From the 'Cinderella' to the 'Fourth Pillar' of the Irish Education System – a Critical Analysis of the Evolution of Further Education and Training in Ireland.

By

Rory O'Sullivan, B.A., H.Dip.Ed., Dip.Comp.Ed., H.Dip.Prof.Ed.St., M.Ed.

A thesis presented to Trinity College, Dublin in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Philosophiae Doctor

In the

School of Education

Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Science

September 2017

Head of School: Professor Andrew Loxley

Supervisors: Professor Michael Shevlin and Professor Conor Mc Guckin

"The great enemy of truth is very often not the deliberate, contrived and dishonest – but the myth- persistent, persuasive, and unrealistic. Too often we hold fast to the clichés of our forebears.   We   subject   all   facts   to   a prefabricated set of interpretations. We enjoy the comfort of opinion without the discomfort of thought."

President John F. Kennedy
Commencement Address, Yale University, New Haven
Connecticut
June 11, 1962.

1 ABSTRACT

The five years from 2010 to 2014 witnessed significant developments in the further education and training (FET) sector in Ireland. This period culminated in the launch, in 2014, of the first ever National FET Strategy in the history of the state which set out a roadmap to achieve the vision of a world-class FET system in Ireland. This research aims to explain how and why these developments took place and if the developmental trajectory is consistent with realising the vision of a world-class FET system. This research takes a case study approach to assessing the evolution of FET in Ireland from a skill formation perspective. The primary focus of this case study is the period from 1973, when Ireland joined the EEC, up to 2014 and the launch of the FET Strategy. The critical analysis of the developmental trajectory examines FET as part of the skill formation institution of the state. Accordingly, this research is placed within the theoretical framework of historical institutionalism. Given the aim of having a 'world-class' FET system in Ireland, the research begins with a review of the international context of skill formation systems in advanced economies. This is followed by a review of the evolution of skill formation in Ireland prior to 1973. Four themes emerge from these reviews which scaffold the analysis of the two primary data sources in this research. 32 published government policy documents are analysed using a semantic content analysis, and 13 semi-structured interviews were conducted with key policy actors in the FET policy space to assess the relationships between the key stakeholders over this period, analysed with the frame of the 'iron triangle of government', i.e. the state, executive agencies, and interest groups. The results of the analyses are triangulated and 32 findings emerge from the research. Based on Busemeyer's concept of the skill regime, this study proposes a model for an Irish Skill Regime which identifies the inter-institutional relationship within the skill formation space. The need to optimise

the quality and balance of these relationships is also highlighted. In addition, the legacy of neglect and underinvestment has resulted in a capacity deficit in the FET sector in Ireland. There is a need for significant investment to address this deficit if the ambition of a 'world-class' FET system is to be achieved.

2 DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this or any other university and it is entirely my own work.

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Rory O'Sullivan

3 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Finally, to the person who makes it all worthwhile, my beautiful wife Mary. For her unfailing love and support always. I could not have done this, or anything else, without you. Thank you for everything. You are my life and my love.

4 DEDICATION

During the course of this research an extraordinary person left this world and my life. After a courageous fight with cancer my mother Evelyn died on December 22nd 2012. From my earliest memory, my mother was passionate about education. She was a great reader herself and, with her husband Tom, my father, they both instilled a love of learning in me that became my life's pursuit. They further instilled in me a strong sense of social justice and of fundamental fairness, and a belief that all people are created equal. I can never fully express what they have meant to me in my life. I am proud to be the son of Tom and Evelyn O'Sullivan. The person I am today is because of them. The educator I am today is because of them.

I dedicate this thesis to my mother Evelyn, in loving memory.

"Ar dheis Dé go raibh a h-anam"

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7 ABBREVIATIONS

AnCO	An Chomhairle Oiliúna – the National Industrial Training Authority
ALMP	Active Labour Market Policy
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
ASTI	Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland
AVT	Accelerated Vocational Training
BIM	Bord Iascaigh Mhara (Ireland's Seafood Development Agency)
CBT	Competence-Based Training
C&C	Community & Comprehensive
CAS	Common Awards System
CandV/CnV	Community and Voluntary Pillar
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CERT	Council for Education, Recruitment and Training
CEVA	Council for Educational and Vocational Awards
CFE	College of Further Education
CIF	Construction Industry Federation
CME	Coordinated Market Economy
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DES	Department of Education and Skills (or Science prior to 2010).
DES-FET	All FET courses provided under the policy direction of the DES prior to the government decision in 2010 to transfer responsibility for industrial training to DES.
DETE	Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment
DIT	Dublin Institute of Technology
DJEI	Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
DJEI-FET	All FET courses provided under the policy direction of the DJEI prior to the government decision in 2010

	to transfer responsibility for industrial training to DES.
DPER	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
DSP	Department of Social Protection
ECB	European Central Bank
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
ECVET	European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training
EEA	European Economic Area
EEC	European Economic Community
EES	European Employment Strategy
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
EGFSN	Expert Group on Future Skills Needs
EMS	European Monetary System
EMU	European Monetary Union
ENQA	European Network for Quality Assurance
EQARF	European Quality Assurance Reference Framework
EQAVET	European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ESF	European Social Fund
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
ETB	Education and Training Board
ETBI	Education and Training Boards Ireland
EU	European Union
FÁS	An Foras Áiseanna Saothair – the Irish National Training and Employment Authority
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FET	Further Education and Training
FETAC	Further Education and Training Awards Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GPS	Global Positioning System
HCT	Human Capital Theory

HE	Higher Education
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HETAC	Higher Education and Training Awards Council
IALS	International Adult Literacy Survey
IBEC	Irish Business Employers Confederation
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ICTU	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
IDA	Industrial Development Authority
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INES	Indicators of Education Systems
INT	Interviewee
IoT	Institute of Technology
ISME	Irish Small and Medium Enterprises Association
ITB	Industrial Training Board
IUQB	Irish Universities Quality Board
IVEA	Irish Vocational Education Association
LME	Liberal Market Economy
MA	Modern Apprenticeship
MAC	Management Advisory Committee
MME	Mixed Market Economy
MSC	Manpower Service Commission
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Association
NALA	National Adult Literacy Agency
NAPD-FET	National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals – FET Committee
NAPS	National Anti-Poverty Strategy
NCEA	National Council for Educational Awards
NCVA	National Council for Vocational Awards
NEAP	National Employment Action Plan
NEET	Not in Employment Education or Training
NESC	National Economic and Social Council
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications

