offered to teachers in each school.
- *A Substance Abuse Prevention Project* was initiated in 1991, with the co-operation of the Mater Dei Student Counselling Centre and a number of schools. The aims of the project are to develop a model for implementing effective substance abuse education within the context of health education in schools, including the development of suitable resource materials. It is intended that the programme would be evaluated and made available nationally in 1993.
- *A Child-Abuse Programme* at primary level, under the auspices of the Department of Health, is supported by the Department of Education through the secondment of three teachers to work with Eastern Health Board personnel in implementing the programme. Additional teachers will be released to enable the programme to be extended to all Health Board areas. In addition, it is proposed to expand the programme to second-level schools to provide support for teachers in managing the disclosure of abuse. A pack containing guidelines on dealing with matters relating to abuse has been issued to primary schools, and it is proposed to issue similar guidelines to second-level schools in the near future.

Relationships within the School

The nature of interpersonal relationships, and the way in which the school community is encouraged to be involved in the operation of the school, have a significant bearing on both student and teacher behaviour. Boards of management, principals and teachers all play a crucial role in the formulation and development of a school's policy on behaviour.

It is particularly important to emphasise the role that parents should play in the development of positive standards of behaviour among students, and a school's behaviour policy should be developed in close consultation with parents. Many schools have formulated codes of behaviour or have amended existing codes in recent years, particularly since the Department's preparation of guidelines on school discipline and behaviour in primary schools in 1990. In most cases, the schools have consulted closely with parents in this work.

The Department of Education has recently issued similar guidelines and a suggested code of behaviour to all second-level schools. The Department will continue to encourage boards of management, teachers and parents, both at primary and second level, to co-operate fully in the formulation, updating and implementation of codes of behaviour.

As part of its policy of encouraging schools to draw up or adapt codes of behaviour, the Department of Education will hold a series of seminars on codes of behaviour for schools throughout the country and will monitor the progress being made by schools in the formulation and implementation of these codes, by means of information provided in school returns and inspectors' reports.

4.8 NEW TECHNOLOGY AND THE CURRICULUM

During the period of curricular change in the 1960s, the initiation of "Telefís Scoile" was seen to have a significant impact on curricular improvement and in-career training. Pilot schemes of educational radio for Irish schools have also been regarded as successful ventures. The use of television and radio for formal education purposes has become firmly established in other developed countries. Its potential for present Irish circumstances was endorsed strongly in the report

and recommendations of the Educational Broadcasting Committee. Technology now facilitates very flexible use of broadcast materials within school timetables. With careful planning in the use of such materials, teachers can enrich their teaching greatly, and the quality of students' educational experience can be enhanced through a medium which is very much a part of their environment and culture.

At a period of significant curricular and managerial change in Irish schools, it is intended to explore the possibilities of drawing on the resources and potential of Ireland's educational broadcasting and to initiate discussions with the relevant agencies in this regard. For adults, plans are underway to extend the use of distance learning programmes, in association with the National Distance Education Centre, the universities and the broadcasting authorities.

Teaching at all levels of the education system must keep abreast of the potential created by new technologies for the process of teaching and learning. The use of the new information technologies — for example, computers, interactive video and electronic mail — is likely to be a more familiar feature of classroom life in the future. Equally, it is increasingly important that a basic appreciation and understanding of the modern information and communication technologies is fostered in young people, from their early years in school up to the completion of their education.

4.9 PRE-SCHOOLING

Under the Child Care Act 1991, responsibilities in relation to pre-schools lie with the Minister for Health. Section 50 of the Act provides that the Minister, in making regulations to secure the health, safety and welfare and to promote the development of children attending pre-schools, will consult with the Minister for Education, who will advise, as appropriate, on the educational aspects of provisions governing pre-schooling.

Special arrangements, funded by the Department of Education, exist for certain groups of children under 4 years of age. These include a special inner-city project in Dublin and provision for the children of travelling families,

where this is required. The health authorities also make grants-in-aid to voluntary bodies, to provide pre-schooling for children with disabilities and for certain disadvantaged groups.

At present, although children aged four or five are not obliged by law to attend school, in practice some 65% of 4-year-olds and almost all 5-year-olds attend the infant classes in primary schools. The Primary Education Review Body commented that *"since children are entitled to enter school from the age of four years, much of what is considered pre-schooling in other countries is already incorporated in the primary school system in Ireland."* (p.72) In the context of the considerable financial implications of extending pre-schooling to children under four, the Review Body recommended *"that more pressing areas of concern affecting the quality of educational provision from age four to age twelve-plus be given priority over a general system of pre-schooling for children under four."* (p.72)

Experience of the home/school liaison programme has confirmed the importance of achieving the involvement of parents with the school at as early a stage as possible in the child's development. It is proposed, therefore, to extend the development of pre-school programmes as part of the home/school liaison project for disadvantaged areas, in co-operation with all concerned groups and agencies. In addition, schools will be encouraged to make school facilities available, to the extent possible, to community and parent groups for pre-school activities.

Chapter 5

MAKING
the
BEST USE
of
RESOURCES

Chapter 5

MAKING THE BEST USE OF RESOURCES

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This Chapter deals with three main themes: radically devolving administration from the centre, introducing the best management practice at all levels of the system, and strengthening policy-making.

The recent OECD Review, commenting on the education system, stated:

... although a small system, it has the same administrative apparatus and faces the same problem of control, management and monitoring as large systems ... The schools are locally managed ... but in so far as the exercise of its specific powers are concerned, the Department of Education functions like a ... highly centralised bureaucracy. (p. 36)

While the *Review* acknowledged the existence of a close relationship and partnership between institutions and the Department "to which many countries now aspire" (p. 37), it concluded that a case could be made for the devolution of many managerial functions to local and school levels, in order that the Department of Education could "concentrate on higher-level administration and policy-oriented tasks." (p. 41)

Much has happened in Ireland which has created a context for change and, indeed, has already led to change in the management of educational institutions. Most significant, perhaps, is the degree to which parent and teacher representation is an accepted part of the management structures at primary and post-primary level, though not yet applied in all cases at the post-primary level. Gaelscoileanna and multi-denominational schools have been established with new ownership arrangements, in response to parental demand.

The need for change in the functions and responsibilities of Boards of Management at the primary level has also been raised. The Primary Education Review Body (1990) recommended that the Boards should be given greater autonomy and should play a more meaningful role in the operation of the school, while ensuring proper communication with parents. The Review Body also stated that "*The Chairperson [of the Board] is usually the local clergyman and*

Boards, generally, are well served in this respect. Not all clergymen, however, are suited to this role, nor indeed do some of them wish to assume this responsibility." (p. 37)

The 1991 annual report of the Catholic Primary School Managers' Association echoed this sentiment: "*Priests are questioning their role as Chairmen of Boards, a role which on occasions may come in conflict with their pastoral functions."* (p. 7)

Against this background, it seems appropriate to consider ways of strengthening Boards of Management and of facilitating wider access to the post of Chairperson.

The Religious have made an enormous contribution to Irish education, at all levels, and will continue to do so. Their role has been particularly important in school management within the voluntary secondary sector. Because of the decline in religious vocations, the degree of involvement of the Religious in management has changed over the last decade. As a result, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of lay principals, who now account for 35% of all principals in voluntary secondary schools.

The present diversity of school type at post-primary level stems from the decisions taken to establish particular forms of school management and organisation appropriate to needs at the time. Thus, we now have comprehensive schools, community schools and community colleges, as well as the more traditional secondary and vocational schools. Each type seeks to offer a broadly based education for all, but with different types of management structure and varying levels of delegated authority. In view of the common objectives of these second-level schools, it is timely to consider whether a common form of management for all, representative of concerned interests, might not be more appropriate for the future.

A strengthened role for school management was foreshadowed under the PESP, with its emphasis on the need to define and strengthen "*the respective roles of Boards of Management, Principals, Vice-Principals and holders of other posts of responsibility in the management and day-to-day running of schools."* (p. 34) At the same time, there is a need to change the centralist role of the Department of Education in favour of arrangements that would permit much more authority and responsibility to be devolved to local level.

A feature of many present trends, and, in particular, of the drive to promote greater autonomy for schools, is the desire to reflect parents' rights and wishes in school management, combined with local community involvement, as part of a genuine partnership with the providers of education.

5.2 PARTNERSHIP IN MANAGEMENT

In line with the general trends outlined, it is proposed that the following broad principles should form the basis for improved organisation and management in education:

- The creation of a management structure for each school or institution which is representative of all concerned interests and with the necessary authority to perform its management functions.
- The establishment of a national policy and budgetary framework within which each school or institution can exercise its responsibilities.
- The Department of Education to devolve the maximum degree of responsibility for the management of its affairs to the school or institution.
- The development of services to support the work of individual schools and to plan and co-ordinate a range of educational provision.

5.3 THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL

Primary and Secondary Schools

Some diversity in primary school provision is now emerging, with all-Irish schools and multi-denominational schools complementing the more general parish schools. In addition, the Department of Education has ten "model" schools directly under its aegis, as well as a small number of other primary schools directly vested in the Minister. All these schools are classified as national schools. In line with international practice, and to denote the level of education, it is proposed to describe all schools at this level as primary schools. This will not preclude school authorities from maintaining specific names for their schools.

Further, in line with the new structures described below, it is proposed to open discussions on transferring "model" schools, and other schools directly vested in the Minister, into the general primary school provision.

Ten multi-denominational primary schools have come into existence in recent years; all were established because of the initiative and resourcefulness of parents. Where the establishment of further multi-denominational schools represents the wishes of parents, and where such schools can be justified on the basis of demand, the Department of Education will facilitate and support the establishment of such schools on the same terms as those available for the establishment of denominational schools.

At the second level, it is proposed that all schools be described as **secondary schools**.³ This brings Ireland into line with international practice and eliminates any misunderstanding or confusion about the nature of the schools. As with primary schools, school authorities would be free to retain specific names for their schools, in line with their own traditions.

The deeds of trust and any instrument and articles of management of publicly owned schools will be reviewed in consultation with all concerned interests. In the case of privately owned schools, appropriate leasing arrangements will be finalised, in consultation with the authorities concerned, in order to ensure that the interests of both the schools' owners and the State are properly safeguarded.

Boards of Management

Schools are a key resource for improving the quality of life for all those in their communities. Boards of Management that are representative and operating effectively enable schools to be of maximum benefit to students and the broader community.

Since 1975, Boards of Management have become a more common feature of Ireland's school system. It is now proposed that a Board of Management be

³ This term is used throughout the remainder of this Green Paper to denote all types of second-level schools.

appointed by the owners/trustees for each primary and secondary school. These Boards would operate for periods of three years under clearly defined rules for both primary and secondary schools.

The major responsibility of the Board of Management would be to ensure that the school achieves the highest quality of education for its students. Boards of Management would have to receive the necessary authority for this purpose from the owners/trustees, on the basis of clearly defined roles and responsibilities and embodied in appropriate instruments and articles of management. There would be minimal intervention from the owners/trustees and the Department of Education, both of whom would provide support where needed. The Board would also seek the active involvement and support of parents and the community.

It is suggested that the composition of the Board would be as set out in the Tables overleaf:

PRIMARY SCHOOLS

4 Teachers or less

- 3 Nominated by the trustees or owners.
 - 2 Elected by parents who have children in the school.
 - 1 Co-opted from the local community.
- The Principal as a voting member.

5 Teachers or more

- 5 Nominated by the trustees or owners.
 - 2 Elected by parents who have children in the school.
 - 2 Elected by teachers in the school.
 - 1 Co-opted from the local community, preferably a representative of the local business community.
- The Principal as a voting member.

SECONDARY SCHOOLS

(all aided schools)

- 5 Nominated by the trustees or owners.
 - 2 Elected by parents who have children in the school.
 - 2 Elected by teachers in the school.
 - 1 Co-opted from the local business community.
- The Principal as a voting member.

Note: It would be open to smaller schools, within the one or adjacent catchment areas, to come together to form a common Board of Management.

It is proposed that the Chairperson would be elected from among the members of the Board, with rotation of this position encouraged. Employees of the school, that is the Principal and other staff, would not be eligible for election as Chairperson. Persons appointed to Boards of Management — in particular, the Chairperson — would be expected to have a high level of commitment to the school and, where possible, relevant expertise. In addition, it would be open to the Board to co-opt, on a non-voting basis, past-pupils and others who could further the interests of the school. A balanced representation of the sexes would be expected, with a specified minimum representation from each sex.

Functions of Boards of Management

The Board of Management would provide leadership and ensure effective management for the school, within an agreed school budget and a framework of accountability. In this, the Board would be supported by the principal, vice-principal (for larger schools) and holders of other posts of responsibility, each with well-defined duties. In discharging this function, the specific responsibilities of the Board should include ensuring that the following objectives are met: quality of student learning, appointment of staff, quality of teaching and School Plan and review.

Quality of Student Learning

The most important responsibility of the Board is to ensure that the learning environment is such that a high quality education is provided for all students. The Board, through the principal and teaching staff, should ensure that the needs of students, individually and collectively, are identified and responded to by the school, and that the curricular, assessment and general educational provisions within the school are of a high standard. The Board should also encourage the active involvement of parents and, where appropriate, the participation of students in decision-making within the school. In secondary schools, Boards will be required to move towards encouraging the establishment of student representative councils, with which the principal would liaise. This could lead, in time, to the representation of students on the Board of Management.

Appointment of Staff

It would be a matter for the Board of Management to ensure that appropriately qualified and competent staff are appointed. It is visualised that staff would be appointed to the school by the Board of Management through the following process, using appropriate professional expertise on the selection committees:

- The principal would be appointed on the basis of the recommendation of a selection committee, consisting of the Chairperson of the Board of Management, and four others appointed by the Board.
- Vice-principals, holders of posts of responsibility and other teaching staff would be appointed on the basis of the recommendation of a selection committee, consisting of the Chairperson of the Board of Management, the principal and three others appointed by the Board.
- The non-teaching staff would be appointed by the Board of Management, within the budgetary allocation.

In all cases, the selection committees should be such as to reflect a gender balance in their membership and to have not less than a specified minimum representation of each sex.

Quality of Teaching

The Board would have a particular responsibility to ensure that the teaching staff have the required expertise and skill, and that a high quality of teaching is maintained throughout the school. It also would ensure that there is support for probationer teachers and it would identify and address staff development needs. Where weaknesses are identified, the Board would ensure that remedial action is taken.

School Plan and Review

The concept of a School Plan is now well accepted throughout the primary sector and, to an increasing degree, at secondary level. Building on this, it is proposed that all primary and secondary schools should have a plan, as a school policy statement, to be prepared annually by the principal, in

consultation with the other members of staff, and approved by the Board of Management. The plan would set out key strategies for the school, such as:

- The approach to the curriculum, methods of learning and homework policy, including the range and level of subjects taught.
- Arrangements for assessing the progress of students.
- Policy on support for children who need particular care and attention.
- Policy on the promotion of the health and fitness of students.
- Policy on the promotion of the Irish language and an Irish milieu.
- Policy on expanding the provision of and take-up of European languages.
- Teacher/parent and home/school liaison programme.
- Policy and procedures on school behaviour and discipline.
- Links between primary and secondary schools and between secondary schools and higher education.
- Support arrangements for probationary teachers.
- Staff development policy.
- The policy on continuing and adult education and on other services to the community.
- In the case of secondary schools, the enrolment policy of the school.

The Department will provide guidelines for the development of the School Plan. To complement the School Plan, it is proposed that each school carry out an annual written report of all aspects of its work. This should include curricular policy and initiatives, and the outcomes of assessment and staff development policies. It should contain, as an appendix, a summary analysis of relevant statistical data. Where appropriate, the review also should specify follow-up action. The School Plan and review would form the basis for regular meetings with parents and would be available as part of whole school inspection.

Information from this review, in aggregated form, would be of particular importance to the Department in its continuing review of the education system. It would facilitate the dissemination of information on good practice and also

help to identify those schools and activities that need assistance and support beyond their own resources.

School Leadership

A statement of the school's goals will be an integral part of the school plan and will reflect its educational aims. Effective management and leadership, at all levels within the school, will be essential to the achievement of these goals.

Recent research on the characteristics of effective schools confirms the importance of leadership, teamwork and sound management structures.

The principal, as the chief executive of the school, occupies a pivotal role. Under the direction of the Board of Management, the principal has the responsibility for determining the school's educational aims, formulating the strategies to achieve them, encouraging the commitment of all the staff to supporting those goals, and developing the school's curriculum and assessment policies.

The principal is the manager of the teaching staff, affirming and evaluating their work, identifying their development needs, and fostering good relationships between the staff and parents and, indeed, the community generally. Teachers would be accountable to the principal for the discharge of their duties; in turn, the principal would be accountable to the Board of Management for the work of everyone in the school. The principal, with senior school staff, would arrange for the proper support of new staff, particularly during their probationary period.

The principal is supported by the vice-principal and holders of posts of responsibility. At the same time, there should be a sense of participatory decision-making, of teamwork, involving all staff. A positive approach to school leadership embraces effective consultation and participation in the decision-making process by all concerned, including parents and students.

As the Programme for Economic and Social Progress states, discussions will take place with interested parties to redefine the respective roles of principals,

vice-principals and holders of posts of responsibility. Guidelines will be prepared to assist schools in framing the management structures within their schools and methods of operation. Selection committees for management posts would be required to pay particular attention to each candidate's track record in in-career development.

A priority for in-career training will be management training for staff with managerial responsibilities. A special training programme, adapting the best practice in management generally to the special needs of education, will be established in 1992. Attendance at this course will be obligatory for all new principals and its availability will be extended progressively to existing principals.