NIEC	National Industrial and Economic Council
NIHE	National Institute of Higher Education
NMS	National Manpower Services
NPM	New Public Management
NQAI	National Qualifications Authority of Ireland
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NRP	National Reform Programme
NTF	National Training Fund
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OEEC	Organisation for European Economic Cooperation
OMC	Open Method of Coordination
PCET	Post-Compulsory Education and Training
PCW	Programme for Competitiveness and Work
PEC	Pre-Employment Course
PESP	Programme for Economic and Social Progress
PIAAC	Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PLC	Post-Leaving Certificate
PNR	Programme for National Recovery
PPF	Programme for Prosperity and Fairness
PSET	Poet-Secondary Education and Training
QNHS	Quarterly National Household Survey
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
R&D	Research and Development
RTC	Regional Technical College
SBTC	Skill-Biased Technological Change
SCANS	Secretary of Labor's Commission on Achieving the Necessary Skills
SFA	Small Firms Association
SI	Statutory Instrument

SLMRU	Skills and Labour Market Research Unit, in SOLAS
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
SMI	Strategic Management Institute
SOLAS	An tSeirbhís Oideachas Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna – Further Education and Training Authority
TUI	Teachers' Union of Ireland
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference for Trade and Development
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
USA	United States of America
VEC	Vocational Education Committee
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VoC	Varieties of Capitalism
VPT	Vocational Preparation and Training
VTOS	Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme
YTS	Youth Training Scheme

1 INTRODUCTION

The supply of skilled labour for the economy has long been a concern of governments worldwide. The period following the Second World War saw the beginning of increased international cooperation and collaboration through the establishment of such organisations as the United Nations (UN), the European Economic Community (EEC), and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The post-war period also witnessed the expansion of education provision in industrialised countries. This expansion coincided with the increasing popularity of Human Capital Theory (HCT) among governments. This theory sees the funding of education as an investment in the human capital of the country (Becker, 1964, 1993). The widespread support for HCT among many governments led to an increasing emphasis on the role of education in preparing students for work at all levels of education, i.e. vocationalism. Bowles and Gintis (1988) observe that there was "an accommodation of educational structures to the economic division of labour" (p.238).

The significant transformations which have taken place in the industrialised world since the mid-1980's, fuelled by the technological advances in information and communications technologies have caused governments to strive for ways to maintain their global competitiveness, enhance work place productivity, and lower unemployment. However, a common finding in many countries is that, despite claims to the contrary, the vocationalisation of education has been shown to have limited impact (Grubb, 1985; Ashton and Green, 1996; Wolf, 2002). Undoubtedly, skilled workers are a vital part of any high skills economy but equally there needs to be sufficient skilled jobs for them to do (Payne, 2000). However, Ashton and Green (1996) observe that this approach leads "to an oversimplified and, in some cases, unduly linear conception of the relation" (p.11).

The economic crises of the 1970s were seen as a significant episode strongly associated with the emergence of a neo-liberal ideology starting in the United Kingdom (UK) when Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister and in the United States of America (USA) during the Reagan administration.

Perceived high levels of government interference in the market and excessive regulations, as well as levels of labour market inflexibilities, such as occupational demarcations, were blamed for the economic ills of countries. This resulted in a shift from a Keynesian, or 'supply side', to a monetarist, or 'demand side', approach to economic policies. With the emergence of neo-liberalism in the UK and the USA, the education and training system was among the areas of government targeted for criticism for not preparing students for the new economic and labour market reality. Vocational education and training (VET) systems in many countries, such as the UK, USA and Australia, are in a seemingly constant cycle of reform, failing to allow one set of reforms to become embedded before commencing the next reform programme (Grubb, 2006). Cuban (1990) is of the view that reforms return because policymakers fail to diagnose problems and promote correct solutions. He further suggests that policymakers regularly return to educational reform as a solution to national problems. "Reforms return because policymakers cave in to the politics of a problem rather than the problem itself" (Cuban. p.6). Referring to the influence of employers on education policy, Schlesinger (as cited in Cuban, 1990, p.7) states that "the politics of public purpose gave way to the politics of private interest".

The most recent reforms of Further Education and Training (FET) in Ireland were the catalyst for this study. The rationale for this research is outlined in the next section followed by a discussion on what is meant by skills and competence. This chapter concludes with an outline of the structure of this study.

1.1 Rationale for the Study

In May 2014 the Minister for Education and Skills, launched the first National Further Education and Training Strategy (SOLAS, 2014) in the history of the Irish State. This followed an intense period of reform within each of the previously separate further education, and industrial training sectors. Beginning in 2010, at the height of the Great Recession, the reform period began with the government decision to transfer responsibility for

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training to the renamed Department for Education and Skills (DES), thus bringing education and training back under one government department for the first time in some 80 years. In July 2011 the government announced its decision to disband the National Training and Employment Authority, FÁS, and to establish a new Further Education and Training Authority, SOLAS. As part of the cost-cutting programme initiated in response to the crisis in the public finances, the 33 Vocational Education Committee's (VECs) were amalgamated to form 16 new Education and Training Boards (ETB) which combined vocational schools and colleges with the former FÁS training centres. The employment services element of the FÁS operation was transferred to the Department of Social Protection (DSP).

In announcing the establishment of SOLAS in 2011, the Minister for Education and Skills said that the aim was to have 21st century FET provision. During this period, the Minister, in outlining the pending reforms of the FET sector, described the FET sector as having been treated as the "black sheep of the education system" (Quinn, 2012) as well as being the "backwater" (Quinn, 2013) and the "Cinderella of the broader education system" (Quinn, 2014). The FET Strategy launched in 2014 was set out to present "a roadmap and implementation plan to realise the vision of a world-class integrated system of further education and training in Ireland" (SOLAS, 2014, p. 3). This suggests that there is some distance for the FET sector in Ireland to travel to become 'world-class' or to have '21st century FET provision'.

Historically, vocational education and training, which is now referred to as further education and training in Ireland, has been regarded as of lower stature than higher education. Indeed, Sweeney (2013) describes Ireland as a "third level society" (p. 12). Ireland is not alone in this regard with the recent review of vocational education and training by the OECD (2010) stating:

> "Vocational education and training (VET) can play a central role in preparing young people for work, developing the skills of adults and

responding to the labour-market needs of the economy. Despite this role, VET has been oddly neglected and marginalised in policy discussions, often overshadowed by the increasing emphasis on general academic education and the role of schools in preparing students for university education. It has also been seen as low status by students and the general public" (p. 9).

This suggests that the range of skills required for the economy may not be regarded as of equal value or status. The status or value of VET also differs between countries. Apprenticeships are highly regarded in Germany, for example, but less so in the UK and Ireland. Therefore, before discussing skill formation systems it is important to clarify what is meant by the concept of skill and how it has been translated into modern education and training systems. In particular, how the different epistemological perspectives on the meaning of skill can be identified in the differences between skill formation systems requires examination.