Time in School

The Duration of Schooling

The Government has recently decided that the option of six years of secondary education would be available to all students who commenced secondary education in 1991. This brings to 12 years the period of education from primary through to the end of secondary level (excluding the two years of infant classes). This is generally in line with international standards.

A major policy objective will be to seek to have all students complete the three years of the Junior Certificate programme, even those who transfer to secondary level later than the desired 12 years of age. About 9% of young people currently leave school at the age of 15 and most are not likely to have completed three years of secondary schooling. To encompass these children and to bring Ireland's school-leaving age more in line with that of many of our European partners, it is proposed to raise the school-leaving age from 15 to 16.

The School Year

While the duration of schooling in Ireland is generally in accordance with international patterns, traditionally it has had a shorter school year than other developed countries, many of whom have school years corresponding to 200 school days. In Ireland, at primary level, the school year is officially 184 days;

at secondary level it is 180 days, including the period of the Certificate Examinations.

(i) Primary

The position in respect of the primary level was reviewed in detail by the Primary Education Review Body, whose major concern was to ensure that the requirement that 184 days be devoted to teaching was not eroded. As recommended by the Review Body, the relevant rules will be clarified on the basis of the following model:

Days	
School in Operation for Teaching	184
<i>Standard Number of Closings:</i>	
(a) Saturdays and Sundays	104
(b) Permitted Vacation Days	56
(c) Public and Religious Holidays	<u>15</u>
	175 175
Remaining Days	<u>6</u>
	365

The six remaining days are intended to be used for school-related activities such as curriculum development and school planning, as well as for special closures.

(ii) Secondary

At secondary level, the rule requiring 180 days results in 168 days of teaching, when the period of 12 days for the Certificate Examinations is deducted. In practice, this allowance of 12 days currently applies to all students and teachers, even though less than half the students and a small proportion of teachers are actually involved in the public examinations. In addition, a variety of other factors, such as early closures before examinations, mid-term breaks and special closures, have further eroded the minimum of 168 days.

It is proposed to ensure the integrity of the 168 days, as follows:

Days	
School in Operation for Teaching	168
Allowance for Certificate Examinations	12
<i>Standard Number of Closings:</i>	
(a) Saturdays and Sundays	104
(b) Vacation Days	60
(c) Public and Religious Holidays	<u>15</u>
	179 179
Remaining Days	<u>6</u>
	365

As in the case of primary schools, the six remaining days are intended to be used for school-related activities such as curriculum development and school planning.

In addition, it is proposed to discuss with all interested parties the use of the period of the certificate examinations for purposes such as in-career training and in-house examinations/assessment, for those not directly involved in the certificate examinations.

The Pupil/Teacher Ratio

Primary

The recent OECD Review commented on the value of selective improvements, such as the provision of more remedial teachers, or more teachers in disadvantaged areas, rather than a blanket lowering of the pupil/teacher ratio. The needs of disadvantaged groups require a degree of targeting of resources so that efforts can be made, within existing resource limits, to improve the class size in areas of greatest need.

The improvement currently being undertaken to reduce the pupil/teacher ratio to 25:1 is made possible, partly by the creation of additional teaching posts

and partly by retaining teaching post numbers which otherwise would have been lost because of the decline in student numbers. As a result of agreements reached under the Programme for Economic and Social Progress, a substantial number of these posts is being allocated to special needs, such as the provision of remedial teachers and of additional posts to schools in disadvantaged areas. At the same time, this improvement is helping to reduce large classes throughout the system.

Secondary

In discussing the pupil/teacher ratio in secondary schools, reference is usually made to the present ratio of 19.5:1 or, with effect from 1992/93, to a ratio of 19.25:1. While these are the ratios on which staff allocations or schedules are based, the true pupil/teacher ratio, derived from dividing the total number of pupils by the total number of teachers, was 17.4:1 in 1990/91. That situation has improved for 1991/92, and will be further ameliorated over the next few years as a result of improvements agreed under the Programme for Economic and Social Progress.

In order to gain the maximum educational advantage from improvements in the pupil/teacher ratio, future policy will be that, where financial circumstances allow for the appointment of additional teachers, they will be allocated on the basis of greatest educational need, having regard, in particular, to the needs of the disadvantaged. Across-the-board improvements in ratios, applying equally to every school — irrespective of the nature of its enrolment — are not seen as providing the best use of resources in attempting to achieve equality of opportunity for all.

Class Size in Schools

School managements should examine the organisation of class sizes within their schools, given the number of teachers available to the school at any particular time. At certain critical stages of a young person's schooling, smaller class sizes are more important than at other times. Accordingly, school management should consider the benefits, within available teaching resources, of matching class sizes more closely to the curricular and developmental needs of the students.

Funding of Schools

Arrangements are being made for the introduction of a new funding mechanism for all state-aided primary schools and for secondary schools that meet required criteria. The aims of the new funding mechanism are twofold. It will ensure a more equitable basis of funding for schools, while providing the maximum flexibility to Boards of Management in the operation of their school budgets.

A study of recurrent costs, excluding teachers' pay, for first- and second-level schools is underway to identify a cost per student at primary and secondary level. This data will form an important input into the determination of school budgets.

It is envisaged that the budgets for all state-aided primary and secondary schools would be determined as follows:

- A standard budget by school size and by school level, based on a cost per student, subject to a minimum provision for very small schools.
- An additional budget allocation for schools serving disadvantaged areas and for those providing for children with special needs.
- An additional budget allocation for secondary schools offering non-mainstream programmes such as Vocational Preparation and Training (VPT), Youthreach and other special community-based programmes.

Expenditures within the school budget would be at the discretion of the Boards of Management, under procedures that would ensure accountability. The discretionary budget would be increased progressively, to the extent feasible and, over time, could be extended to cover a range of support services, including school transport. While teachers' pay will not be included within the discretionary budget, the Department will discuss with concerned interests whether additional flexibility may be introduced, such as:

- Teacher allocations to be on the basis of full-time staff equivalents related to the pupil/teacher ratio, with appointments to be at the discretion of the Board of Management.

- Additional expenditures currently made for teachers' pay, such as those for part-time hours for special curricular needs and provision for substitution, to become part of the discretionary school budget provision.

Conditions for Funding

Equity requires that schools similarly funded would be subject to similar funding conditions. All schools would be expected to establish a representative Board of Management with the necessary authority to manage, on the basis set out previously. In addition, schools will be requested to promote the community use of school buildings, when they are not required for school purposes. The use of the school buildings for adult education and summer language schools will also be encouraged.

In addition, State-aided secondary schools will be required, as a condition of funding, to:

- Have an admissions policy that will not discriminate on the basis of means, educational level or social background.
- Provide a comprehensive system of education suitable for a wide ability range.
- Provide for the educational needs of the local community.

Currently, of the almost 800 secondary schools, 55 are fee-paying schools. Fee-paying schools do not, in general, qualify for the non-pay funding given to schools that do not charge fees, but they receive State funding for the payment of recognised teachers in their schools. The payment of salaries means that they receive about 85% of the amount of State support given to a non-fee-paying school.

Discussions will be held with the authorities of fee-paying schools with a view to determining whether or not it would be appropriate for them to join the non fee-paying sector. In these discussions, regard will be had to whether these schools are fulfilling an educational requirement in their own specific catchment areas, and whether or not this could improve the availability of second-level places in their area.

In the case of those schools which continue to charge fees, discussions will be held with their authorities on the extent to which they would be in a position to meet the other conditions specified above, e.g. Boards of Management, community use of buildings, non-selective admission policy and full financial reporting.

5.4 PARENTS AS PARTNERS

Since parents are the primary educators of their children, their representatives have a critical role to play in the management of schools and in supporting the education of their children in school.

The National Parents Council (Primary and Post-Primary Tiers) has developed into a strong and active body, articulating the needs and concerns of parents. The Council's contribution to policy issues is very much welcomed and will continue to be an important part of policy formulation.

The composition of Boards of Management includes parents in order to ensure that they are directly involved in the decision-making process of primary and secondary schools. Schools will continue to be actively encouraged to establish parents' associations in schools where they do not already exist.

Apart from being represented on Boards of Management, all parents should have a close relationship with schools, in support of their children's education. In recognition of this role, a number of further initiatives are proposed:

- The inclusion of a formal home/school liaison policy in each school's plan, outlining the school's approach to links with the home and the actions being taken to foster such links.
- Close consultation with parents in the development of each school's behaviour and discipline policies, emphasising the role of parents in the development of agreed standards and the importance of good communications between parents and teachers on matters of behaviour and discipline.

- In areas of disadvantage, the extension of the special home/schools links programme, embracing both primary and secondary schools.
- Regular formal meetings between parents and school management to review the school's work, on the basis of a report by the school on its policies and activities.
- The establishment by Boards of Management of procedures through which individual parents can receive full information from schools on all aspects of their children's progress.

5.5 THE ROLE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The essential tasks of the Department of Education are:

- To formulate a national policy for education.
- To support and monitor the country's educational development and achievements within that policy framework.
- To establish and ensure maintenance of national standards of quality.
- To allocate available educational resources equitably on the basis of a well-defined budgetary framework.
- To ensure the effective and efficient management of the education system.
- To ensure that those in need of special help and attention are identified and their needs addressed.

The various measures proposed in this paper, by which the maximum possible operational and management autonomy will be accorded to schools and colleges, will result in the Department divesting itself of its excessive involvement in day-to-day administration of the education system. The Department, therefore, will be in a position to address itself to its key tasks in a more dynamic and effective manner.

Some operational functions would still need to be maintained at central level, under the aegis of the Department. The most efficient way by which these tasks would be performed, while enabling the Department to focus on its broader policy role, would be through a series of executive agencies which would have

designated powers and responsibilities, within given policy and budgetary frameworks.

The Department's operational activities are currently being reviewed with a view to determining those activities that might most appropriately be assigned to executive agencies, of which priority examples are:

- *Educational Property Management Agency*, with overall responsibility for forward planning, building, maintenance and cost-efficient and effective management of educational buildings.
- *Curriculum and Assessment Agency* (subsuming the NCCA), with two components, one responsible for the administration of the certificate examinations and the other with a range of functions in relation to school curricula.
- *Payroll Agency*, with responsibility for payments to primary and secondary teachers on the basis of the agreed policies and criteria in respect of salaries and allowances.
- *School Psychological Service Agency*, with responsibility for ensuring the provision of effective school psychological services for primary and secondary schools, in liaison with psychological services provided by the health authorities.
- *Special Education Service Agency*, to implement new policies on special education, following receipt of the report of the special committee currently examining this area.

Policy papers in these areas will be issued when detailed analyses have been completed.

5.6 THE ROLE OF THE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION COMMITTEES

As noted elsewhere, VECs will no longer be directly responsible for the day-to-day management of schools, and teachers will be employees of the Boards of Management of the individual schools.

However, the Vocational Education Committees will play an important role in the development and provision of vocational education and training. Similarly, they will play an important co-ordinating and support role at the local level in the proposed expansion of activities in such areas as adult education, including literacy and community education, youth and sport services and a range of other special services.

In view of the new needs and circumstances, the operation and structures of the VECs will be reviewed comprehensively in consultation with all concerned. As part of that review, it is proposed to examine and streamline the current network of the 38 VECs.

The Chief Executive Officer

The Chief Executive Officers of the Vocational Education Committees have been responsible for many recent initiatives to adapt the education system to changing circumstances. Notable examples have been the extension of adult education provision, and especially VTOS, the development of VPT and Youthreach programmes, and of community education programmes generally. It is proposed to discuss in detail with CEOs how best their role can be developed so that they can continue to contribute in the most effective way possible in the future.

5.7 EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICES

Co-operation between schools and between schools and other agencies to provide support services on a co-operative basis will be encouraged and supported. These may arise at regional, area or local level, as educational requirements dictate. There are many examples of this at present through initiatives of school managements, principals and teachers and the establishment of local bodies such as Schools/Industry Liaison Committees. The Teachers Centres could also provide a basis for informal support services.

5.8 TRANSPARENCY IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Promoting Transparency

A continuing two-way flow of information, from local providers of education to parents, to local communities and to the Department, as well as from the Department to all concerned interests, both locally and nationally, will be critical to the success of the education system in the future. Comprehensive information on all aspects of the operation and performance of the system is also seen as a basic right of users of educational services, children and their parents, in permitting them to make informed choices.

Schools will inform students and their parents on the student's achievements and advise on any follow-up action required. The development of effective guidance and remedial services in schools to assist with this process is described elsewhere in this paper. In addition, each school will report to parents and the local community on its performance and achievements by reference to its School Plan and levels of achievement nationally. In any such comparison, due regard would have to be taken of the overall standard of the school's students on entry and of any special circumstances that might apply, such as in the case of schools in disadvantaged areas, or schools with an above-average number of children in need of remedial help.

At the third level, colleges will be expected to publish an annual report which included a review of performance against agreed performance indicators and against other policy objectives. Such indicators would extend to aggregated data on performance, for each course, as a matter of public information and as an input to periodic reviews of performance of the third-level sector to be undertaken by the HEA. For the same purposes, the report would also detail post-graduation performance, in relation to progression to postgraduate studies and employment performance.

Similar reports will be required from institutions providing vocational training, and will be complemented by evaluation reports prepared by the proposed Council for Educational and Vocational Awards (see Chapter 4).

These reports would follow a common format with respect to both content and presentation, which, in all cases, would be modest and functional.

Annual Education Report

An Annual Education Report will also be prepared by the Department of Education which will provide information and analysis to the public on the progress of the education system. It will provide an analytical review of the operation of the system over the year, progress in the implementation of planned educational reforms, and a comprehensive statistical analysis. This report will include an analysis of the flow of students to the end of third level, participation and dropout rates, outcomes of assessment (including the certificate examinations), trends in subject choices, and analysis of information supplied by the schools.

This report will complement the Inspectorate's annual report on the qualitative aspects of the system, reports from the executive agencies and other periodic reports on performance in individual aspects. Together, these reports will provide a comprehensive overview of educational progress and performance for all those involved in education and for the public at large.

Chapter 6

The
TEACHING
PROFESSION

Chapter 6

THE TEACHING PROFESSION

6.1 THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

A well-trained and committed teaching force is essential in maintaining and enhancing the quality of education. The teaching profession has always been esteemed in Ireland and has continued to attract people of high calibre and intelligence. As the *OECD Review* team remarked, "*Ireland has been fortunate to maintain the quality of its teaching force.*" (p. 100) Teachers have made an enormous contribution to Irish society, and it is important that the career of teaching continues to be an attractive and professionally rewarding one. Research supports the widely held view that teaching is a complex and demanding job which requires high quality initial training and preparation, supported by in-career development to meet continually changing needs and demands.

6.2 INITIAL TEACHER PREPARATION

Pre-service training crucially influences teacher performance. The *OECD Review*, describing provision in this country, states that "*Despite the pressures, initial teacher education is already of a good and appropriate standard and, happily, the means very largely exist at present for the further development that should and will undoubtedly occur.*" (p. 97) In relation to possible future developments, it is timely to consider whether the current differences in the initial training of teachers for primary and secondary schools continues to be appropriate, especially in the light of current interest in bringing about a unified teaching profession. In this connection, it is worth noting that a number of OECD countries, which formerly had separate systems of training primary and secondary teachers, have now changed to a single system. The most recent example of this is France, where the initial training of teachers of primary and second level now involves obtaining a 3-year university qualification, followed by two years attendance at the new "*Instituts Universitaires de Formation des Maîtres*", which are specialist teacher training institutes associated with the universities.

The development of primary teacher training into its present 3-year course, leading to the B.Ed. degree, has resulted in its having many of the academic characteristics of a B.A. degree, with the addition of concurrent teacher training. In accordance with Government decisions, institutional links are being forged between the two main primary teacher training colleges and adjacent universities. As a result, the majority of students in these colleges will be following B.A. degrees, offered in conjunction with and validated by the universities. Thus, in relation to both the nature and context of initial training, the gap has been, or is being, narrowed between that for primary and secondary teachers.

A common form of initial training for all teachers appears to have considerable merit. Common initial training would provide greater interaction and understanding between prospective teachers at the different levels, as well as between them and students aspiring to other professions. It would facilitate greater flexibility in meeting teaching needs at the local level, particularly in the context of specialist teacher requirements at both levels. It would also contribute to current efforts to align curricula and, more importantly, would narrow the gap between teaching methodologies in senior primary and junior secondary classes.

6.3 A NEW MODEL FOR TEACHER TRAINING

It is proposed that all prospective primary and secondary teachers would undertake a three-stage programme of initial training, along the lines of the following model:

- *A university degree*, in which students could choose Education as a subject.
- *A postgraduate teacher-training diploma*, that would include teaching practice in a variety of school situations.
- *A probationary year*, consisting of part-time teaching complemented by attendance at a range of training modules provided by, or under the auspices of, the teacher training institutions.

A key concern during the period of probation is the evaluation of the participant's suitability for a teaching career. In that context, it is important that the trainee teacher should be supported and guided by the principal and senior staff during the probationary year. On the basis of set criteria, the principal teacher, having consulted appropriate personnel, would certify to the probationer's suitability for registration. It is proposed that such registration, at the end of the probationary period, would apply, in future, to all categories of teachers. This process would be monitored by the Inspectorate, who would also monitor the overall effectiveness of teacher training.

The Teaching of Degree Subjects

While, ideally, teachers should teach only their final year degree subjects, it is not considered practicable to introduce such a requirement at this stage. From August 1991, it has been a regulation of the Secondary Teachers' Registration Council that, to be registered, teachers must include one of the school curriculum subjects in their final degree examinations. It is proposed to add a further requirement that newly registering teachers must teach their final year degree subjects for at least half of their timetabled hours.

6.4 THE IN-CAREER DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS

As in other professions, teachers need to keep themselves abreast of new developments in their professional field of responsibility. They also should be facilitated in participating in and benefiting from structured opportunities for in-career training.

Ideally, teacher education should be seen as a continuum in which high quality initial training and properly structured induction are followed by well-devised in-career training programmes, available periodically throughout a teacher's career. The *OECD Review* recommended that "*the best returns from further investment in teacher education will come from the careful planning and construction of a nationwide induction and in-service system using the concept of the teaching career as the foundation.*" (p. 98)

In-career training is important in improving the quality of teaching, by helping teachers to develop their professional competence and to update their

knowledge and skills to keep abreast of changing educational requirements. The issue of personal and professional development is also decisively important in sustaining and enhancing teachers' motivation and in helping teachers to respond positively to the changing role of the school. They also must take account of social changes and the new challenges that face young people. Courses of varying duration will be required, including some long-duration courses leading to certification, and teachers will continue to be facilitated in pursuing such courses for their professional development.

In-Career Development Needs

The many proposed initiatives in this paper reinforce the need for an expanded and strengthened staff development programme, with particular reference to:

- More effective management within the education system.
- Identifying and providing for students with learning difficulties.
- Support for teachers in school-based assessment at primary and secondary levels.
- Upgrading of skills related to new programmes, particularly at the senior cycle level.

The importance of each school working with its staff to identify their development needs will be emphasised. It will be complemented by training for particular policy and curricular initiatives which will form part of the post-1993 programme for which support under EC Structural Funds will be sought (see Chapter 3).

Resources for in-career development will be strengthened progressively to provide the necessary range of training programmes. Full use will be made of the wide range of agencies and the variety of in-career training currently available locally and nationally. It will be important to ensure that available resources would be devoted to the provision of training, rather than to new and enlarged administrative structures.

Formalised provision for in-career development is intended to complement and support local initiatives by the schools themselves, singly or co-operatively,

or by agencies such as managerial bodies and teacher training institutions. Even where in-career education needs have not been identified locally, it is intended that provision should be locally based and should draw on local capabilities to the maximum extent possible, on the basis of agreed national criteria and guidelines.

Support for the involvement of the various providers would be on the basis of their meeting agreed needs and priorities identified both locally, by their client schools, and nationally.

As recently announced, a small specialist unit has been established in the Department of Education to provide co-ordination and direction to the work of the Department in relation to teacher in-career education. The unit will liaise with a subcommittee of the NCCA and with other relevant interests, on in-career training issues and priorities, as a basis for the allocation of available funding. In addition, the Inspectorate will have an overall monitoring role in relation to the development and provision of in-career education for teachers. A particular focus would be that of ensuring the suitability and competence of the agencies involved. In particular, it would be necessary to ensure the quality of the delivery of programmes, through regular monitoring and training of programme providers.

6.5 A CAREER STRUCTURE FOR TEACHERS

It is important that a clear career structure exists for teachers so that, on the basis of merit and achievement, they may have reasonable expectations of promotion to a post of responsibility, a vice-principalship, or a principalship of a school in the course of their career. This will benefit the teachers themselves and will improve the running of schools.

In recent years, the management of schools has become a more complex task, partly because of the increasing demands that society makes on schools, but also because of the significant changes that have occurred within education as more and new courses become available and as schools are expected to provide for the needs of an ever broader range of abilities and interests.

The position of the school principal is a demanding one. Bearing this in mind and, in the interests of mobility, career enhancement and the vitality of school leadership, a strong case can be made that future appointments of principals should be for a fixed term of, say, seven years, in all but the smaller schools, and with the option of reappointment by the Board of Management. This matter will be discussed with the concerned interests.

It is proposed that appointments to the posts of principal and vice-principal and to posts of responsibility be made through competition, on the basis of the best qualified and most competent teacher. Seniority will be just one of the factors considered in the selection process.

Within the overall allocation of teachers in an area, some teachers with recognised competence and commitment might be seconded to support and advise teachers and schools in the locality. They could help schools develop new or improved approaches to specific subjects, methods of assessment and teaching techniques to cope with particular problems. The model of "visiting teachers" used in the very successful intervention project for Physics and Chemistry in girls' schools, could form the basis for this type of dissemination of good practice.

6.6 THE CONDITIONS OF SERVICE OF TEACHERS

It is proposed that all teachers should be the employees of the Boards of Management. This would represent a change in the case of vocational teachers, and their rights, under the 1930 Vocational Education Act, would be fully safeguarded.

In line with the harmonisation of secondary school provision proposed in this paper, it would be important to bring about a unified secondary teaching profession. Recent moves by the teacher unions to come together in a single body would lend importance and support to such a development, since it seems sensible that all second-level teachers should have the same basic conditions of service. Such a provision would facilitate the mobility of teachers

throughout the secondary sector and make it possible to achieve the maximum use of specialist teaching services at the local level.

Conditions of service should be considered in conjunction with salary provisions. The Government has recently put forward proposals to extend the conciliation and arbitration scheme for teachers in order to include conditions of service on the same basis as elsewhere in the public service. It is within a common forum that the equalisation of teachers' conditions of service and other duties should be discussed.

6.7 ASSESSING THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

In line with the principle of devolution that is central to this paper, it will be a matter for the principal, in the first instance, to ensure the quality of teachers' work in the school. In consultation with all the interests involved, there will be a need to develop nationally agreed procedures, including self-assessment and peer review, for the ongoing evaluation of teachers' work, in order to identify current and future developmental needs and to make specific plans to meet such needs.

In particular, the problem of unsatisfactory teaching must be debated and resolved. While the needs of the student should be the primary concern, it is also in the teacher's and the profession's interest that remedial help be given to teachers experiencing difficulties. Such teachers should be given every possible support, including in-career development and further training. In the event of no improvement taking place over an agreed period, the Board of Management would be able to call on the advice and support of the Department of Education.

In the event that remediation is not successful, it would be necessary to pursue withdrawal of recognition. A balance has to be found between a sensitive approach to the problems of individual teachers and the right of students to teaching of the highest possible quality. This matter will be discussed under the proposed new arrangements for conciliation and arbitration.

6.8 A TEACHING COUNCIL

A council or governing body for teachers has long been sought by the profession and has been proposed, in one form or another, in a number of reports and other documents on education in Ireland.

The question of establishing a Teaching Council, with functions extended to include all teachers, is being considered at present by a committee established in 1990 and representative of all concerned interests. Certain legal issues have been raised by the committee and an opinion has been sought. It is hoped to resolve these outstanding legal issues so that the work of this committee can recommence, with a view to its reporting to the Minister later this year.

Chapter 7

QUALITY
ASSURANCE
METHODS
AND
NEW
STRUCTURE

Chapter 7

QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE NEW STRUCTURES

7.1 INTRODUCTION

As already outlined, Boards of Management at individual school level will be responsible in the first instance for the quality of education in their school. In support of this, there is also clearly a need for a system of effective quality assurance at national level.

7.2 THE ROLE OF THE INSPECTORATE

Inspectors are the most visible link between the Department and schools and have a particularly important role in achieving and maintaining quality. The *OECD Review*, discussing the inspectorate, concluded that it "*constitute[d] a formidable body of professional expertise*" (p. 43), but commented that its "*full potential is far from being tapped*" (p. 44).

In the context of the greater delegation of responsibility to schools, a changed role is envisaged for the inspectorate. The inspectorate's main responsibilities will be to evaluate the schools generally, to disseminate good practice and to contribute to the formulation of policy, with particular reference to ensuring and maintaining quality. It will perform these functions through:

- Inspecting the work of a range of schools each year and reporting on trends and achievements and on the general implementation of Departmental policies.
- Providing support and advice for schools that have particular needs.
- Reporting, annually, on the performance of the educational system.
- Detailed reporting on important themes from time to time, e.g. language teaching, support programmes for schools, special curricular initiatives.
- Monitoring the effectiveness of teacher training, including the probationary process for teachers.
- Monitoring the effectiveness of testing and examinations and analysing and reporting on the results.

- Identifying in-career development priorities and monitoring the effectiveness of such training.
- Providing advice on and participating in departmental policy formulation and development.

The inspectorate will be reconstituted within the Department as a single cohesive unit, with statutory functions. It will prepare an annual report on the performance of the school system, which will be published independently of the Department of Education.

It is envisaged that inspection will be "whole school" inspection, using a team approach and related to overall school performance. Inspection of individual teachers will arise only at the request of the Board of Management in cases of particular difficulty, or as part of a general review of performance in individual subject areas.

The participation of inspectors in the certificate examinations will be phased out with the establishment of the Curriculum and Assessment Agency. As a first step, the role of experienced teachers in the operation of the examination process will be expanded. In addition, inspectors will no longer participate in the actual running of in-career training courses, but will be responsible for the monitoring of their quality.

In order to bring about closer and more effective linkages between policy-making and practice in the schools, and as part of a general policy of promoting mobility within the teaching profession, it is proposed that teachers would be seconded for fixed periods to work within the inspectorate.

7.3 ASSESSMENT

In order to complement its curriculum and teaching methodology, each school should have a coherent and consistent policy of assessing its students' progress. Teachers and parents need accurate information on the progress of individual students and on the effectiveness of the learning process. Students, moreover, need a measure of their own progress, especially at key points of

transition within the education system. Indeed, the assessment of student progress provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of the work of the school generally and it is absolutely essential in identifying those students who may require particular help from time to time.

In-school assessment takes a number of forms. Teacher observation, in the early stages of education, provides most important insights into the learning characteristics of each child and often alerts teachers to difficulties that may require further investigation. End-of-term and end-of-year examinations of varying degrees of formality are set in many primary schools and in all secondary schools.

Primary Level

The first formal external examination which students encounter is the Junior Certificate. Since children do not reach that stage until they have completed between 9 and 11 years of formal schooling, there is clearly a need for some objective criteria by which to measure their progress at earlier stages of their education, as a complement to teacher or school-devised tests. Standardised tests are used in most developed countries to measure student progress at certain key stages and, also, as a means of identifying students who may require particular help. Many schools in Ireland already use such tests and find them helpful.

It is proposed to extend testing to all primary school students as a diagnostic aid. Its primary purpose will be to support efforts by teachers to identify those in need of special assistance and the nature and extent of the assistance needed. It would provide a further safety net for those who may be experiencing basic literacy or numeracy problems. Tests at age 7 and 11 are considered to be the most appropriate for this purpose. In consultation with the NCCA, arrangements will be made with an appropriate research institute, which has the necessary expertise and experience in this area, to develop a range of such tests which can be easily administered, scored and interpreted. The tests will be made available to schools, together with guidelines and training in their use for teachers.

The results of individual tests will be confidential to schools and parents. Administration of the tests will be monitored as part of whole school inspection and the results of the tests would be made available in aggregated form to the Department. As such, they would provide valuable public data on which to base remedial efforts and the targeting of such efforts.

Junior Certificate

The current provision for examining students at the end of the Junior Certificate level consists of an external examination administered by the Department of Education. Ireland is exceptional among the EC member states, and indeed among developed countries internationally, in having a fully externally examined system of assessment at the junior cycle phase of secondary education.

Because close to 90% of those completing junior cycle now proceed to courses at senior cycle, the character of the junior cycle has changed dramatically over the last two decades. Accordingly, assessment at this stage would be seen more as a diagnostic aid than as a measure of attainment for students leaving the system.

Furthermore, the nature of the changes in the new programmes, with an enhanced provision for and emphasis on oral, aural, practical and project work needs to be reflected in the delivery of the new programmes and the related assessment process. Oral, aural and practical tests, as well as written tests, would be seen as an integral part of the teaching of the new programmes, which would be undertaken as a normal and ongoing feature of the testing of student progress in schools.

In the circumstances, the question arises as to whether the Junior Certificate examination should continue in its present format. As already described, it is no longer the terminal examination for the majority of young people, who remain in the system for several more years after completion of the compulsory period of education. At the same time, the examination, as it has evolved, tends to exert a restraining influence on the new junior cycle programmes, which emphasise greater flexibility and freedom for teachers in the teaching of their

subjects. In addition, it is open to question whether the information provided by an external examination adds significantly to that available from the school's own assessment of students for course and career planning purposes.

Teachers traditionally carry out ongoing testing. It is proposed to give greater support to teachers in this regard on a more systematic basis by way of in-career training but also in the development of assessment guidelines, criteria, and sample tests. The support will relate to the full range of assessment instruments — oral, aural, practical and written tests.

A working party comprised of representatives of the managers, teachers and the Department and chaired by the chairperson of the NCCA, is currently examining the question of the use of school-based assessment, related to the non-written tests, as part of the Junior Certificate examination. The working party is expected to report shortly.

Following receipt of the working party's report and also having regard to international experience of the use of school-based assessment, the views of the NCCA will be sought on a more fundamental reappraisal of testing at the Junior Certificate level, on the basis that such testing should consist of two elements: an externally conducted examination and a complementary, but separate, school-based assessment. The latter would be seen as testing the progress of students related to the various subjects of their programmes, and the various elements of those subjects, and would include testing of oral, aural, practical and project work, as well as written work. The standardised external tests would ascertain attainment of students against the broader aims and attainment targets of the programmes in selected subject areas.

Progress in restructuring the junior certificate examination on the above basis would be linked to progress in providing the necessary support for teachers in the broader application of school-based assessment and in the development of the external tests by appropriate research institutes. The latter tests would provide the necessary assurance of standards attained on a school basis and nationally and would contribute to the overall evaluation of, and reporting on, quality in the education sector. At the same time, it would inform individual

parents of standards attained by their children against school standards, as contained in the school's annual report to parents, and national standards, as contained in the Department's annual report.

7.4 THE REGISTRATION OF PRIVATE COLLEGES

There has been a major growth in recent years in the number of private colleges and institutions offering education and training courses of varying duration at a variety of levels, including third-level.

Concern has been expressed that such colleges are not regulated in the interest of consumer protection. Such registration would provide a stamp of approval for those colleges obtaining registration, and the publicity related to the registration process would alert the public to the need to reassure themselves as to the quality of courses on offer.

Arrangements have already been agreed with the National Council for Educational Awards in relation to the designation of private, commercial colleges and in relation to the validation and certification of third-level programmes offered by such colleges. The purpose of these arrangements is to ensure that standards are fully satisfactory and quality is assured. This aspect of the Council's work is carried out on the basis of full recovery of costs from the colleges. Ongoing review of the colleges and courses is required as a basis for maintaining recognition.

It is proposed that the Council for Educational and Vocational Awards (CEVA) would have an overall registration function for private colleges and specific courses being offered by them. Initially, registration would be of those courses of not less than one year's duration, outside the third-level sector, leading to the award of acceptable and approved qualifications. This would be extended on a phased basis to include comprehensive and graduated registration and recognition arrangements for the variety of training programmes currently on offer from private commercial institutions. Accordingly, the Department will agree a comprehensive code of quality control for the private colleges sector with the CEVA. The review process under the code will provide for a variety of

circumstances including those where the qualifications are awarded by fully recognised institutions abroad. An objective would be to ensure that the award of certification could take place only if the college holds a licence from the CEVA in accordance with the code of quality control. In drawing up the code, the Department will ensure that fair and equitable procedures are put in place.

The approval and registration process, which in all cases would be on a cost recovery basis, would not imply entitlement to State grants in any form. The arrangements are intended to provide protection for consumers in relation to the basic quality standards of providers of education and training.

**HIGHER
EDUCATION**

Chapter 8

HIGHER EDUCATION

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Higher education in Ireland has won international recognition for its quality and diversity. It has contributed greatly to the personal education of students, to cultural, economic and social development, to the promotion of the professions, and to the provision of new knowledge and scholarship.

The Government fully recognises the importance of third-level education, and this is reflected in a number of recent initiatives. Examples are the programme of expansion of student places, major capital development initiatives supported by the European Structural Fund, and the commitment in the Programme for Economic and Social Progress to the importance of higher education. These initiatives are building upon the active policy of the last 25 years to expand and diversify the sector. Numbers in third-level education have expanded rapidly over the last quarter of a century, from 21,000 in 1965 to almost 70,000 in 1990/91, increasing in the 1991/92 to about 75,000. Student intake in 1991/92 was close to 26,000, representing almost 40% of the age-group and, with the additional places to be provided under the PESP, participation is likely to increase in the medium term to about 45% of the age cohort. About half the intake proceed to degree-level programmes.

Although still below the best levels in the EC member states, Ireland has made dramatic strides in increasing the participation rate in recent years. Further measures to increase our participation rates in third-level education will have particular regard to the need to improve the participation rates of those from economically disadvantaged areas.

Recent years have seen a major transformation in the structure of the third-level sector, with the development and expansion of the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT), the Regional Technical Colleges (RTCs) and the two National Institutes of Higher Education, with the latter more recently designated as universities. During the same period, considerable growth occurred in the university sector, in particular in the technology/business disciplines, but

accompanied also by a wide range of exciting and innovative new developments in the arts, the social sciences and other disciplines.

The future development of higher education will seek to maintain and build upon a balance between the technological and humanities sectors, in order to provide students with the widest possible exposure to the diversity and richness of higher education, for their own benefit and that of society. A key contribution of the sector is to help develop people who are willing and able to manage innovation and change in all sectors of society, including the creation of wealth and employment.

The development of third-level education in Ireland is fully in line with approaches in all other developed countries, which are seeking actively to build up participation and completion rates to meet the economic and social challenges of the 1990s and the new century. Accompanying the rapid expansion of third-level education internationally is an increasing emphasis on the way the third-level system is organised and managed, at Government and institutional level. In Ireland, we are tackling many of the same issues, with the support of the institutions.