1.2 Skill and Competences

1.2.1 What is Skill?

While the availability of sufficiently skilled workers has always been a concern of governments, the last decade, in particular, has seen a significant increase in the international focus being placed on the issue of skills and skill formation as a lever for improving individual employability, productivity and national competitiveness. According to the OECD (2011) "skills are key to the prosperity of nations and to better lives for individuals in the 21st century" (p.7). An increasing number of countries have been developing skills strategies or skills policies. Supranational bodies such as the EU and, in particular, the OECD, have also conducted considerable work in the area of skills (European Commission 2008b, 2010; OECD, 2010, 2011, 2012a).

A discussion about skills in isolation from their corresponding occupation or field of employment would be incomplete. Indeed, some commentators are

of the view that acquiring skills is inseparable from identity formation for the individual (Streeck, 1989; Rauner, 2007). When a young person leaves school, or an older person is considering a change of career, they seek to acquire the skills for a particular occupation or area of employment. For example, the young person becomes an apprentice and trains to be a carpenter. Equally, he or she could go to medical school to train to be a doctor. Identity formation is also connected to the value society places on a given occupation or field of employment. As far back as the time of Aristotle (1995), occupations were socially categorised:

> "Occupations are divided into those which are fit for freemen and those which are unfit for them" (p.229).

The skills associated with such a social categorisation of occupations were similarly given differentiated value within the society. While Aristotle described the distinction made in the society of his time between occupations 'fit' or 'unfit' for freemen (the unfit occupations referred to the work conducted by slaves), similar differentiations have been made in all societies. The development of occupational categories began to emerge with the industrialisation period, particularly in the nineteenth century. Present day social class categories used in official statistics are based on occupational categories. In Ireland the current social class categories used in official statistics in Ireland are based on the following occupational groupings:

- Professional workers;
- Managerial and technical;
- Non-manual;
- Skilled manual;
- Semi-skilled;
- Unskilled;
- All others gainfully occupied and unknown (www.statcentral.ie).

Consequently, it is can be concluded that skills, their corresponding occupations, and the value given to them are socially defined constructs

(Rigby and Sanchis, 2006).   Indeed, Jessop (1993) contends that all "economic activity is both socially embedded and socially regulated" (p.8).

Accordingly, each society will have constructed its own individual concept of skills and their relative values. Different countries will consequently differ on what is meant by skill or, indeed, the same skill could be valued differently across countries. The VET system is well regarded within Germany, whereas in other countries, such as Ireland, it has a lower social standing. Indeed, the original differences between skill formation systems across countries can be traced back to the early period of industrialisation and "the extent to which skills came to be contested across the class-divide, i.e. between emerging unions and employers" (Culpepper and Thelen, 2008, p.26).   These differences are manifestations of the philosophical foundations of the skill formation system which has evolved in each country. This is particularly the case in VET. Rauner (2007), in his analysis of VET in Europe, identifies what he refers to as a "two qualification scenario" (p.118), namely, the vocational education scenario and the employability scenario. He describes the vocational education scenario as education and training for the purpose of pursuing an occupation and involves both classroom-based learning and the learning of work-place based professional practice, e.g. apprenticeship. This involves the socialisation of the apprentice into the culture of the occupation.   The second scenario, employability, he describes as the accumulation of skills for the purpose of employment. According to Rauner, these two scenarios correspond to the characteristics of the skill formation systems in countries such as Germany versus that of countries such as the UK. Greinert (2004a) agrees with Rauner when he observes that the systems in England and Germany would be regarded as polar opposites of the VET cultural divide.

In examining what is involved in the construction of a skill, Adler (2004) argues that a skill consists of two key components:

"Mastery of the complexity of the tasks required of workers by their jobs, and mastery of the relations that coordinate activity across these tasks" (p.246).

These components can be viewed as the technical dimension of the skill and the social dimension necessary for it to be effective in a given context. From an occupational perspective, the totality of skills required for a particular employment will consist of technical and social components. Deissenger (2004), referring to the German VET system, states that "social and personal behaviour patterns are taught along with the relevant technical and practical job skills" (p.29). However, when it comes to the measurement of skills, the measurement of the relational or social dimension is more difficult than measuring the technical components. Within Rauner's employability scenario measurement of the social dimension is often lacking if not totally absent.

In the 1980's there was a move from skills towards competence, particularly in the area of human resource management. This shift coincided with the emergence of a learning outcomes approach to assessment. Given that the concept of competence places the emphasis on outcomes, the emergence of learning outcomes in the assessment arena was opportune. The disadvantage to this approach is that skills which were more difficult to measure, i.e. the relational or social component, such as teamwork, communications and problem solving, tended to have a minimal presence in the qualifications process. Teamwork, for example, is by definition not a solitary but a group activity. In the context of a group activity, the measurement of each team member's individual level of competence at 'team-working' is not straight forward. Equally, assessment systems are heavily biased toward the measurement of individual performance. Consequently, the assessment systems, from a functionality perspective, are biased towards the measurement of the technical component of skills rather than the social component. Conversely, the skills sought increasingly by employers are typically from the social dimension of skills. This presents a dilemma for the assessment and qualification processes.

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1.2.2 Three Approaches to Competence

Delamare-Le Deist and Winterton (2005) identify three approaches to competence – the behavioural, the functional and the multi-dimensional holistic approach. The behavioural approach, most associated with the US tradition, evolved from desire to develop an alternative measure of competence to the traditional tests of cognitive intelligence. The competence approach was developed by differentiating between effective and ineffective performers in employment. This approach was viewed as capturing aptitudes and attitudes beyond description of specific tasks.

The second approach identified was the functional approach, which is traditionally ascribed to the UK. This approach was based on the occupational standards of competence grounded in a functional analysis of occupations in a variety of contexts. Brockmann, Clarke and Winch (2008), in discussing the English system, observe that there has been "a trend towards a narrowing down of 'skills' and a further weakening of the knowledge base" (p.550).

The third approach identified was the multi-dimensional holistic approach. This approach was identified in relation to France and Germany. The French approach to competence has three elements – *saviour* (knowledge*), savoir-faire* (functional competences) and *savoir-être* (behavioural competence). In the German system, competence (*Kompetenz)* was more implicit being rooted in the concept of *Beruf* (occupation – a concept which encompasses the traditions and knowledge of the craft from the guilds).

1.2.3 Context-Dependent v Context-Independent Learning

The multi-dimensional holistic approach of France and Germany and the behavioural and functional approaches of the US and UK traditions have different underpinning epistemological assumptions (Brockmann, Clarke and Winch, 2008). The multi-dimensional holistic approach to competence is

based on the active employee participating in constructing knowledge. Such an employee is seen as having the competence to bring all of the resources he/she has at his/her disposal to deal with complex situations in the workplace. This would equate to Rauner's (2007) 'vocational principle' scenario. This holistic view of the concept of competence includes all aspects of the person – personal, professional and social. Most importantly, competence is not seen as static or fixed but something that evolves and develops through a range of experiences. In other words the learning is situated and dependent upon the context of the relevant occupation. Sandberg (2000) states that the "worker and work form one entity through the lived experience of work. Competence is thus seen as constituted by the meaning the work takes on for the worker in his or her experience of it" (p.11).

The behavioural and functional approaches, on the other hand, view the employee as passive, in the main. The concept of competence in this approach is seen as the demonstration of a set list of competences as required by an employer. In this approach the terms 'competence' and 'skill' can be used interchangeably (Brockmann et al., 2008a). This approach to competence sees the learning as independent of the context of the associated occupation and equates to Rauner's 'employability' scenario.

1.2.4 The Changing Meaning of Skills and Competence

The discourse in policy documents relating to 'skills' or 'competences' has seen a continually changing 'meaning' in response to changes in the economy. As more 'flexible' and 'adaptable' workers were needed policy developments moved towards 'core skills', 'transferable skills' or 'generic competences'. Such skills or competences would be 'required' in any position of employment. "The key or core or higher-order skills are remarkably similar from country to country, and usually include problem-framing and problem-solving, communications skills and teamwork, analysing information, critical thinking and reasoning skills" (Grubb, 2006, p.20). There have been increasing policy shifts to 'suites' of skills and the inclusion of sets of desirable attributes that were once viewed as personal

qualities and attitudes (Cornford, 2005). Payne (2000) sees the 'skills universe' as having expanded to include "a range of personal characteristics, behaviours and attitudes, and embracing a new language of generic, transferable key skills…Indeed, skill has grown so diffuse and wide ranging that it now means all things to all people and can be applied almost universally without exception" (p.366). The view that generic skills or competences are transferable across multiple occupational areas has attracted some disagreement (Halász and Michel, 2011). Collin (as cited in Winterton, Delmare-Le Deist and Stringfellow, 2006) is of the view that it is a futile attempt to capture skills and competences in a mechanistic, reductionist fashion.

This expansion in the meaning of skill has resulted in the development of a policy that presents significant conflicting problems in VET. While the breadth of elements included within the 'skills universe' expands, description of skills and competence for the purposes of curriculum in VET has become increasingly reductionist. Learning is increasingly seen as a product - that can be 'ordered', delivered and measured - rather than as a process (Cornford, 2005; Mulder, Weigel & Collins, 2007; Velde, 1999; Jackson, 1993). McGuinness et al (2014) quote a contributor to their research on FET in Ireland who describes the approach to skill development in Ireland somewhat glibly as:

> "We are going to bestow these [skills] on you like a coat of paint" (p. 77).

In linking education closely with economic progress politicians, employers and other have placed great stress on the instrumental, vocational value of education and have tended to downgrade the old liberal concept of education as a valuable possession in its own right – as a consumption as well as an investment good (Crouch, Finegold and Sako, 1999). Pring (2004) observes that policy documents on VET in the UK placed considerable importance on the rapid development of skills. However, he cautioned that the concept of skills being articulated is too narrow and that the "language of skills…gives

an illusion of straightforwardness which closer examination would not warrant" (pp. 106-107).

1.2.5 *The Shift to Learning Outcomes and National Qualifications Frameworks*

What is as important as describing the skills required is embedding them in the curriculum and assessment systems (Grubb, 2006). Within education and training systems, skills and competence development strategies have found expression in competence-based training (CBT) and the certification of the learning using a learning outcomes-based approach. These strategies were initially introduced in the UK in the mid-1980s as part of VET policy reform measures in response to high youth unemployment. They were seen, in combination with the skill/competence approach, to improve the labour market and workplace relevance of VET (CEDEFOP, 2008). This approach led to the development of learning outcomes based qualifications. This proved to be a significant shift away from the traditional position of qualifications based on content, i.e. inputs, being owned by the institution in which the learning programme took place to the separation of the qualification from the programme and being based on learning outcomes, i.e. outputs, and being owned by the 'user', namely, the learners and the employers. These outcomes were defined in terms of the knowledge, skills and competences (Winterton, Delamare-Le Deist and Stringfellow, 2006). Allais (2010) observes that the 'shift to outcomes' has also seen a shift in power "away from educational institutions and towards other stakeholders, particularly employers" (p.25).

Jackson (1993) argues that CBT and learning outcomes are a 'seductive' tool of administrative rather than instructional reform. They provide a means of establishing educational objectives and organising programme delivery in a manner that ensures 'efficiency, 'effectiveness' and 'responsiveness' to the needs of industry. It provides an infrastructure for making teachers, administrators and the curriculum process accountable to a policy process. The objectified form of organising instruction gives the appearance of

responsiveness to external decision making, namely, the needs of the economy.

The development of learning outcomes-based qualifications, such as the National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) in the UK in the early 1980's, was followed closely with the development of national qualifications systems and national qualifications frameworks (NQF). The concept of NQFs emerged out of the vocational qualification reforms in England in the 1980s and has become a rapidly growing phenomenon in education reform internationally initially in the English speaking world. The reforms in England began in 1987 with the launch of the National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This was the first national attempt to base qualifications on the idea of competences or outcomes and it has been used as the model for many qualifications frameworks around the world (Allais, 2007). New Zealand was the first country to use the official title of NQF in 1992 followed soon thereafter by Australia in 1995. Along with the UK these countries are regarded as the first group of countries to have developed NQFs. Ireland launched its NQF in 2003. Since 2005 there has been a significant increase in the number of countries adopting NQFs, with over 100 countries implementing, developing or considering NQFs, or involved in regional qualifications frameworks (ibid.). The European Union launched a European Qualifications Framework in 2008 (European Parliament and Council, 2008) as a meta-framework through which, following an alignment processes, NQFs of Member States could align with each other. This framework involves eight level descriptors defining the requisite knowledge, skills and competences for each level.

Allais (2007) sees qualifications frameworks as part of international trends in service delivery and public sector reform. In keeping with the neo-liberal ideology which is driving such reforms, she identifies performance statements and measurements as key to this managerialist approach. "The growing popularity of outcome-based qualifications frameworks in education reform can be accounted for at least partly in light of these trends in public-sector reform" (p.65). From an education standpoint, she argues that seeing

education as something to be 'delivered' against performance statements relating to outcomes-based NQFs does in fact undermine the provision of education.