Higher education now requires a very large investment by the state and by individuals. Accordingly, there is a heavy responsibility to ensure the maintenance of quality, equitable and more effective funding systems, flexible modes of operation, co-ordination between institutions, productive partnership between higher education and the industrial and commercial sectors, and the institution of legislative reforms. This Chapter deals with such key issues. It also discusses matters such as admission procedures, course modularisation, the quality of teaching and student monitoring, and improved scope for post-graduate participation. Research is a central feature of higher education, and this Chapter makes proposals that will strengthen this element in higher education institutions.

8.2 ADMISSIONS AND COURSE STRUCTURE

New Admissions Procedures

Despite the anxieties associated with the points system, it has the considerable virtue of fairness in so far as it rewards student achievement in the

Leaving Certificate examination without reference to social position, school attended or other extraneous factors. However, it is a cause of very real anxiety for many students and their parents.

It was with this in mind that a major overhaul of the admissions procedures to third level was initiated, in the interests of simplifying the application procedures for students to all third-level institutions and of making the system fairer, more understandable and transparent. The institutions have supported and enthusiastically implemented a number of important changes, and a new streamlined system is almost fully in place.

For the first time, all applications for entry to third level in 1991 were processed through an expanded CAO/CAS system (Central Applications Office/Central Admissions Service), and offers for all courses, in all the institutions, were issued on the same day. All third-level institutions will have a common points system from this year. A number of other changes will come into effect this year:

- The common points system will be based on a new, more differentiated grading system in the Leaving Certificate, which will minimise the need to resort to a random selection of candidates with an equal number of points.
- The possibility of combining the results of two Leaving Certificates is being discontinued, as is the matriculation examination and, from 1992, it will no longer be possible to combine matriculation and Leaving Certificate results.
- The Colleges of Education will be included within the CAO system.

These initiatives, when viewed in the context of the rapid expansion of places at third level, should help to reduce the pressure of the points system on students and parents, while preserving its basic fairness and transparency as a method of selecting students for third-level education.

Modularisation, Credit Accumulation and Credit Transfer

New developments in course structure within higher education institutions, such as course units or modularisation, can be of great benefit to student

participation. Initial discussions with management authorities in the sector indicate that they are receptive to exploring the development of a modular basis for courses and a related credit transfer system.

In addition, the modular approach will facilitate a broadening of the scope of programmes in particular disciplines. Examples would be:

- Technology awareness programmes for humanities students.
- Business-related modules for students in technical disciplines.
- Language modules for all students.

Such modularisation would be particularly important in facilitating credit transfer both nationally and internationally and in the context of:

- Enhancing student mobility within and between all institutions.
- Facilitating access by allowing an accumulation of credits in different time periods and geographical locations.
- Facilitating mature and second-chance students and the accumulation of qualifications through part-time attendance at courses.
- Enhancing recurrent education and training of the workforce by facilitating accreditation without prolonged absence from the workplace.

These developments would take full account of the need to maintain the well-established quality standards of the various institutions, while maximising the flexibility with which students of all ages can avail of higher education.

What is envisaged is the development of a comprehensive system of modularisation and credit transfer across the third-level sector, building on existing initiatives nationally and internationally. For this purpose, a working group — representative of the institutions, the HEA, the NCEA and the Department — has been established to examine the issues and to develop appropriate systems. The group will examine existing procedures to see what lessons are to be learned and the obstacles to be overcome to make the system comprehensive.

In addition to the benefits of modularisation and credit transfer between Ireland's own institutions, there is a European dimension to credit transfer. Central to the exchange of ideas across national boundaries is the mutual recognition by different educational institutions of each other's academic courses and standards. This allows for the free movement of students, enables them to enrich their education and cultivates a sense of European identity.

An initiative on credit transfer at the European level is already underway in the form of the European Community Course Credit Transfer System (ECTS). This is an important development of the ERASMUS programme, which is the Community's principal programme for the promotion of co-operation between higher education institutions across Europe. Students participating in this scheme receive full transferable credit for all academic work successfully carried out at ECTS partner institutions. To date, five Irish institutions are participating in the scheme, embracing a wide range of academic disciplines, including Business Administration, Chemistry, History, Mechanical Engineering and Medicine.

Access Courses

While modularisation will facilitate transfer arrangements, it is likely that a need may also arise for access courses. These courses are designed to assist particular categories of students to move confidently into higher education studies through, for example, providing the necessary foundation knowledge in particular subjects, familiarising students with the most effective learning techniques, and generally ensuring that they have the necessary skills and approaches to maximise the benefit they receive from their studies. The need for such access courses is likely to increase as, in line with international trends, increasing numbers of mature students seek entry to third-level education. The same working group mentioned above will also review the question of access courses.

Postgraduate Work

The university sector has a fine tradition of nurturing a high standard of postgraduate work among its students and of encouraging and facilitating

people to return to build upon their primary degree work at later stages of their lives.

Currently, about 12% of students in the HEA sector are postgraduates, including those in such programmes as the Higher Diploma in Education. An important concern is the necessity to sustain and encourage postgraduate research in all faculties, including the humanities and social sciences, where research funding tends to be limited. A constant stream of postgraduate students is essential to continuing innovation and development in all disciplines and to sustaining research; and, indeed, there are considerable benefits in increasing the emphasis on interdisciplinary postgraduate work.

Some 21% of science students and 12% of engineering students are engaged in postgraduate work, and significant initiatives to sustain and improve these levels are already underway. The current Advanced Technical Skills Programme is providing an increased flow of graduates with qualifications relevant to the needs of indigenous industry and this will be developed further in the post-1992 period, in conjunction with industry and the third-level institutions. Moreover, the investment in science and technology under the European Structural Fund programme will facilitate a further expansion of postgraduate research.

8.5 RESEARCH

Research and teaching are the well-established cornerstones of higher education, and Ireland has established a distinguished record in many research fields. The Department, recognising the importance of research and scholarship, proposes to develop a more explicit national policy on the funding of research in third-level institutions.

At present, Department of Education funding for research is not distinguished from the funding provided for teaching and, in effect, is linked to the number of students in the particular institution. Targeted funding for research projects comes primarily through the Office of Science and Technology.



Internationally, the trend is towards separating funding for teaching and research activities, leading to a situation where certain elements of the research budget are incorporated in the basic block grant for the institution; the remaining element is contained in a separately identified fund. Consideration is being given to applying a similar approach in Ireland. This will assist efforts to give greater priority to research, with due regard to the following possible breakdown:

- Updating studies or scholarship, linked to teaching, to be funded through the basic grant.
- Basic or strategic research to be funded separately.
- Commissioned research to be provided on a cost-recovery basis.

A collaborative approach with the institutions is the way forward, given the importance of research and the complexities of the issues involved. Bearing this in mind, a special working group, representative of the university presidents, the Higher Education Authority and the Department, has been established to develop the best methods for achieving revised funding of research, drawing, as appropriate, on international experience.

The principles underpinning research policy for the third-level sector will relate to:

- Its role in the advancement of learning in all academic disciplines.
- Its role in stimulating innovation and change and in promoting economic development.
- The need to target state funds more effectively on nationally important research activities.
- The recognition that, in many cases, research is very costly and that there is a consequent need to develop interdisciplinary and interinstitutional co-operation.
- The clearer identification of the difference between basic, applied and strategic research and of the roles of the various institutions in relation to these different types of research.

Institutions will continue to be encouraged to develop their commissioned research assignments on a full cost-recovery basis, with due regard to the need for competitive pricing in bidding for contract work. In addition, the clearer identification of the research efforts of the institutions concerned will facilitate the seeking of funds from a variety of sources.

An important aspect of the new legislation for the RTCs/DIT is the provision to permit them to engage in research and development work with industry. Such research would be mainly applied research, with a regional dimension, and in the areas of the synthesis and dissemination of existing knowledge. It is envisaged that basic research would still be conducted largely by the universities.

The investment in science and technology under the European Structural Fund programme is facilitating a major expansion of postgraduate research. In addition, the Programmes in Advanced Technology (PATs), currently being developed by the Office of Science and Technology in niche areas and crossing institutional boundaries as necessary, will facilitate the development of the critical mass necessary to compete internationally in science and technology.

There is a crucial need for the universities and the regional colleges to develop a dynamic leadership role in the regional development of their surrounding areas. An important way in which this can be achieved is to provide innovative research support and training to local indigenous industry, thereby positively supporting national and European policy on regional development.

8.4 QUALITY ASSURANCE

An Approach to Quality Assurance

A fundamental objective of this paper is to ensure the highest standards of quality in all fields, in order to provide students with the best possible education. Quality is multi-faceted and often difficult to measure, certainly in absolute terms. However, there are many aspects of education where it is possible to ask questions in a useful way; for example, the concern and care for

the students and the ways in which this is demonstrated in the institution; the quality of teaching and support provided by staff; the percentage of new entrants who proceed to graduation; the output and quality of research; the efficient use of resources and the procedures in place in institutions to review quality continually.

The approach to quality assurance in higher education will be a combination of the development of performance indicators and of internal quality review procedures within the colleges, together with appropriate external monitoring and assistance through a proposed academic audit unit within the Higher Education Authority.

Internationally, an important element of quality assurance in higher education is the development of performance indicators. In essence, these are signals to all those involved in the education process, which alert them to quality issues and allow ongoing review and follow-up action. Accordingly, performance indicators enhance central and local management capability. There has been wide-ranging debate, in many countries, about the development and use of appropriate indicators. What is clear is that the indicators need to be developed on a collaborative basis with institutions, and their subsequent use must be based on mutual understanding between the institutions and the Department of Education. Accordingly, the Department, the university presidents and the Higher Education Authority have established a joint working group to develop appropriate performance indicators for the university sector; they will embrace the widest possible range of activities, including teaching and research. Indicators for the non-university colleges will be developed in a similar fashion.

In addition, the Department will ask all third-level institutions to ensure that more systematic procedures for quality assurance are in place within their institutions. Such procedures might include, for example, a periodic evaluation of each department within an institution by peers from within and outside the institution.

The quality of teaching available to students in higher education is crucially important, if they are to gain maximum benefit from their studies. Some

initiatives are already underway in colleges to help staff, and these need to be further developed. The Department will ask all third-level institutions to ensure that procedures are put in place within each institution to identify and meet the needs of staff in this regard. In addition, students' progress is very dependent on the type of guidance and assistance, apart from formal teaching, available to them at all stages, but particularly in the first year of higher education. Accordingly, institutions will need to ensure that satisfactory arrangements are in place for this purpose.

To assist institutions develop appropriate quality assurance procedures, including those related to the quality of teaching, and in order to monitor quality on an ongoing basis, it is proposed that a special academic audit unit should be established within the Higher Education Authority, composed principally of academics, but also including representatives of industry and wider community interests. It is envisaged that the unit would also address and initiate actions on general quality issues related to the sector.

Course Development

Colleges will have the maximum possible flexibility in their operations. Such development, subject to policy considerations and budgetary limits, would be a matter for the management of the institutions concerned. Management would have to assure itself that the courses could be run cost-efficiently, that the new courses or options would not affect adversely the cost-efficiency of other courses, and that physical resources were adequate.

Provision in RTCs/DIT

In these colleges, course development and monitoring will be guided by the following considerations:

- An appropriate balance to be maintained between the major fields of study in the colleges, i.e. Business Studies, Science and Engineering.
- An appropriately balanced output of graduates from certificate, diploma and degree programmes.
- A strong applied, practical orientation in all programmes, including degree programmes.

A particularly important aspect of course development in the colleges is the need to ensure that the value of both certificates and diplomas is not undermined, and that they retain their primary function as terminal qualifications for employment. This would require the quantification, and monitoring, of desirable levels of progression and output between certificate, diploma and degree-level programmes. Specifically, in relation to the development of degree programmes, the following criteria will apply:

- The proposed programme has unique features linked to the activities of the college.
- A similar programme does not exist or could not be mounted more cost-effectively by another college or university with a well-developed programme at degree level in the particular discipline.
- There is a proven demand for the course.
- It is geared towards industrial development needs, based on effective liaison with and support from industry.
- The need being addressed by the programme could not be served by a diploma-level programme.
- The level of resources required to mount the programme is acceptable.

Applications for programme development from the colleges will be assessed and approved by the NCEA, in accordance with guidelines based on the foregoing considerations and criteria. The NCEA will report annually to the Department on the pattern of course development by reference to the agreed policy guidelines.

In the discharge of its responsibilities in relation to course development in the colleges, close liaison between the NCEA and the HEA will be necessary, given the latter's responsibility for the level, type and variety of provision across the two sectors, and also given the proposed links between the colleges and the universities in relation to the development of degree programmes. The necessary organisational arrangements to ensure this will be discussed with the concerned interests.

Student Entry Standards

After the rapid growth in the regional colleges and DIT over the past decade, it is timely to review standards of entry to the diverse courses available, together with success and drop-out rates. The NCEA has been asked to make this study, in consultation with the college authorities. It will be linked to a review of standards of achievement in each of the colleges.

Length of Courses and of the Academic Year

International comparisons and other considerations suggest that, in general, the duration of courses in Ireland are reasonable. There are, however, faculties within the sector in which the duration of courses, with similar objectives and no apparent differences in standard, vary between institutions. Such variations have cost implications and affect the flow of students through the system. In consultation with the concerned institutions and in the context of the development of the new funding arrangements, it is envisaged that a common basis of funding similar courses would be adopted.

It is a matter of concern that facilities in some colleges may be used for teaching for little more than half the calendar year. The Higher Education Authority is undertaking a study of the current position throughout the third-level sector, set in the context of maximising the benefit to the student and taking account of best international practice.

8.5 FUNDING AND CO-ORDINATION OF THE SECTOR

New Funding Arrangements

A working party, set up by the Government, and composed of representatives of the Department of Education, the Higher Education Authority and the universities, reported in 1990 on possible new funding arrangements for the universities. The new approach has been discussed with the colleges, and arrangements are already in train to introduce the new method, on a phased basis; the intention is to have the new system operational by 1993.

The aim of the new arrangements is to ensure equity and fairness in the distribution of resources among colleges, by basing budgets on actual and cost-effective levels of operation. The new method should also be of considerable assistance to management within individual colleges, to ensure similar equity and fairness across the college's various activities. This, in turn, will ensure that resources are most effectively used for the maximum benefit of students. In addition, the new arrangements are designed to facilitate the greatest possible delegation of responsibility to institutions to manage their affairs.

The basis of the new system is the determination of a budget for each institution, based on cost-effective levels of activity, derived from regularly updated unit cost analyses, incorporated as part of the management information system for each college. The budget will be funded through the state grant, student fees and certain other income. In addition to the standard provision, the Government may provide additional resources for certain targeted initiatives, such as increased enrolment (as agreed by Government for 1990-93) and special research programmes.

Within the agreed budgets for the institutions, subject to Government policy in relation to the sector, universities will be free to deploy their resources in the most effective way they deem appropriate. In addition, earned income over and above the agreed budgetary contribution, may also be deployed as the universities see fit, in order that the institutions can benefit from their own entrepreneurial initiatives.

A broadly similar funding mechanism will be introduced for the RTCs/DIT. Already a cost-effectiveness measure — teaching hours per annum per student — is being widely used within the sector and by the Department to assist in the management process. This will be supplemented by a full unit cost study on the same lines as the university model.

Management Structures

In order that the proposed devolution of responsibility to the institutions can operate effectively, it is important that an efficient management structure should be in place in each institution.

Discussions on such a structure have already been held and initial steps have been taken with the RTCs/DIT. It is proposed that a new structure would be in place for the academic year 1992/93, coinciding with the anticipated commencement of operation of the colleges under the new legislation. Equally importantly, it is proposed that a common management information system would be established for the colleges. The colleges have already been provided with the computer capability for this purpose.

In relation to the RTCs, it is proposed to discuss, with the interested bodies, a new title for the Colleges that would better reflect their expanded role at regional level.

There is also a trend within the university sector in other countries to review internal management structures. Such a trend is accompanied by improved organisation, with defined management responsibilities from senior management downwards. In the context of proposed legislation, the Department of Education will initiate discussions with the HEA and the university authorities, with a view to rationalising the composition and functions of governing bodies and strengthening the executive role of college presidents.

Good, relevant information is central to effective management at all levels of the system. The Department also proposes to make arrangements with the Higher Education Authority and the universities for the establishment, for the universities, of a common management information system linked to the Authority and the Department.

Co-ordination of the University and Non-University Sectors

Developments, particularly over the past 20 years, have resulted in a dual system of third-level education in Ireland. The universities and the designated institutions under the Higher Education Authority, with state funding channelled to and allocated by that body, form one part of the system. The RTCs and the DIT, with state funding channelled by the Department of Education through the VECs, form the other part.

The two sectors within higher education have a common concern to provide the highest quality education for their students and to act as catalysts of social and economic development in their regions and nationally. Both sectors seek to realise these aims through different and challenging missions. The universities are essentially concerned with undergraduate and postgraduate degree-level programmes, together with basic and applied research. The main work of the RTCs/DIT is in 2-year certificate and 3-year diploma programmes, with a smaller number of degree programmes and a growing involvement in regionally oriented applied research. To ensure responsiveness to the needs of the economy and in the interest of providing a wide range of choice for students, catering for their varying aptitudes, it is important that the distinctive missions of the two sectors should be maintained and fostered. In the future development of the sectors, it will be particularly important to avoid the danger of "academic drift" in the non-university sector, which would reduce the flexibility of higher education in responding to the diverse needs of students and the varied skill requirements of the economy.

The question arises as to whether degree-level programmes in the regional colleges would benefit from or require an association with a wide base of postgraduate work and related research, the development of which, in the RTCs, would not be seen as feasible. Consideration also needs to be given to the appropriateness of improved links between the RTCs and the universities to better serve regional needs.