The specific motivations and priorities for each country considering, developing and/or implementing an NQF are as wide and diverse as the countries themselves. Given the breadth of the potential influence of an NQF on educational, social and economic sections of a society it is unsurprising that Bohlinger (2012) describes qualifications frameworks as a political instrument. In her view they are supposed to be drivers of change in that they provide "the impetus for a number of fundamental reforms in education and training systems" (p.279). Raffe (2009) takes a broader view when he refers to NQFs as inherently dynamic entities, the implementation process for which has a political dimension. He sees them as dynamic since they can be used as agents of change in education and training systems. An NQF, he continues, "is not an event, but a lengthy process which involves complex interactions with the education and training system, with its learners and stakeholders and with its socioeconomic and political environment" (p.23).

Qualifications touch on many power relations in society. They are the 'currency' the learner can use to gain access to further studies or the labour market. Qualifications play a key role in social stratification processes in relation to the labour market and higher education. Keating (2008) agrees and observes that qualifications "play the role of gatekeeper for entry into occupations or alumni" (p.1). Consequently, it is hardly surprising that, internationally, the sub-system of education least affected by the learning outcomes approach is upper secondary general education, whose educative function is overshadowed by its selection function. In most industrialised countries, general upper secondary education leads primarily to higher education (CEDEFOP, 2008).

1.3 Structure of the Study

This introductory chapter began with a description of the catalyst for this study – the establishment of SOLAS and the launch of the first ever FET strategy in the history of the Irish State. With the aim of creating a world-class FET system with 21st century provision, there is a question as to whether the reforms are heading in the right direction when compared with skill formation systems in other countries. In addition, there is a desire to understand how, taking a historical perspective, the FET sector evolved over time to its current state of development, as well as the rationale for its particular institutional and organisational configuration. The chapter continued with a discussion of the concept of skill, its epistemological underpinnings, and its socially defined construction. This was followed by a discussion of the measurement of skill, particularly in light of the shift to a learning outcomes-based approach to assessment and the subsequent development of NQFs.

Chapter Two sets out the theoretical framework for the study, namely, the theory of institutional genesis, continuity and change. In particular, given the historical perspective of this study, the primary framework is historical institutionalism. This chapter will elaborate on the different modes of institutional change within dynamically evolving political economies. Having presented the theoretical framework the discussion, Chapter Three moves on to current research relating to skill formation systems. Given the ambition to develop a world class FET sector in Ireland, a discussion of skill formation systems in an international context is pertinent. As skill formation systems respond to the needs of the economy, this chapter begins with a discussion of the Varieties of Capitalism (Hall & Soskice, 2001) model of comparing political economies. This model lays the foundation for an appropriate comparison of the skill formation system in Ireland with those in countries with similar types of political economy. The chapter continues with an analysis of the various typologies of skill formation systems and how such systems are dynamic entities in a constant state of change in response to the ongoing changes in the economy. The

comparative nature of such typologies provides a cross-sectional perspective. However, given the focus of this study of the historical evolution of the FET sector in Ireland, a longitudinal perspective of the evolution of the skill formation systems in Germany and Britain are, by way of illustration, described in detail. The impact of technological change and the increasing prominence of labour market activation are analysed in the concluding sections of the chapter.

Chapter Four takes the discussion of skill formation systems into the Irish context prior to 1973 when Ireland joined the EEC. The significant delay in the industrialisation of Ireland and the significant opposition of the Catholic Church to the development of the vocational school system were key contributory factors in the vocational education system being characterised by its underdeveloped nature and its low regard in Irish society. On the industrial training side, the lack of support from both unions and employers resulted in the development of a weak apprenticeship system.

In the late 1950s the government changed its economic policy from inward-looking protectionism to an outward-looking open approach to international trade. International investment was sought and Ireland's entry to the foreign-direct investment market began. The 1960s were also a period of government intervention in contrast to decades of voluntarism. Significant developments occurred during the 1960s in both education and industrial training during this period, most notably, the introduction of free-post-primary education in in 1967.

Four themes are identified as emerging from the literature – the convergence of education and training; certification of FET; active manpower policy; and, the rationalisation and regionalisation of the administration of FET. These four themes form the basis for the analysis of the two data sources for this research, namely, the published government policy documents and the semi-structured interviews conducted with key policy actors.

Chapter Five describes this research as taking the form of a case study of the evolution of FET in Ireland within the overall approach to skill formation policy. Because of the breadth and historical nature of this study the methodology is primarily historical institutionalism with an appropriate blend of concepts from the other institutionalist perspectives discussed in Chapter Two. The research question that directs this research is:

> What were the key drivers, barriers and/or facilitators, both national and international, which influenced the trajectories of further education and training institutions in Ireland from 1973 to 2014?

Two primary data sources are identified for this study, namely, the policy documents published by the Irish government between 1973 and 2014, and semi-structured interviews with 13 key policy actors. These actors were key 'policy entrepreneurs' in the development of the FET sector in Ireland. Within the framework of the four emergent themes from the literature, the policy documents are analysed using a semantic content analysis of the policy documents. The interviews were conducted in the context of the four emergent themes and placed an emphasis on the relationships between the various actors and stakeholder groups. The analysis of these interviews is framed by the 'iron triangle of government' (Adshead, 2003) which consists of the state, executive agencies, and interest groups. The results of the case study are triangulated to produce the findings from this research.

The results and the findings of the research are presented in Chapter Six. This chapter begins with an analysis of the economic and social context for the case study period followed by an analysis of the educational and training context. The first results to be presented are those of the qualitative document analysis. In the absence of a definition of FET, the purpose of FET as stated in the policy documents, is analysed in the first instance. This provides a context for the subsequent presentation of the results based on the four emergent themes. The results of the analysis of the interviews are presented in the next section of the chapter which is followed by the triangulation of the results and the presentation of the findings. Three key

themes emerge from the findings. Chapter Seven presents a discussion of the research. This discussion begins with a critical analysis of the findings of the case study within the theoretical framework for this research. This is followed by a discussion of the state of the FET institution in Ireland at the end of the case study period. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the three themes that emerged from the findings.

2 THEORETICAL APPROACH

A Theory of Institutional Genesis, Continuity and Change in Advanced Economies

2.1 Introduction

This study aims to explain how further education and training (FET) in Ireland, a neglected policy space until recently, has evolved to its current state of development. The fragmented nature of this policy arena has resulted in an equally fragmented evidence base. As will be discussed in Chapter Four, the predominantly voluntarist approach taken by successive Irish governments to skill formation began to change in the 1960s, but it was Ireland's joining of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973 that signalled the beginning of the development of what is now referred to as the FET sector in Ireland today. Due to the fragmented nature of the development of FET the only consistent sources of data covering this period are the published policy documents of the Irish government. While an analysis of these documents is integral to this study, the choice of an appropriate theoretical framework in which to place this study is less clear.