It is therefore proposed to begin discussions to seek institutional links between the universities and the Regional Technical Colleges in the joint development of appropriate degree programmes and in research, while ensuring the preservation and enhancement of the distinctive missions of the two sectors:

- Such links would be on a regional basis and would embrace all third-level institutions in a network serving the needs of the region.
- Research and development would take place on a complementary and co-operative basis between institutions, in line with their respective roles in research.

- Appropriate co-operation in the provision of services to industry would be promoted — for example, in the use of staff with particular expertise.

These proposals are designed to maximise the contribution that all institutions will be able to make to staff and student development and to the development of their geographical regions.

In relation to other third-level institutions, Thomond College of Education has recently been integrated with the University of Limerick, while strong institutional links are being established between Mary Immaculate and St Patrick's Colleges of Education and the University of Limerick and Dublin City University, respectively.

In line with these trends and similar trends in other countries, discussions will take place with other single-purpose institutions, with a view to seeking stronger links between them and the universities or other third-level colleges.

The Role of the Higher Education Authority

The legislation setting up the Authority envisaged it having a broad advisory role for the entire higher education sector. In practice, however, its activities have related largely to the universities alone.

This Chapter outlines major changes in the third-level sector. In this context, it is necessary to review the present role of the HEA and to debate the most appropriate structures for the future.

One possible scenario is that the remit of the HEA would include the following functions, subject to overall Government policy on higher education and with due regard to the autonomy of the institutions:

- Overall co-ordination of the two sectors — university and non-university — and the elimination of unnecessary duplication and overlap.
- Ensuring a balance of level, type and variety of programmes across the two sectors.

- Ensuring an appropriate overall balance between certificate, diploma, degree and postgraduate work.
- Ensuring cost-effectiveness throughout the two sectors.
- Ensuring that quality assurance procedures are in place in all institutions.
- Monitoring quality assurance through an academic audit unit.
- Monitoring and promoting links between colleges and industry.
- The development of a comprehensive data base for the entire higher education sector.
- Receiving annual reports from each of the third-level institutions and preparing a subsequent yearly report on the performance of the third-level sector generally.

These proposals would require a change in the composition of the Authority, through larger representation of business and industrial interests and of the non-university colleges sector. The proposals would be reflected in amending legislation.

The Role of the Council for Educational and Vocational Awards

As noted earlier, a new Council will be established, incorporating the functions of both the NCEA and the newly established NCVA.

The role of the new Council (CEVA) with respect to third-level institutions would include:

- Ensuring satisfactory standards as a basis for the validation and certification of courses.
- Implementing, in liaison with the HEA, policy guidelines on course monitoring and development in the non-university sector.
- Collaborating with college managements in establishing and maintaining quality assurance procedures.
- Undertaking reviews of the colleges, and of schools within the colleges from the point of view of academic performance and achievement levels, and furnishing each review report to the Minister.

- Advising the Minister, in an annual report, on standards of academic performance, including comparability of standards, achievements and awards between colleges.

8.6 COLLEGE - INDUSTRY INTERACTION

Policy on Interaction with Industry

Collaboration with industry carries considerable benefits for all those involved in higher education and for society and the economy generally. It provides significant opportunities for staff to benefit professionally and for students to profit from the experience gained by staff, and allows the colleges to use their considerable and unique expertise for the benefit of the economy. In addition, it opens up new funding sources for the institutions and promotes mutual understanding between industry and higher education.

A strong pattern of co-operation has already been established in research and development and, to a lesser extent, in management and technical training and retraining. The legislative base for the role of the RTCs and DIT in this respect will be established in the new legislation.

There is potential for expanding such activities, both in research and development and in establishing a pattern of support in technical and management training, through linkages with selected industrial and service sectors. This is a common concern of the institutions and of the Government. Institutions will be encouraged to expand their activities through an explicit and positive policy on interaction with industry, on which they would report annually. Such a policy would include:

- Industrial interests to be appropriately represented on the governing bodies of all institutions.
- The further development of campus companies, on a self-financing and independent legal basis, to exploit technology transfer to industry.
- Industry/institutions liaison groups to be established where necessary to identify research and development and to update education and training needs.

- Increased staff mobility between institutions and industry (on short-term contracts) is to be encouraged.
- Greater professional recognition by academic institutions, for both promotion and appointment purposes, of work carried out by academic staff for industry.
- Funding mechanisms to be such that the academic staff concerned, as well as the institutions, will benefit financially from the results of their innovations and enterprise.

Graduate Uptake by Industry

Despite the improved interaction between higher education and industry, the uptake of graduates by industries and, in particular, small industry in Ireland, is low by international standards. Further efforts are required to extend the scope of co-operative education, graduate placement schemes and staff exchanges, in order to encourage the employment of scientific and technical personnel by Irish firms, so necessary if Ireland is to close the technology gap that exists between small industry in Ireland and its competitors in Europe.

A recent report on Information Technology Manpower in Ireland, commissioned by the HEA, fully reinforces this view in the specific case of the computer industry. The report underlines the importance of graduates in building an industry of world class. It concludes that

... the clear focus of job creation efforts in this area must be to provide a sufficient quota of challenging jobs in research, development and leading edge technologies so as to more effectively utilise the resource that our best computer studies graduates represent.(p. xiv)

As Ireland approaches the completion of the internal market in Europe, the Irish higher education system will be expected to supply the graduates with the technical expertise and management capacity to ensure that Irish business and industry can compete successfully. The development of knowledge-intensive industry based on 'brains rather than fixed assets' will largely depend on the ability of higher education institutions to produce sufficient numbers of leaders, innovators and those capable of managing and exploiting the opportunities of

the new technology and its applications, both as employees and as entrepreneurs.

Continuing and Recurrent Education and Training

A major challenge for higher education institutions in the face of the technological changes occurring in industry, both in the manufacturing and service sectors, is that of providing continuing education and updating the skills of the existing workforce. Most of the technology that will be used in ten years time still needs to be developed and, yet, at least 80% of the current workforce will still be in employment at that time. *Skills Shortages in Europe*, the report of the EC Commission's Industrial Research and Development Advisory Committee (IRDAC), recommended:

... [that] higher education institutions will need to adapt and profit from adult training as a mainstream, rather than an ancillary occupation, [and] ... also that companies, either alone or with related organisations, [should] develop the specific training actions for the specialised topics they can only handle themselves. What is essential here is that structures exist that can deliver the range and volume of training required, and can adapt quickly to evolving needs. (p. 41)

This calls for new forms of partnership between educational institutions and private firms and organisations, which will provide post-experience training and education on a flexible basis, as required by a changing employment market. With the rapid changes in technology, and the resultant effect on a number of related disciplines, including Business Studies, there is a growing need to make formal provision to enable updating of the skills of people at work, unemployed or threatened by redundancy. Higher education institutions will be encouraged to put in place the structures necessary for the identification and provision of recurrent education needs, where they do not already exist. All such work should be on a cost-recovery basis.

8.7 LEGISLATION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Legislation for the Dublin Institute of Technology and the Regional Technical Colleges marks a new stage of development in higher education. These bills reflect the growth of technical and technological education outside the

university sector over the last 30 years. The legislation will place colleges on a well-defined statutory footing, with greater responsibility for their day-to-day affairs. It will also allow the institutions to carry out research, development and consultancy work for business and industry, as well as to enter into commercial arrangements to exploit the results of this work.

In 1989, legislation established the two National Institutes of Higher Education as full universities. This legislation was a recognition of the standards of excellence which these institutions had achieved since their foundation. This legislation was limited in scope, and it is envisaged that more comprehensive legislation will be introduced.

The constituent colleges of the National University of Ireland are governed by the Irish University Act 1908. The Minister has agreed to sponsor legislation to amend this Act, on the basis of proposals put forward by the Senate of the NUI, in order to create four constituent universities within a federal NUI structure.

A substantial amount of legislation is in place, or proposed, in relation to higher education. However, significant legislative disparities remain between the institutions, which present problems in view of the similarity of functions and purpose of the seven university institutions. The legislative framework for universities, which has grown up on an ad hoc basis, needs to be rationalised.

Differing requirements for the approval of staff appointments will no longer be relevant under the new funding mechanisms. The executive role of college presidents needs to be strengthened. There are varying and unspecified degrees of delegation of authority and responsibility to senior university management across the institutions. The developing role of the universities raises the question of rationalising the composition and functions of governing bodies.

It is proposed to bring forward legislation, in consultation with the HEA and the universities, that would be more compatible with the role, function and operation of universities in modern society. Such legislation would not seek to impose rigidity or unnecessary uniformity, but, rather, would preserve diversity

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within an enabling framework, reflecting changed requirements within the colleges themselves, the changing relationships between the central authorities and the universities, and the developing role of the universities in the future.

Chapter 9

**ADULT
and
SECOND-CHANCE
EDUCATION**

Chapter 9

ADULT AND SECOND-CHANCE EDUCATION

9.1 INTRODUCTION

The Commission on Adult Education, in its 1983 report, described adult education as including:

... all systematic learning by adults which contributes to their development as individuals and as members of the community and of society apart from full-time instruction received by persons as part of their uninterrupted initial education and training. (p.9)

This view of adult education has been the basis for the development of adult education since the publication of this report and provides the guidelines for further development in the future. The ever-increasing rate of change in the intervening years has emphasised the link between a lack of knowledge and skills and social and economic disadvantage, for the individual and the community alike.

Learning is a lifelong process. Formal schooling lays the foundation. Access to life-long education is important for all Irish people, and especially for those who, for whatever reason, completed their early education without reaching their full potential.

It is important that positive attitudes towards the quest for knowledge and learning are fostered during the period of initial education and training and that students are made aware of the value and importance of adult education and of the range of programmes available.

Meeting adult education needs involves providing access to a wide range of courses and learning opportunities. It also involves identifying and removing barriers to participation, especially in the case of the disadvantaged. The needs of many mature students can be met by facilitating their return to mainline education programmes, while special programmes, specifically designed for adults, must be provided for others.

Adult education courses should be made attractive to people who left the education system prematurely because of lack of motivation or interest in the programmes available to them. For many people, lack of confidence and motivation, rather than any limitation in provision, may prove the major barrier to participation. The type of course and the teaching approaches and methods must take into account the needs of mature students. Courses must be seen as providing the opportunity for those who are successful, and who wish to do so, to advance to the next stage of their education or training. The establishment of the new national certification arrangements (referred to in Chapter 4) for vocational education and training programmes, coupled with more flexible course structures at third level (referred to in Chapter 8) and underpinned by structured credit accumulation and transfer arrangements, will be of particular benefit in this regard.

The arrangements already in place and those proposed in this paper are based on a view of education and training as a continuum, ranging from basic literacy and numeracy, through general education to vocational education and training, to which there should be access on a lifelong basis. Barriers to participation will be identified and eliminated progressively, as resources permit, particularly in the case of individuals and groups who failed to benefit sufficiently from their initial experience of schooling.

9.2 PRESENT PROVISION

The Vocational Education Committees have played a central role in the provision of adult education down through the years, both directly through their own schools and colleges and through support for other agencies such as Community Training Workshops and the Prison Education Service. The dedication and commitment of the Adult Education Organisers, attached to the Committees, and of the members of the Adult Education Boards have been reflected in the quality and diversity of programmes on offer, especially in recent years.

Since their inception, comprehensive and community schools have also played an important role in the local provision of courses and programmes.

Other agencies, including AONTAS (National Association of Adult Education), the universities, the National Adult Literacy Agency, voluntary bodies, and a variety of private institutions and agencies have also played a valuable part.

The number and variety of agencies involved is reflected in the welcome diversity of courses and course providers, but also highlights the need for concerted action, to ensure that appropriate standards are maintained and that gaps in provision are identified and filled.

9.3 FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

The Vocational Education Committees will have a major co-ordinating and developmental role in Adult Education, building on the network of Adult Education Organisers and Adult Education Boards. The key role of the Adult Education Organisers will be strengthened and clarified, as will the role of staff in secondary schools who are involved in adult education.

A consultative group has been established, representative of the various government departments and grant-aided bodies which are involved in adult education, together with employer and trade union bodies and participants in adult education programmes, to advise on development needs in adult education and training. This group provides a broadly based forum at national level in which weaknesses and gaps in provision can readily be identified for action by the appropriate department or agency or by expert working parties working under the aegis of the group.

Greater emphasis will be placed on the development and promotion of courses and on seeking out those most in need. To this end, information, guidance and counselling arrangements are being examined. Increased community involvement and more effective co-ordination and liaison between community and statutory interests at local level will be encouraged. The local community-based groups (as set out in more detail in Chapter 2), now established as part of the "area-based strategy" launched in the Programme for Economic and Social Progress, are important as a means of encouraging adults to return to education and of matching provision to needs; it is hoped in this

way to contribute to the community-based response to long-term unemployment and to the problems of those at risk of long-term unemployment.

The voluntary youth services can make a significant contribution to the development of programmes and to the identification of local needs. For this reason, the local networking between agencies involved in youth work will be extended to link in with providers and seekers of second-chance education and training.

The potential of distance education and of the new information technologies to broaden the scope and provision of adult education services will be explored with the relevant bodies.

Since the teaching of adults differs significantly in many respects from the teaching of students within the school system, the particular training needs of adult education tutors will be identified and addressed.

9.4 FACILITATING THE RETURN OF MATURE STUDENTS TO FORMAL EDUCATION

In a number of schools throughout the country, mature students take part in senior cycle programmes and sit the certificate examinations. The development of the vocational preparation and training programmes has also opened up a wide range of vocational courses to mature students, at both secondary and post-secondary levels. The increasing demand for recurrent education, resulting from many people seeking second-chance education or an updating of their skills, is likely to increase significantly the numbers wishing to take these courses in the future.

The universities and other third-level institutions provide mature students with access to a wide range of sub-degree, degree and postgraduate courses. These institutions will be encouraged to develop new courses specifically aimed at meeting the retraining needs of industry.

A number of initiatives are proposed to make it easier for mature students to proceed to third-level education. Third-level institutions will be encouraged to build on their existing provision and increase the number of places for mature students who do not, necessarily, meet the usual academic requirements. Other initiatives in relation to the third level generally, which will benefit mature students, are described in Chapter 8 and include the modularisation of courses, which will facilitate part-time attendance, the accumulation of course credits progressively and the awarding of credits for a range of part-time and short courses. Two amendments are also being made to the higher education grants scheme which relate to the needs of mature students, as part of a range of improvements in the higher education grants and related student support schemes. These are, firstly, that the income eligibility of mature students, who are not dependants of their parents, will be determined on the basis of their own income and that of their spouses and, secondly, that mature students who secure a place at third level shall be regarded as satisfying the academic requirements for a grant.

9.5 SPECIAL PROVISION FOR ADULTS

Catering for the needs of the disadvantaged, and those who left the educational system early or without reaching their full potential, is a particularly important aspect of adult education. Education and training for the unemployed, and especially the long-term unemployed, will have a particular priority as a means of helping them enhance their quality of life and their employability. In addition, there is a consensus on the need to upgrade the skills of those in employment. There will be close co-operation between the education sector and FÁS in achieving this.

Adult Literacy

It is only in recent years that the incidence of illiteracy has been acknowledged in advanced industrialised countries; previously it was seen as largely a problem affecting developing countries. A recent report from the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation of the OECD, *Adult Illiteracy and Economic Performance* (1992), contains important findings in this area which serve as a background for proposed initiatives in Ireland.

The report in noting that literacy is essential to economic performance, states in particular that:

- The incidence of illiteracy, when classically defined as the inability to decipher printed words, is actually quite low in industrialized nations. The problem, instead, appears to lie in the alarmingly high incidence of what many observers call "functional illiteracy". High proportions of individuals fall within the lower and middle ranges of literacy scales and, despite some literacy skills, are unable to participate fully in the economic and civic life of today's advanced nations. (p. 10)
- Illiteracy [in this sense] ... is not a problem that is restricted to a group of mostly drop-out youths, but one that includes also a significant number of older workers [requiring] remedial programmes that are targeted to an older, adult population, including a sizable share of the employed adult labour force. (p. 15)
- [There are, however,] serious gaps in our knowledge, in particular about the extent of illiteracy and about which of the many types of remedial programme actually succeed in improving adults' literacy skills. (p. 7)

While reliable data on the incidence of illiteracy are not available in Ireland, it is likely that the broad picture corresponds to that reflected in the OECD report. To provide the basis for more extensive initiatives in the future, it is proposed to commission a national survey drawing on the experience of similar surveys being undertaken in other countries. The survey will seek to assess competency levels in various categories in reading and writing, including communicative and interpretive skills, through an in-depth survey of sample groupings.

The Current Approach to Literacy Problems in Ireland

Literacy education for adults in Ireland has until now focused on those whose basic literacy skills were inadequate to enable them to function in their day-to-day lives. The Adult Literacy and Community Education Scheme (ALCES), which is operated through the Vocational Education Committees, provides literacy and basic education tuition on a one-to-one or small group basis, free of charge or at a nominal cost, with a substantial contribution from volunteer tutors. Literacy tuition is also provided as part of other programmes

such as the VTOS and Youthreach and by other agencies such as FÁS and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) through its Centres for the Unemployed.

ALCES received a significant boost in 1990 with the doubling of the budget to 1m per annum. Additional funding was provided in 1991 for a tutor training development project. In recent years, there has been a trend away from home tuition to centre-based tuition and to the development of student groups and to support from community groups. Generally speaking, this scheme has succeeded in meeting demand in that all those coming forward could be accommodated. The success of the programme has tended to attract increasing numbers of adults with literacy difficulties, and resources will continue to be made available to meet needs.

Future Developments

Proposed developments within the school system, particularly at the primary level, include an enhanced focus on identifying and supporting those with emerging problems in either literacy or numeracy. These measures include improved assessment and remedial services, developments within the home-school liaison programme aimed at specific areas of need, and an expansion of parenting programmes.

The ALCES will be continued and developed to meet the needs of those who lack basic literacy skills. A detailed study of the operation of the scheme has been commissioned and a preliminary report is expected by the end of June 1992. While it is envisaged that the semi-voluntary, community-based service offered through the VECs will be maintained and strengthened, the possibilities of providing workplace-based services will also be examined in consultation with employer and worker representatives.

International experience indicates the desirability of linking literacy training to general skill development and future developments in literacy programmes will seek to systematically establish such linkages.

Special attention will be directed towards meeting the needs of those who have basic literacy skills but who are not functionally literate, and a multi-faceted diagnostic and remedial programme will be developed in consultation with FÁS and other educational and training agencies. A clear statement will be developed of the different skills which are involved in functional literacy and of the levels of competence in these skills which might be regarded as minimum requirements in different situations in the home, community and at work.

A comprehensive range of remedial literacy programmes will be developed which will include one-to-one and small group tuition as provided under the Adult Literacy and Community Education Scheme and specialist modules for inclusion in basic second-chance education and in vocational training programmes, including modules for those already at work.

A programme of literacy tutor training, initiated in 1991, will be continued and developed.

Assessment and evaluation processes will be developed to give dependable measure of real progress by individuals and of the relative effectiveness of different remedial programmes, as well as ensuring accountability and cost-effectiveness. Some progress has already been made in this direction and a working party is currently developing appropriate certification procedures for literacy courses.

Since the success of these remedial programmes will depend to a significant extent on public awareness and an appreciation of the importance of literacy skills for training and employment, as well as for personal development, promotion and publicity initiatives will be taken to increase this awareness and appreciation.

The Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme

The Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS), administered in conjunction with the Department of Social Welfare, offers the long-term unemployed an attractive opportunity of returning to full-time vocational education and training. Fifty-three groups have now been approved under the

scheme, with places for 1,060 participants. Twenty-five additional groups will be approved for the 1992/93 school year. The scope of the scheme has recently been expanded to cover those signing on for credits, and this will be of particular benefit to married women. Under this scheme, participants are not charged fees and are paid allowances in lieu of their social welfare entitlements and for other expenses.

The VTOS started in 1989, following pilot projects in Limerick and Tallaght. Even in this short time, it has proved to be an outstanding success and of great benefit to participants. This success is due, in no small measure, to the enterprise of Vocational Education Committees and their commitment to the promotion and development of the scheme.

The Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) will be further developed and expanded. The ability of the scheme to benefit participants will be further enhanced through the work of an expert group which is currently examining all aspects of the scheme, including the content of education and training programmes which should be offered under the scheme and the provision for tutor training, accreditation and evaluation.

Short Part-time Adult Education Courses in Secondary Schools

A significant contribution has been made to adult education over the years by the short part-time courses offered by VECs and, since their inception, by community and comprehensive schools. A total of 110,000 adults participated in 1989/90.

The courses are varied and include leisure courses, personal development courses and courses to develop skills appropriate to the workplace. A typical course takes place in weekly sessions over 13 weeks. Traditionally, these courses were offered in the evenings, but they are now increasingly being offered during the day as well. Tutors are paid at an hourly rate; some are teachers who tutor on these courses independently of their normal teaching duties, while others are persons with particular skills specially engaged for the purpose.

Unlike the basic education courses available under the Adult Literacy and Community Education scheme, which are given free or for a nominal fee, these courses are in the main self-financing. However, the self-financing provisions have been operated in a way that allowed access by the less well-off on a reduced fees basis.

The tradition of offering these courses in the evening allowed for the use of accommodation used during the day for secondary education courses. Day-time provision requires separate accommodation which is met by using spare accommodation in schools with falling enrolments and by renting accommodation as required. Short-term, part-time courses in secondary schools offer important learning opportunities within the overall provision for adult education. The Department is committed to their continued availability on a countrywide basis, both by day and in the evening, in all secondary schools, including privately owned secondary schools and in outcentres to serve outlying areas. The more widespread provision of such courses in the privately owned secondary schools will be actively encouraged.

A comprehensive review has begun of all factors which affect the availability of these courses, including their accessibility to the less well-off in the community. While the capacity for subsidising courses in less well-off areas from surpluses generated elsewhere will be facilitated, consideration will be given also to the progressive increasing of the funding by means of reallocation, but within overall available resources. Consideration will also be given to the special difficulties in providing such learning opportunities outside urban areas.

Other Schemes and Programmes

Under pilot schemes introduced by the Department of Social Welfare in consultation with the Department of Education, long-term unemployed can attend secondary and third-level courses without losing their social welfare allowances. Unlike their counterparts on the VTOS courses, those attending secondary courses under these schemes receive no assistance towards books, travel, etc. and the Department is conscious of the burden these expenses place on them. As resources permit, it is proposed to consider bringing such schemes

under the umbrella of VTOS. Those attending third-level courses will benefit from the changes in the higher education grants scheme already referred to.

The Vocational Education Committees, in conjunction with the Department of Justice, have developed high-quality programmes of education and training for prisoners. Currently, up to 50% of prisoners attend these courses. The number of participants in the current year is 1,050 and the equivalent of 130 full-time teachers are employed. In addition, the equivalent of 23 teachers is provided for courses in conjunction with the Probation and Welfare Service of the Department of Justice. These programmes will be continued and improved. Links increasingly will be established with outside programmes to encourage those leaving prison to continue their education and training.

The Department will continue to co-operate closely with FÁS in providing vocational training for young adults in Community Training Workshops. These programmes are designed to help young people at risk in the 16-25 age-group to develop their full potential to break out of the cycle of illiteracy and social deprivation in which many are trapped and to enable them to become self-reliant and self-supporting members of society.

9.6 A POLICY FOR SPORT

Introduction

As a follow-on to the promotion of the physical well-being of children in school, the aim will be to develop greater fitness and a more active lifestyle among the adult population and to enhance performance standards by Irish sportspersons. Adults generally have become increasingly concerned about issues affecting health and well-being and are more aware than ever of the value and pleasure of physical exercise and sport. However, this is not always accompanied by a willingness to take part in any form of regular exercise and there is a need, therefore, to translate this awareness into regular participation.

The term "sport" covers a wide range of activities, which includes organised competitive sport, recreational sport and active leisure pursuits within the *Sport for All* concept. It has strong links to physical education in the schools and is

part of a continuum which merges into passive leisure activities. It is not confined to any one age or social group.

An important feature of programmes of physical education and sport within the school is that they should have close links with the sports programme of the community. This will enrich both programmes and contribute towards the maintenance of a healthy approach to physical activity in young people as they make the transition from school to adulthood.

All sports provision requires, to one degree or another, facilities and equipment, coaching and training and, of course, organisation and finance. Meeting these needs involves contributions by individuals, by voluntary clubs and community organisations and by private-sector commercial agencies. The public sector plays an important role in encouraging and supporting private initiatives to support and sponsor the sports provision.

As well as being an essential element of the balanced lifestyle which is necessary for healthy living, sport has the capacity to promote increased economic activity, not only through the manufacture and supply of equipment, but also as an important and growing service industry within the community and as an asset in attracting foreign tourists. Meritorious performances by Irish sportspersons in the international arena increase morale at home and enhance the country's prestige and image among the community of nations.

Funding will continue to be provided from the proceeds of the National Lottery to assist National Governing Bodies of Sport towards the costs of administration, coaching, the purchase of equipment, international competition, and the introduction of programmes aimed at increasing participation and improving standards. To assist in policy development and programme implementation, a number of initiatives are proposed:

- Cospóir, the National Sports Council, will be re-established to advise on all aspects of sport.
- The contributions of individuals, of voluntary and community organisations, of the private sector and of the various government departments

and public sector agencies will be effectively co-ordinated at local and national levels.

- Support for sport-related research will continue through the committee originally established under Cospóir in 1988. It is proposed to adopt a more proactive approach to the selection of research projects and to better integrate this with the support mechanisms for the broader educational research activities sponsored by the Department.
- Programmes supported through public funds will be evaluated through the measuring of achievement against pre-identified operational objectives. The evaluation process will serve to identify the programmes that are successful in achieving their objectives and enable resources to be used in the most effective way.

Sport for All

As a member of the Council of Europe, Ireland is committed to the implementation of the *Sport for All Charter* which was introduced in 1978. This charter seeks to extend the benefits of sport to as many people as possible irrespective of age, sex or ability.

A survey for the Health Education Bureau, in 1984, sampled adults aged 16 years and over in the Republic of Ireland. This survey updated a previous survey undertaken in 1979. The results indicated that 24% of adults sampled had gone out training or running, or had participated in other forms of exercise, during the preceding seven days. Television viewing (93%), reading/listening to music (83%) and going for a drink (48%) were the dominant leisure activities. Although indoor games showed strong growth, there was very little change between 1979 and 1984 in the rate of voluntary participation by Irish adults in physical exercise.

A variety of *Sport for All* promotions have been organised, aimed at the less active population, in co-operation with the Vocational Education Committees and with considerable voluntary effort from teachers and others. One important element has been the Be Active — Be Alive programme co-ordinated by Saol Plus and the national Sport For All Committee. However, the effectiveness of *Sport for All* initiatives in Ireland, to date, has been severely limited by the

absence of formal structures at local level to co-ordinate the development and delivery of programmes and to promote the necessary co-ordination and co-operation between voluntary sports and other community and public-sector organisations.

A new approach is necessary if a significant breakthrough is to be made in changing the habits of the adult population. A number of initiatives are proposed:

- The Vocational Education Committees will be given an expanded role in the development and implementation of programmes, in conjunction with local community interests and sports organisations.
- A network of Sports and Leisure Development Officers will be established under the committees. Those officers will also actively encourage the development of linkages between schools and local communities and provide an impetus for a renewed nationwide campaign to bring adults to an appreciation of, and involvement in, physical activity.
- The survey on leisure habits will be updated to provide data for the development and evaluation of Sport for All programmes to promote a fitter and more active population.

Standards of Performance in Organised Sport

In recent years, the performances of Irish sportspersons in top level international sport have been significant and have brought credit to themselves and to the country and immense pleasure to many people. The Olympic Council of Ireland and the national governing bodies of the various sports have contributed in no small way to these successes.

Grants are paid to national governing bodies of individual sports to assist in the administration and to promote the development of their sports, as well as to assist them in participating in international competitions abroad and in hosting major international events at home. This support will continue. One practical step has been the provision of office facilities for smaller organisations through the establishment of the House of Sport.

The recent establishment in Limerick of the National Coaching and Training Centre (NCTC) represents an important step forward in providing necessary support infrastructures, through the development of coaching and testing programmes for elite sportspersons and the implementation of a national coach education programme.

Funding is also made available to individual elite sportspersons to enable them to train on a full-time basis, with financial independence. In addition, one objective of the continuing development of capital facilities throughout the country is to provide for the training and competitive needs of elite performers.

In conjunction with the NCTC and the third-level educational institutions, a programme will be developed to make it easier for promising young sportspersons to combine high-quality training and competition in their sport with an appropriate educational programme.

It is intended that Ireland should ratify the Council of Europe Anti-Doping Convention, which was agreed in 1989 and which is aimed at reducing and eventually eliminating doping in sport. Ireland will introduce its own dope-testing procedures to fulfil its obligations under the Convention.

Extra-curricular Sport at School Level

The relationship between the school physical education programme and the sports programme in the community is important. Sport in the community is generally organised by clubs affiliated to national governing bodies, many of which organise competitions for schools. The traditional involvement of teachers in sports organisations provides the type of dynamic link between them which can benefit both the school and local sport organisations. Such links ensure that the games and recreation activities that are a part of community life are integrated, in a suitable form, into the school programme. In this way, the school can also be a factor in enriching community life. By identifying the relationship between school activities and life outside school, young people will have an opportunity of seeing physical education as a part of their lifestyle and not just as a separate school activity.

It is important that the schools' games programmes, which are normally developed separately from the physical education programme, are suited to the age and developmental stage of the students, that ethical values of fair play are taught and observed and that such games should not become unduly competitive. This will require high standards in coaching for young people.

A concerted effort will be made to improve the provision for extra-curricular sport at school level through greater integration of school and community-based programmes. The Vocational Education Committees and the local development officers will promote the necessary co-ordination and co-operation.

Provision of Capital Facilities

Grant aid is provided for recreation and sports facilities as part of a comprehensive capital programme which complements private sector and voluntary developments and is integrated with the capital programmes of other public-sector agencies.

There has been considerable investment of public funds in sports and recreation facilities, both in schools and for the community in general, and it is important that the maximum benefit should accrue from this investment.

The success of a facility depends to a significant extent on the quality of its management and marketing. This is now more generally appreciated as a result of programmes such as the Better Use of Facilities scheme and training provided by the Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management, with the support of the Department of Education.

The shared use of sports and recreational facilities between schools and colleges and the wider community offers substantial opportunities for the efficient use of resources, through ensuring that they are in use throughout the year and by avoiding a duplication of provision. There are corresponding opportunities for the use of community facilities by schools. This is a significant feature of the current sports capital programme, under which many facilities

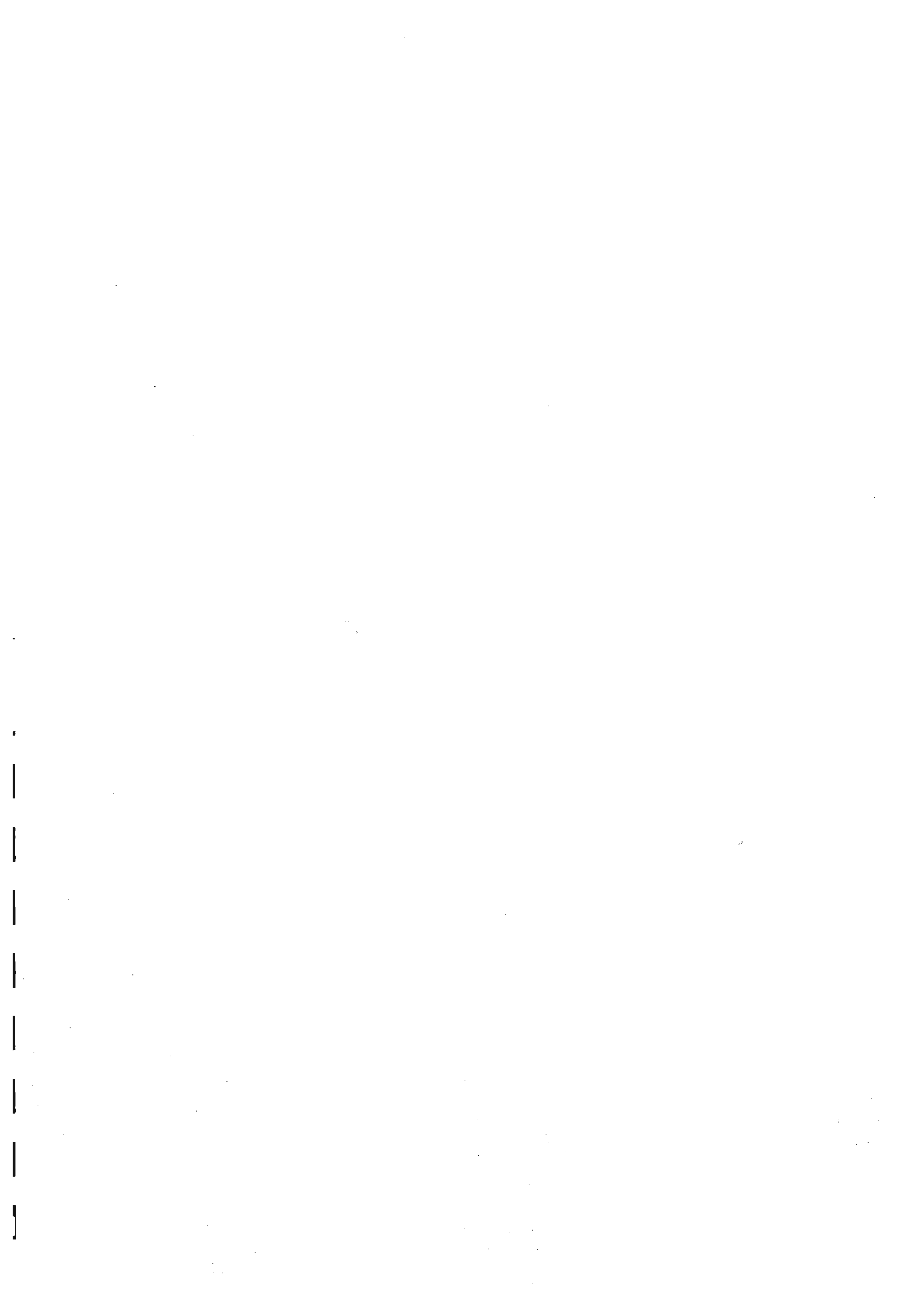
are sited close to schools, with appropriate access for school purposes. This programme states that:

- All schools in receipt of public funding will be required to facilitate community use of their facilities. In future developments, additional emphasis will be placed on the adjacent siting and common use of schools and community recreational facilities. The policy of providing indoor sports accommodation in schools, in the form of a general purpose area at primary level and a hall at secondary level, will resume as soon as pressure on available resources for urgent classroom accommodation has eased. The design of indoor accommodation in schools intended for physical education will ensure suitability from the safety point of view. In the meantime, schools will be encouraged to make maximum use of other sports facilities in their areas.
- Programmes to improve awareness of the importance of high standards in management and marketing of recreational and sports facilities and in improving these standards will be continued, with greater emphasis on offering advice and assistance to the voluntary sector. Commitment by promoters to high-quality management and marketing will be a condition of future grant aid.
- A comprehensive Code of Practice covering all aspects of safety at sports grounds will be published. This Code of Practice is being prepared by an expert committee under the aegis of the Department, in consultation with major sporting organisations and relevant statutory bodies.