Studies of education policy documents are placed by numerous writers within a post-structuralist framework and based on the work of Michel Foucault on discourse analysis (Ball, 1994; Olssen, Codd and O'Neill, 2004). Brine (2002, 2006) similarly uses discourse analysis in her study of the policy documents of the European Union. However, discourse analysis is insufficient to explain policy change over time. Vossiek (2015), in his comparative analysis of apprenticeships reforms in the United Kingdom, Australia, and Ireland, uses a process tracing approach, which is often used in "within-case analysis based in qualitative data" (Collier, 2011). This approach could address change over time but its focus is too narrow to address macro-policy change within the broader skill formation space.

Therefore, this study will look beyond these approaches for a more appropriate framework within which to position this study.

The bulk of studies within the skill formation space, both nationally and internationally, have focused on a particular aspect of the system, such as, education systems and the labour market (Allmendinger, 1989); school to work transition (Raffe, 1997, 2003, 2008; Smyth, Gangl, Raffe, Hannan, & McCoy, 2001; Shavit & Müller, 2003; Quintini, Martin, & Martin, 2007; Ryan, 2001); apprenticeship (Ryan, 2000; Rauner, & Smith, 2010); adult education (Murtagh, 2009); higher education (Clancy, 2003, 2015; Loxley, Seery & Walsh, 2014); and vocational education and training (Thelen, 2004; Pilz, 2012). However, since the 1990s, a number of scholars have examined the issue of skill formation within the broader sphere of the political economy (Ashton & Green, 1996; Crouch, Finegold & Sako, 1999) with some scholars focusing on the political economy of high skills (Browne, Green & Lauder, 2001). Cross-national comparisons of skill formation systems have also been produced (Thelen, 2004; Mayer & Solga, 2008; Busemeyer & Trampusch, 2012). Examining education policy as part of the welfare state was also the focus of a number of studies (Iversen and Stephens, 2008; Busemeyer and Nikolai, 2010; Busemeyer, 2015). In addition, the area of labour market activation, which links the skill formation system and the welfare state, has been the focus of a range of other studies (Boyle, 2005; Kluve, 2006; Card, Kluve and Weber, 2010; Grubb, Singh & Tergeist, 2009; Weishaupt, 2011).

Examining FET solely within the confines of education policy would be out of line with the development of overall skill formation policy, both nationally and internationally. While the vocational and technical education has been traditionally viewed as a system of education within education policy scholarship, the FET sector in Ireland, as it is known today, has been constructed from the vocation education and training provision under the policy direction of a number of government departments. Prior to the government's decision in 2010 to transfer policy responsibility for industrial training to the Department of Education and Skills, the FET sector of today

consisted of the industrial training arena, including apprenticeships (under the policy direction of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment until 2010), the sectoral training element in the fields of agriculture, tourism, fisheries, and forestry (under the policy direction of a number of government departments), as well as the VEC sector (under the direction of the Department of Education and Science). Therefore, while the VEC sector has been a system of education, an analysis of the evolution of the FET in Ireland to the present day must take a broader perspective. The skills agenda has increasingly been linked skills formation policy to the areas of labour market policy, in terms of both the supply of appropriately skilled workers for the economy, as well as the activation of the unemployed. In Ireland, the importance of foreign direct investment to overall economic development has placed an increasing emphasis on the skills agenda. The recent legislative changes in Ireland have positioned the skills agenda in Ireland across three government departments – Education and Skills, Social Protection, and Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation. Consequently, examining a particular aspect of skills formation, or FET in particular, in isolation from developments in the adjacent policy domains would be insufficient. Therefore, in order to reach the fullest possible understanding of the evolution of FET within the overall skill formation policy in Ireland a broader perspective of the macro-policy change is required. Such a perspective necessitates the examination of the particular policy arena within the macro-institutions of the State. Accordingly, the theory of institutional genesis, continuity, and change, which will be the focus of the remainder of this chapter, is an appropriate framework for this study. Indeed, previous studies focusing on broad systemic or macro-change over time, such as Thelen (2004) and Weishaupt (2011), have taken such an approach. In particular, the evolution of macro-institutions have been analysed from a historical institutional perspective which examines this development over broad time periods.

Institutional theory, and in particular, institutional genesis, continuity, and change will be discussed in the remainder of this chapter. This discussion will be divided into four main sections. Firstly, a definition of an institution

is provided and how, within institutional theory, it differs from that of an organisation. This will be followed by a discussion of the three perspectives of institutionalism, as set out by Hall and Taylor (1996), namely, rational choice institutionalism, sociological institutionalism, and historical institutionalism. The second section will focus on institutional genesis. It will examine the circumstances under which an institution is established, and the constraints upon its design, based on the work of Pierson (2004). The third section examines the area of institutional continuity. It will include issues of external and internal change stimuli as well as the developmental trajectories within the concepts of path dependency and critical junctures. The final section of this discussion focuses on institutional change. The circumstances which would cause an institution to change as well as the manner of that change will be examined. This section will conclude with a discussion of the complexities of institutional change in the broader institutional landscape and how change rarely occurs within one institution is isolation from change in others.

2.2 A Theory of Institutions – Genesis, Continuity and Change

The first section begins with an overview of the different perspectives on institutionalism. It will continue with a review of the literature on the origins or genesis of institutions. The final section of this Chapter will focus on the continuity and evolution of institutions, and the manner in which institutional change occurs.

2.2.1 Institutions and Organisations

The importance of institutions within a country – social, economic and political – has been the subject of examination by scholars stretching back to the time of Plato and Aristotle (Steinmo, 2008). Galvin, Shapiro, and Skowronek (2006) describe institutions as giving the state "its shape, articulate its relationships, and express its legitimacy" (p.1). While the term "institutions" has been synonymous with established organisations in a country, such as, parliament, the courts and schools, more recent work

distinguishes between institutions and organisations. It looks at institutions as the rules, both formal and informal, which structure behaviour, and organisations are seen as entities within this landscape. Cairney (2012) says that this view of what constitutes an institution involves two main factors "regular patterns of behaviour and the rules, norms, practices and relationships that influence such behaviour" (p.69). North (1990) sees institutions as providing a sense of certainty and structure to the normal day-to-day activities in society. Hall and Soskice (2001) distinguish between "institutions" and "organisations". Citing the work of North (1990) they define institutions as:

> "A set of rules, formal or informal, that actors generally follow, whether for normative, cognitive, or material reasons" (p.9).

They define organisations as

> "Durable entities with formally recognised members, whose rules also contribute to the institutions of the political economy" (p.9).

North (1990) refers to institutions as the 'rules of the game in a society' with the actors, such as organizations, being the 'players' of the game. Relating to public policy, Cairney (2012) echoes the distinction between institutions and organisations when he states:

> "Institutions are not just the buildings or arenas within which people make policy – they are also the rules of behaviour that influence how they make policy" (p.69).

Thelen and Steinmo (1992) concur with this view with particular reference to the influence of institutions on the outcome of political contestations:

> "…institutions constrain and refract politics but they are never the sole "cause" of outcomes. Institutional analyses do not deny the broad political forces that animate various theories of

politics…Instead, they point to the ways that institutions structure these battles and in so doing, influence their outcomes" (p.3).

2.2.2 *The Three Institutionalisms*

Within the Social Sciences there are a variety of perspectives that can be taken to the study of institutions, or institutionalism. Hall and Taylor (1996) identify three such perspectives – historical institutionalism, rational choice institutionalism, and sociological institutionalism. They state that although these three schools of thought have "incubated in relative isolation from each other" (p.957) the differences between them are a matter of emphasis. Steinmo (2008) argues that, within these three perspectives, there is a great deal of agreement about what constitutes an institution, namely, the "rules that structure behaviour" (p.126). He sees the key difference between the three as their view of the people "whose actions or behaviour is being structured" (p.126). Thelen (1999) refers to a mutual borrowing taking place between the three:

> "The walls dividing the three perspectives have also been eroded by "border crossings" who have resisted the tendencies towards cordoning these schools off from each other and who borrow liberally (and often fruitfully) where they can, in order to answer specific empirical questions" (p.370).

The rational choice perspective sees people as rational strategic actors whose behaviour is primarily influenced by self-interest, and the pursuit of improving one's position. From this perspective institutions are seen as providing the parameters within which an individual actor's strategic behaviour takes place. Hall and Taylor (1996) refer to this as the "calculus" approach. By contrast, sociological institutionalism sees people, not as rational or self-interested beings, but primarily as social actors. Within this perspective, institutions are regarded as setting out the boundaries for, not only the rules that structure behaviour, but also how a person sees the world. March and Olsen (1984) see people making choices based on "rules

of appropriateness" (p.741) as determined by the norms and cultures of the institution. Hall and Taylor (1996) describe this as the "cultural approach" in which the person's "worldview" sets the boundaries of choice. They distinguish this from the rational choice perspective as follows:

> "It tends to see individuals as satisfiers, rather than utility maximizers, and to emphasize the degree to which the choice of a course of action depends on the interpretation of a situation rather than on purely instrumental calculation" (p.939).

Historical institutionalism exists between both rational choice and sociological institutionalism. People are seen as "both norm-abiding rule followers and self-interested rational actors" (Steinmo, 2008, p.126). In seeking to explain particular choices made at particular points in time, Weishaupt (2011) states that both the historical context and the institutional framework are important. History provides the context while the institutional framework "condition and constrain actors' behaviour" (p.28). While the rational choice perspective emphasises the coordinating aspects of institutions that sustain stability, historical institutionalism sees institutions as emerging from and being sustained by "features of the broader political and social context" (Thelen, 1999, p.384). However, Schmidt (2008) expresses the view that, while the three institutionalisms can describe institutional change and continuity, they are weak on the capacity to explain why change occurs. Weishaupt (2011) makes a similar point when he says that "the omission of an *ideational* variable…leads to incomplete explanations" (p.44, emphasis in the original). The ideational dimension will be discussed later in the chapter.

2.2.3 Institutional Genesis

Much of the literature on institutions has focused on their effects, and in more recent years, on the issue of change, with little attention being paid to how they came into being. Pierson (2000b) is critical of what he sees as a tendency in the literature to resort to a functionalist perspective in which the

function that the institution currently serves is equated with the explanation for its establishment (p.475). Bates (1988) concurs and advises that it is important not to confuse the explanation for the origin of an institution with the role it currently plays. Indeed, the processes involved in the establishment of the institution are often quite different to those which maintain it (Mahoney, 2000). The vocational education and training system in Germany would be a case in point. This system, which is regarded a central pillar of the German social partnership system today enjoying the support of both employers and trade unions, was established under an autocratic government following the enactment of legislation in 1897, the purpose of which was to strengthen support for the artisan producers against the surging support for working class groups (Thelen, 2004). The original system established by the 1897 legislation, in a particular socio-political context, was required to evolve as the socio-political context changed in order to continue in existence. The various episodes of renegotiation and institutional adaptation, which took place in the intervening period, each resulted in an agreement on the way forward. On each occasion, the subsequent institution was a manifestation of the collective agreement between the parties.

Why are institutions established? An institution does not just appear in isolation, either from context, or other institutions. Powell, Packlen, and Whittington (2012) observe that "institutions often portrayed a solution to collective problems that enables participants to realize gains from coordination" (p.434). However, Moe (2006), taking a rational-choice approach, observes that, while the institutions could be seen as structures that facilitate cooperation, he emphasises the political power dimension of the negotiations from which institutions would emerge:

> "…the political process often gives rise to institutions that are good for some people and bad for others depending on who has the power to impose their will. Institutions may be structures of cooperation…but they may also be structures of power" (p.32).

Taking a historical institutionalist view, Thelen (2004) argues that building coalitions with key actors from the various interests involved is key to establishing institutions. In echoing Moe's view, she "emphasizes a strong power-distributional component" (p.32) to institutional genesis. In essence, she sees institutional genesis as the product of the resolution of political conflicts. Her view is echoed by Offe (2006) when he says:

> "Institutions and institutional change are more consistently explained in terms of the balance of social power that they reflect than in terms of the goals and objectives that they claimed to serve" (p.12).

In establishing an institution, a *tabula rasa* is not the starting point. The existing social, political, and cultural contexts, not to mention the existing institutional infrastructure, create constraints on the options available when building a new institution (Thelen, 1999). Indeed, Armingeon (2004) states that the existing institutional infrastructure is "the major determinant" (p.212) on the structure of any new institution.

As the negotiations between the interested parties conclude with an agreement as to what will constitute an institution it would be fair to suggest that the outcome represents the point of least resistance among the negotiating parties in relation to the collective issue at hand. In other words, as with all negotiations, the final agreement will include compromises. Equally, the parties to the negotiations may not all be on the same footing from the perspective of political power – some parties are likely to have been more dominant than others. Consequently, it is also likely that dominant parties achieved more of their preferences than others. As Thelen (1999) states "institutions often reinforce power disparities" (p.385) between parties.

Having reached agreement among the parties on the constituent elements of the institution it must now be implemented. However, at this stage in the process, the agreed, and as yet not implemented, institution could also be

regarded as the 'best idea' among the parties for a solution to the collective action problem they share. Such agreements have often been reached without a full knowledge of the total impact the new institution will have. As Knight (2001) states:

> "When social actors attempt to create and maintain political and economic institutions that will further their own interests, they often do so with at best an incomplete understanding of the relationship among their preferences, their actions, and the long-term consequences of the institutional alternatives" (p.44).