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Chapter 10

RESEARCH
and
DEVELOPMENT



Chapter 10

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

10.1 THE CURRENT STATE OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Recent decades have witnessed a significant growth in educational research in Ireland, with the participation of a wide variety of institutions and substantial direct and indirect funding from the state. Associations such as the Educational Studies Association of Ireland and the Irish Association for Curriculum Development, together with the teachers' unions and the school managerial bodies, promote and disseminate educational research and development work. Dissemination of research through conferences and symposia, as well as through journals such as *Irish Educational Studies*, *The Irish Journal of Education*, *Studies in Education* and *Oideas*, has played an important role in cultivating a more informed understanding of educational issues and of the means to improve educational practice.

The OECD Review (1991) found that the study of education was well developed in Ireland and that the volume and variety of research was impressive for a small country. It found, however, that there was a dearth of policy-related research, as opposed to policy discussion literature, and that policy-makers appeared to have little direct access to the findings of research and development studies.

The Primary Education Review Body (1990) called for a "*strong body of quantitative and qualitative data*" (p. 97), which it saw as essential for the formulation of policy judgements. It identified a need for closer co-operation between research workers and policy-makers, and for a special emphasis on the co-ordination of research and on the evaluation of existing research and development provision.

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment recently undertook a review of current educational research and development in Ireland. The findings of this review indicate the need for urgent measures aimed at co-ordinating educational research efforts, which, it suggested, should be geared more effectively to underpinning educational development, in addition to

ensuring the most effective return from the substantial state investment in such research. Such measures would include the avoidance of overlap between research activities, ensuring complementarity in the research initiatives of the diverse bodies engaged in research, and the establishment of national research priorities. An essential outcome of these measures would be that closer links and co-operation would be established between researchers and policy-makers, thereby improving communication and mutual understanding.

In recent years, many countries have experienced similar problems in relation to educational research and development and are reviewing the links between research and policy-making procedures. The strategic framework for development in education, outlined in this paper, provides an important opportunity for a fundamental review of our approach to research and development.

10.2 A POLICY FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

The significance to society of its education system and the extent of its investment in education requires that the research and development dimension of educational policy and practice be incorporated as an integral feature of educational planning. In this context, a number of significant initiatives have already been undertaken within the Department of Education. Policy planning units have been established at primary and secondary level, and the role of the statistics section has been redefined to include policy analysis of data and the setting of such data in a relevant international context. Moreover, the reporting procedures of the inspectorate will be updated and developed to ensure that full use is made of inspectors' reports, both internally and as a basis for regular reporting on the quality of the educational system generally.

These structural changes within the Department will facilitate a bringing together, for policy planning purposes, of statistical data, information from inspection and school review, and the findings of both national and international research and development projects.

While research agencies will continue to be free to undertake various forms of educational research on a self-funding basis, a major priority for direct and indirect funding from the Department of Education will be support for research and development work that would underpin policy development and implementation.

It is proposed that available funding would be allocated, annually, to appropriate research and development agencies, following a review of proposals received and in line with overall policy and planning priorities. For this purpose, a Research and Development Committee has been set up in the Department, to which external advisers will be appointed. The functions of this committee include:

- Liaison with educational and research bodies in relation to the establishment of priorities.
- The identification of research and development priorities, linked to national and local educational objectives.
- Reviewing research and development proposals and discussing them with proposers and, where appropriate, with the relevant funding agencies.
- Ensuring co-ordination and the avoidance of overlap in research and development work.
- Allocating research funds on the basis of the priorities.
- Evaluating the outcomes and effectiveness of research and development work.
- Ensuring the collation and effective dissemination of the findings of relevant research and development.

The committee is being asked to report within six months, following consultation with concerned interests, on the effectiveness of establishing an Institute for Educational Research, through pooling the resources allocated to a number of existing research facilities. This body would be charged with conducting research in areas related to various policy initiatives, in line with strategic planning priorities. It is also envisaged that the Institute would commission research from outside individuals and bodies.

Building on the traditions and significant achievements of Irish education in the past, there is a need to plan for the future with an openness to new structures and procedures, as well as to the insights offered by educational research and development, both in this country and internationally. The proposals in this Chapter are intended to ensure that educational research and development in Ireland will act as a stimulus and support for the new policy directions proposed in this paper.

Chapter 11

IRELAND
as an
INTERNATIONAL
EDUCATION
CENTRE

Chapter 11

IRELAND AS AN INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION CENTRE

11.1 OVERVIEW

International education is a significant growth industry. The global market for third-level overseas students studying outside their home country, alone, is estimated at one million annually. This will continue to increase, as the developing countries require more of the education services available in the developed world. The teaching of English as a foreign language is also a major growth area, with increasing demand both from within the developed world and from developing countries.

Ireland is well placed to benefit in these areas. The Irish educational system has a high international reputation and there is extensive international goodwill towards the country. Notwithstanding these strengths, the evidence of recent reports suggests that there remains a lack of awareness of Ireland as an education centre in the main target markets. Furthermore, there is a perception of an unevenness in the quality of the service provided, particularly in the area of English language teaching.

11.2 CURRENT PROFILE OF SERVICES PROVIDED

At present, Ireland markets a range of courses for foreign students:

Second Level

Foreign earnings activity at second level centres on the efforts of private secondary schools, which provide full-time courses for overseas students. Some schools operate to the national curriculum of these students and at present there are Spanish, Japanese and Mexican schools operating here. It is estimated that the 1,000 or so full-time students could be providing £5m annually to the economy.

Third Level

A large number of third-level institutions attract foreign students. Currently, there are over 2,000 full-time foreign students attending these

institutions, the majority of whom are from outside Europe. It is estimated that the associated value to the economy is in excess of £30m each year. Private third-level schools also attract overseas students, although the extent to which this is happening is difficult to assess.

English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

Currently, there are over 100 English Language Schools in Ireland recognised by the Department, attended by an estimated 90,000 foreign students annually. There are two clearly defined subsectors in this area: those schools specifically established to cater for the summer youth market, which accounts for approximately 60% of the total number of schools, and those offering year-round general language tuition or English for Special Purposes (ESP). It is estimated that the associated value to the economy from these operations is in the region of £70m annually.

Ireland is well established as a provider of *consultancy services* in the design and management of courses and educational projects in developing countries. This important segment of our internationally traded educational services has been actively promoted by Higher Education for Development Co-operation (HEDCO) and, increasingly, through the marketing efforts of many of our third-level institutions. The current value of overseas consultancy work is estimated to amount to about £5m per annum.

In addition to the main sectors outlined above, there is a significant level of activity over a range of courses designed to meet a variety of demand for short- and long-term tuition. These include summer courses, pre-university courses and corporate education and training services.

11.3 PROPOSALS FOR DEVELOPMENT

The recognition of this country's potential in the area of internationally traded education services and the need to derive maximum benefit from this potential is reflected in the Programme for Economic and Social Progress, and a comprehensive range of recommendations is being acted upon by Government.

Marketing

The establishment of a central agency to market internationally all aspects of educational services available in Ireland has been identified as the crucial strategic element in effectively and efficiently promoting Ireland as an international education centre. This agency will:

- Market Irish services, in co-ordination with other marketing agencies, in targeted countries.
- Co-ordinate the preparation of appropriate marketing literature on available services.
- Serve as a point of contact and a source of information about potential in targeted countries.
- Provide a more focused mechanism for identifying and following up on overseas opportunities.
- Act as a centre of expertise and technical support for projects funded by international agencies.
- Provide support for individual institutional initiatives, while preventing the wasteful duplication of efforts.

The agency will bring a professional marketing expertise to bear on this key area of activity. It will be representative of all those interests involved, including State agencies, Government Departments and educational institutions, both public and private. When fully operational, its activities would be self-financing.

Quality Assurance

In view of the growing importance of this sector, it is becoming increasingly clear that strict quality control in the services provided will be essential in order to protect Ireland's reputation and to provide the basis for further development.

The development of common validation and certification arrangements for all vocational education programmes, under the new Council for Educational and Vocational Awards, will provide a strong foundation of quality control and quality assurance for this sector. In addition, formal credit accumulation and

transfer mechanisms will facilitate orderly progression from one level to the next and ultimately to third level. At third level, new course structures and related credit transfer arrangements are also being developed, underpinned by more systematic quality assurance procedures. As described earlier, new registration and recognition arrangements are being introduced for the private commercial colleges sector.

The combined effects of these initiatives will be to provide more flexible course structures, ease of transfer between programmes and institutions, the highest standards, and certification with international standing. This is, of course, in the first instance designed for the advantage and benefit of Irish students. However, equally, it increases the attractiveness and marketability of the country as an international education centre, for the intake of foreign students, as capacity allows.

In relation to English language teaching, the Advisory Council for English Language Schools (ACELS) will be reconstituted. The functions of the reconstituted Council will be:

- To control standards in teacher training, both initial and in-career, for EFL teachers in Ireland, and to maintain a register of such qualified teachers.
- To control standards in accreditation of EFL schools and courses.
- To ensure the establishment of appropriate tests for EFL students and to control standards in the certification of their performance.
- To promote an Irish cultural dimension in the EFL courses, particularly in the textbooks used in its schools network.
- To undertake whatever other functions are considered necessary to promote the public interest, in so far as teaching English as a foreign language is concerned, which may reasonably be regarded as falling within its remit.

The new Council will have representatives of Government Departments, State agencies and the EFL course providers. It will be required to be self-financing.

11.4 OTHER BENEFITS

Effective marketing of quality products will be the cornerstone of the promotion of Ireland's education services in an increasingly competitive international market. In addition to the direct financial benefits for the economy, the quality of education for Irish students will be enhanced. Interaction with increased numbers of foreign students from a range of cultural and racial backgrounds will better equip them to live and work in a world of increasing worker mobility. Moreover, international exchanges offer Irish institutions the opportunity to develop links with colleges abroad and in this way assist with the further recognition and promotion of Irish educational services throughout the world.

**STATISTICAL
APPENDIX**

NUMBERS IN FULL-TIME EDUCATION 1990/91 *

FIRST LEVEL	543,744
SECOND LEVEL	343,045
THIRD LEVEL	68,270
TOTAL	955,059

**Schools aided by Department of Education only*

NUMBER OF FULL-TIME TEACHERS 1990/91

	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
FIRST LEVEL	4,830	15,600	20,430
SECOND LEVEL	9,256	9,577	18,833
TOTAL	14,086	25,177	39,263

Source: Department of Education

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS 1990/91

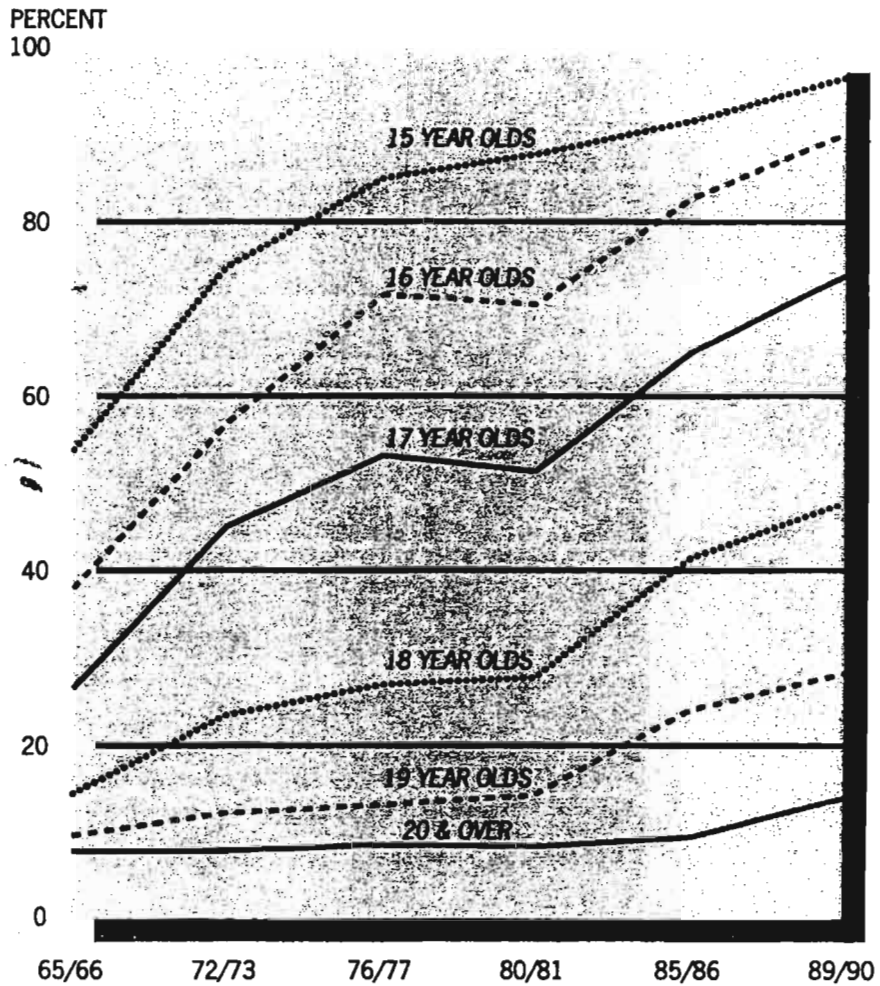
FIRST LEVEL TOTAL (including 117 Special Schools)	3,342
SECOND LEVEL TOTAL	792
Secondary	476
Vocational	248
Community	52
Comprehensive	16

SCHOOL SIZE 1990/91

1 ST LEVEL		2 ND LEVEL	
LESS THAN 100	1,427	LESS THAN 100	32
100 - 200	953	100 - 200	80
200 - 300	363	200 - 300	140
300+	492	300 - 500	246
TOTAL	3,235	500 - 800	244
		800+	50
		TOTAL	792

Source: Department of Education

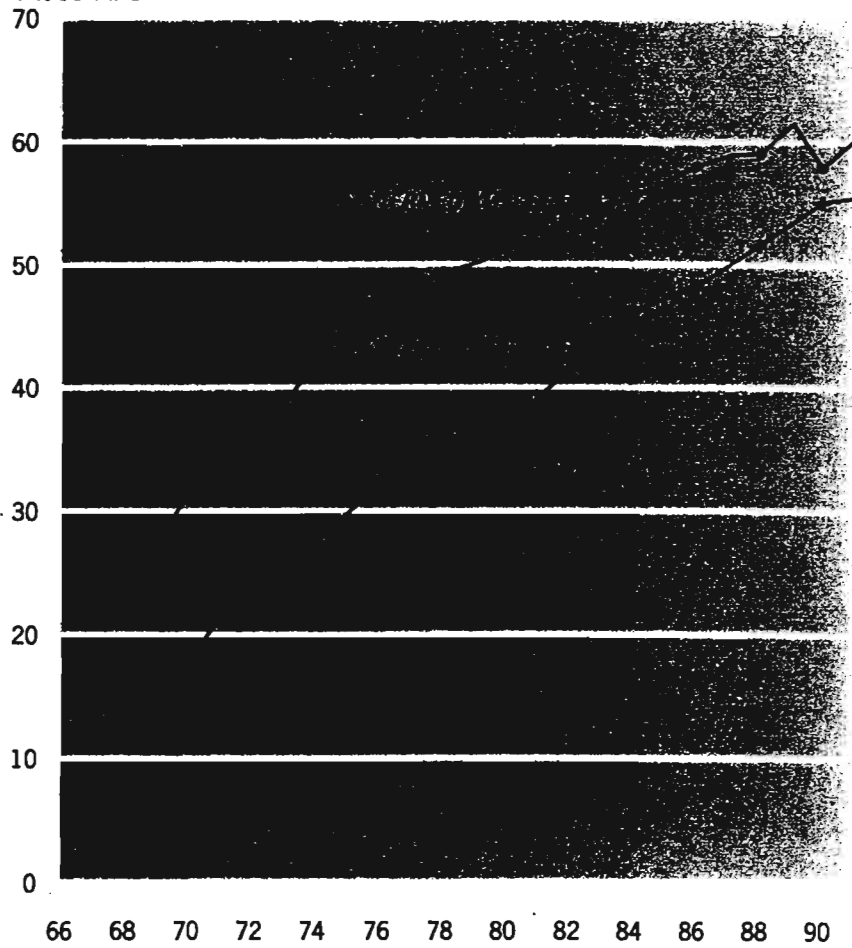
PARTICIPATION RATES IN FULL-TIME EDUCATION FOR VARIOUS AGE GROUPS



Note: The participation rate for 20 years old and over is estimated
on the basis of the 20-24 age cohort of total population
Source: Department of Education

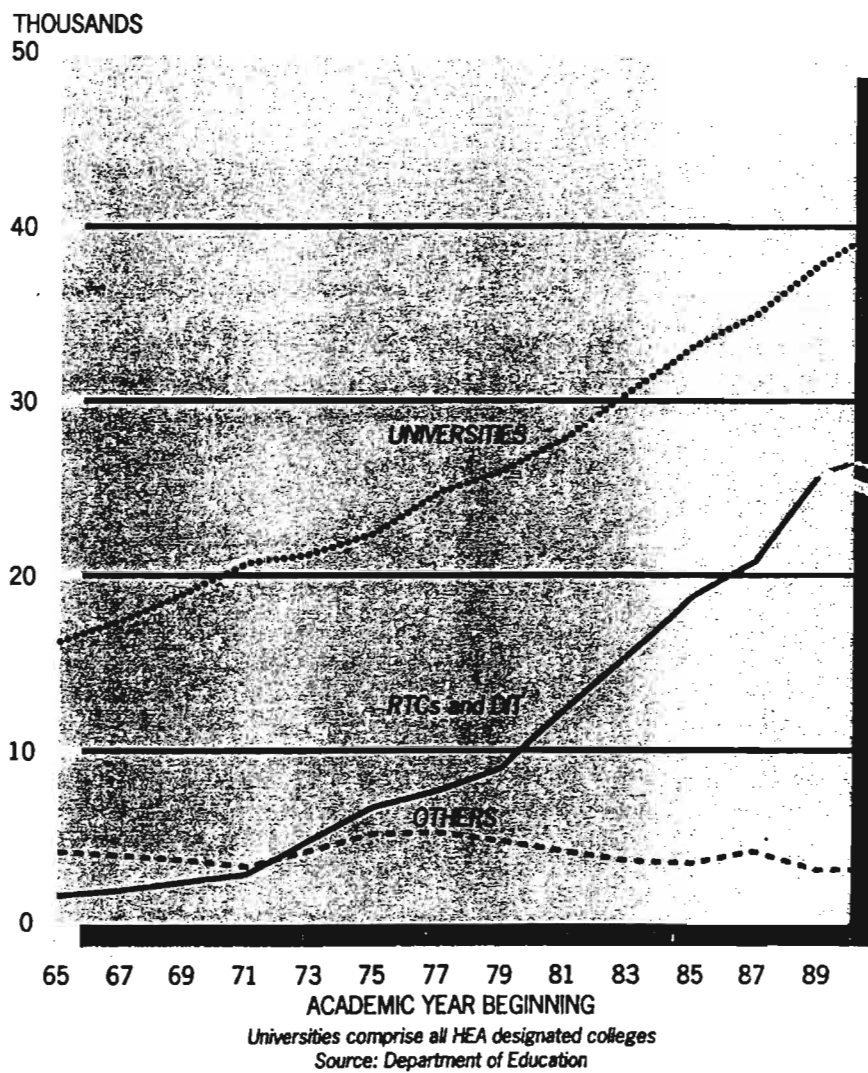
NUMBERS SITTING THE INTERMEDIATE AND LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS

THOUSANDS



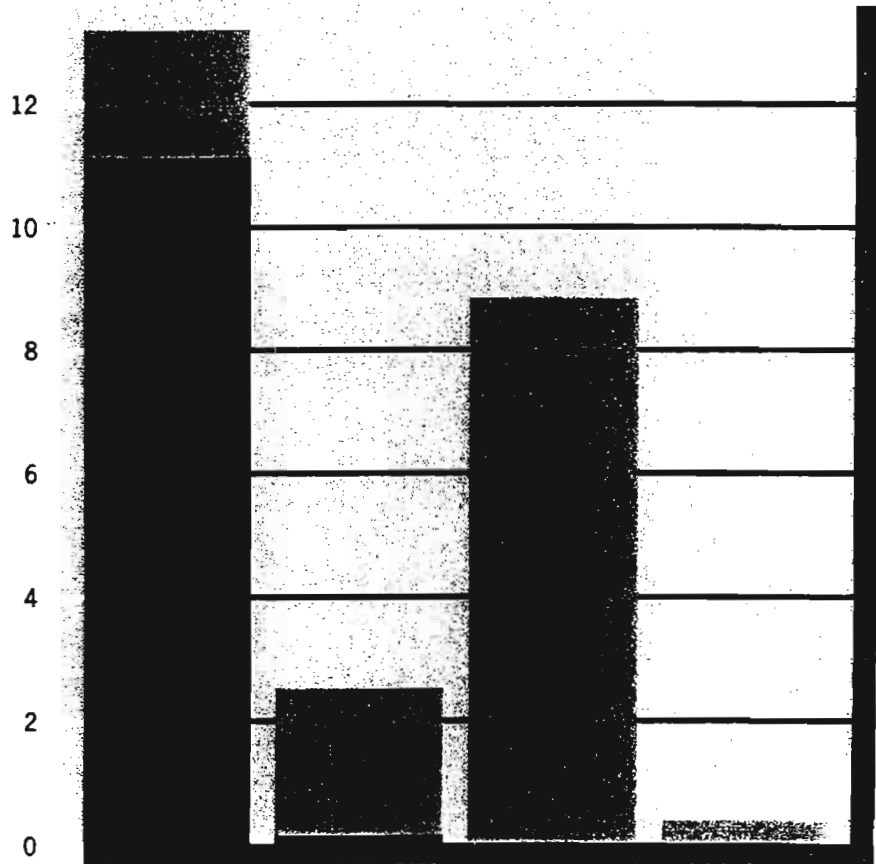
Source: Department of Education

FULL-TIME ENROLMENT AT THIRD LEVEL 1965-90



**NUMBER OF 1ST YEAR STUDENTS ENROLLED
FULL-TIME THIRD-LEVEL EDUCATION 1990/91**

THOUSANDS
14



DEGREE

DIPLOMA

CERTIFICATE

NON-SPECIFIED



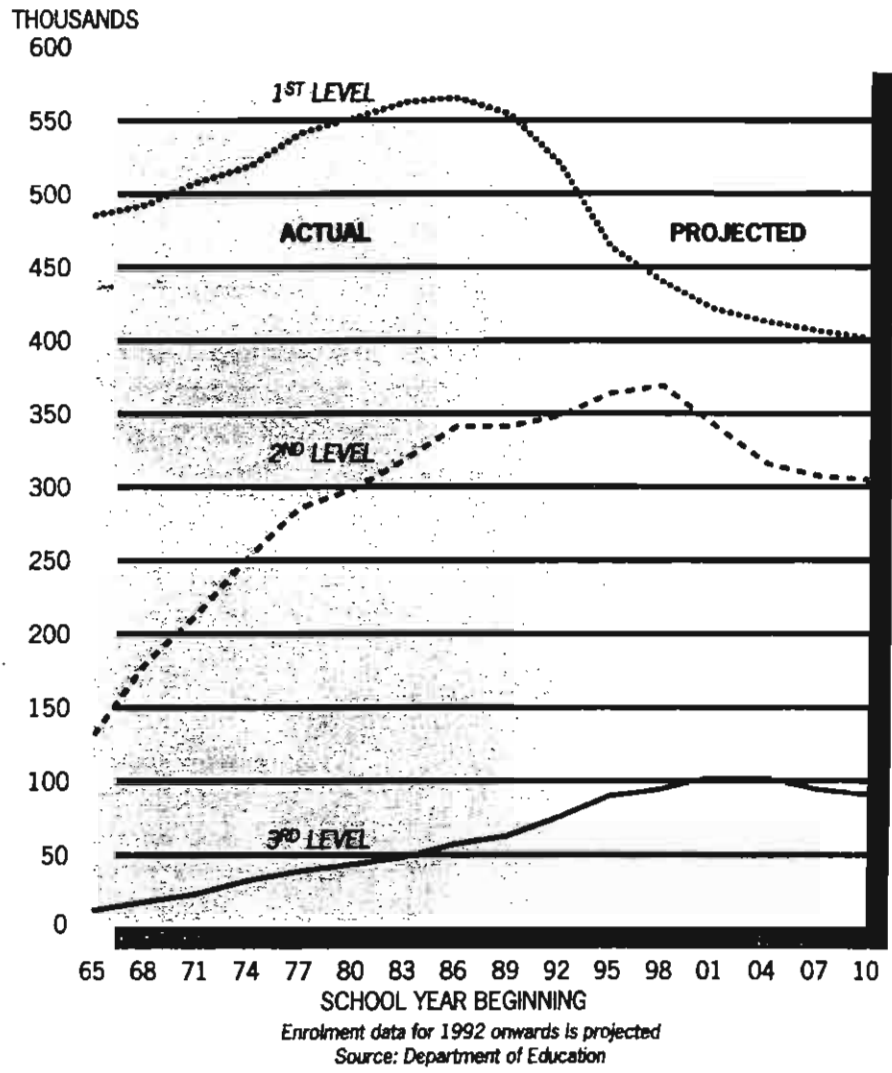
UNIVERSITIES
(TOTAL = 11,361)



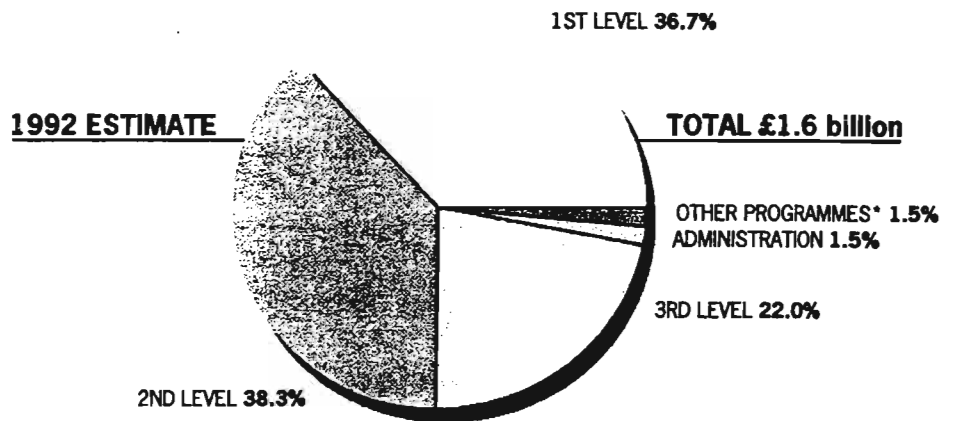
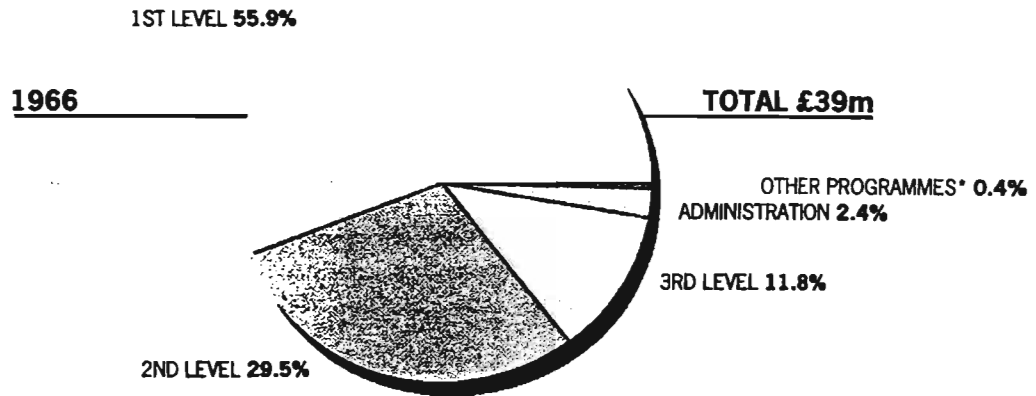
RTCs / DIT
(TOTAL = 13,791)

Source: Department of Education

ACTUAL AND PROJECTED ENROLMENT 1965-2010

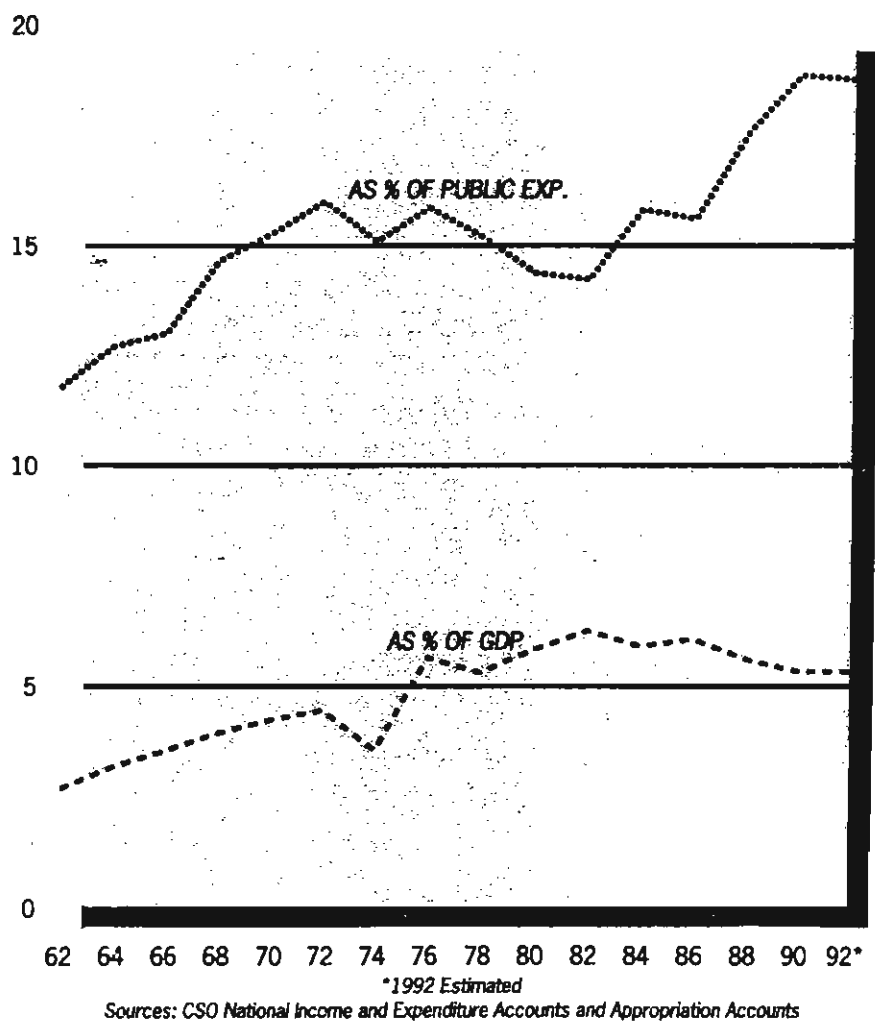


**PUBLIC EXPENDITURE ON EDUCATION
IN 1966 AND 1992**

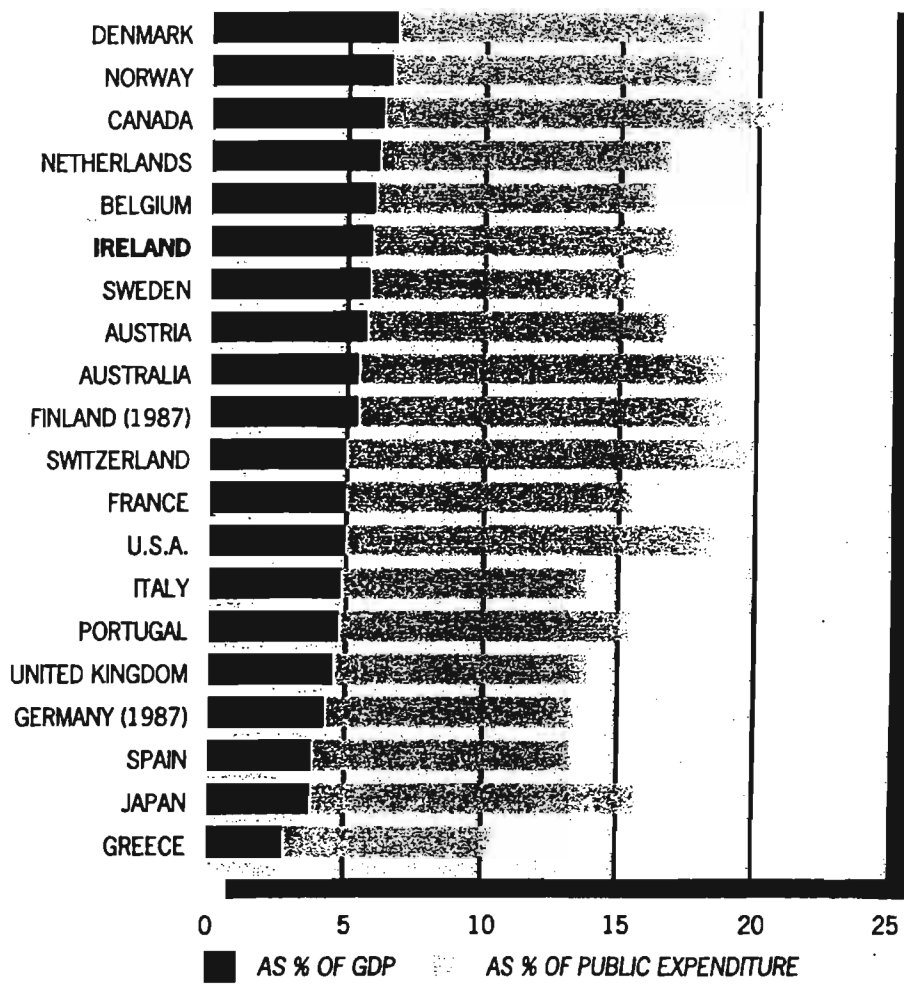


*NOTE: In 1966, third level includes primary teacher training as well as an estimate for third level VEC colleges.
*Other Programmes consist of, inter alia, the following: Youth and Sport Activities, Irish Language, Arts/Culture, Aid to Developing Countries
Source: Department of Education*

**PUBLIC EXPENDITURE ON EDUCATION
RELATIVE TO GDP AND TOTAL VOTED PUBLIC EXPENDITURE***



PUBLIC EXPENDITURE ON EDUCATION AS A PERCENTAGE OF GDP AND TOTAL PUBLIC EXPENDITURE IN 1988



Public expenditure excludes debt servicing
Source: OECD