Pierson (2004) highlights a number of limitations on the institutional designers. Firstly, an institution may have multiple effects. He cited the example of the European Union's increased judicial remit:

> "Expanded judicial review in the European Union simultaneously has empowered judges, shifted agenda-setting powers away from the member states towards the European Commission, altered the character of discourse over policy reform, transformed the kinds of policy instruments that decision makers prefer to use, and dramatically changed the value of political resources traditionally employed by interest groups…"(p.109).

A second limitation Pierson identifies is the "short time horizons" of the designers. While much of the literature analysing institutions, particularly in historical institutionalism, takes a long-term perspective on institutional development, those involved in the design of institutions very often have more short-term goals in mind. The nature of parliamentary democracies is that politicians must stand for election every few years. Therefore, in designing an institution their focus, to some extent, may well be on whether the proposed institution will have a positive electoral impact for them. Despite the long-term view taken in the literature on institutional analysis, the short-term horizon of those involved in the design means that the institution is more likely to emerge in response to more short-term issues.

As Pierson observes, "long-term institutional consequences may be the by-*product* of actions taken for short-term political reasons" (p.112). Occasionally, however, in the development of an institution the medium- to long-term impacts are such that its attraction for designers is in the form of a political legacy.

A third limitation Pierson identifies is that of unanticipated effects. As mentioned above the development of an institution involves the building of a coalition and the negotiation of a solution to a collective issue. However, to achieve an outcome, the negotiation would have to have been contained within certain parameters. These may have been imposed by the social, political and cultural environment; the financial circumstances, if applicable; and the existing institutional landscape. The degree to which the social, political and economic environment is changing, for example, through globalisation, makes the task of trying to anticipate all possible consequences of the implementation of a new institution unrealistic. Modern societies have become so complex with an increasing level of interdependency between sectors of society, policy arenas of the state, and the national and international economies, that even the most experienced actors could not expect to anticipate every possible scenario and effect of their actions.

2.2.4 Institutional Continuity

The predominant view in the literature is that institutions are seen as structures of stability and equilibrium in society, and are only subject to change in response to a significant external or exogenous shock. This "punctuated equilibrium" model takes a discontinuous view of institutional change in which periods of institutional "stasis" are interrupted occasionally in response to such exogenous shocks. In the absence of such external events the institutions are seen as "sticky" and resistant to change from other sources. Thelen and Steinmo (1992) are critical of this model and argue:

"The problem with this model is that institutions explain everything until they explain nothing. Institutions…explain political outcomes in periods of stability, but when they break down … [their] shape is determined by the political conflict that such institutional breakdown unleashes. Put somewhat differently, at the moment of institutional breakdown, the logic of the argument is reversed from "institutions shape politics" to "politics shapes institutions"" (p.15).

More recently, scholars have begun to see institutions as sites of constant gradual change in response to internal or endogenous events (Streeck and Thelen, 2005). Peters, Pierre, and King (2005) see this dichotomy, between the stimuli of institutional change being external or internal, as reflecting a perspective highlighted in ancient Greek times in the search for an explanation of the natural world:

"On the one hand Parmenides stressed permanence and the persistence of the elements of the world. On the other hand, Heraclitus argued that "all is flux" and that the world is constantly changing" (p. 1275).

While the predominant view of institutional change may be one of stability, it is probably true to say that both perspectives – stability and constant gradual change - have validity. Implicit in the definition of an institution is the notion of stability. As North (1990) states "institutions reduce uncertainty by providing a structure to everyday life" (p.3). Thelen (1999) distinguishes between historical institutionalism and other forms in placing an emphasis on "historical process rather than equilibrium" (p.384). She argues that, from a historical institutionalist perspective, rather than focusing on institutions as reinforcing stability and relatively unchanging, institutions "emerge from and are sustained by features of the broader political and social context" (p.384).

2.2.4.1   Path Dependency and Critical Junctures

Having established an institution actors and related institutions adjust their practices to its existence. Through feedback processes, new procedures and practices become more embedded thus reinforcing the institution's position – a process known as increasing returns (Pierson, 2000a). Conran and Thelen (2016) refer to this as a process of "institutional consolidation" (p.55). As mentioned above, no institution is established on a *tabula rasa.* The existing institutional landscape, in the social and political environment of the time, is a key determinant on the configuration of any new institution. Subsequently, any new institution will become part of the institutional landscape and, in turn, will influence the design of subsequent institutions. Each new institution, through a process of increasing returns, will become more embedded.

As institutions become more consolidated the cost of reversal becomes higher for all actors concerned. Hall and Gingerich (2009) argue that the more embedded institutions become the more likely any attempt at change would involve the "politics of institutional defence" (p.451) with actors, within a multi-institution landscape, defending against any potential negative returns by insisting on complementary changes or reforms in "coupled institutions" (Pierson, 2004, p.162). Equally, alternative institutional options which may have been available at the time of establishment may no longer be available. Over time, institutional development becomes "path dependent" as the development trajectory takes on an identifiable direction. As Pierson (2000a) states:

> "… [the] conception of path dependence, in which preceding steps
> in a particular direction induce further movement in the same
> direction, is well captured by the idea of increasing returns. In an
> increasing returns process, the probability of further steps along the
> same path increases with each move down that path" (p.252).

A "critical juncture" constitutes the "starting point of a path dependent process" (Capoccia and Kelemen, 2007, p.342). Generally speaking, a critical juncture is more likely to be a short period of time prior to a "critical" event. The antecedent circumstances would consist of the conditions leading to the development of a particular institution. A key characteristic of critical junctures is contingency. In other words, there are a number of viable outcomes possible, and the effect of the option chosen has a long-term influence on the institution's developmental path. During these critical juncture periods, the active involvement of proactive actors or "political entrepreneurs" is crucial. As Capoccia (2015) says:

> "…critical junctures are cast as moments in which uncertainty as to the future of an institutional arrangement allows for political agency and choice to play a decisive role in setting an institution on a certain path of development, a path that then persists over a long period of time" (p.148).

2.2.5 Institutional Change

2.2.5.1   Model of Institutional Dynamism

In criticising the mechanical, static approach taken to the study of institutions previously, Thelen and Steinmo (1992) propose a model of "institutional dynamism" (p.16). They are interested in the interaction between institutions and the political environment in which they exist. In particular, they are interested in the dynamic of a two-way process in which institutions mediate the political environment, but also how the institutions influenced the political context. They identify four sources for this dynamism:

1.   Broad changes in the socio-economic or political context;
2.   Changes in the socio-economic context or political balance of power;

3.   Exogenous changes that produce a shift in the goals and strategies being pursued by existing institutions; and

4.   Political actors adjust their strategies to accommodate change in the institutions themselves.

2.2.5.2   Enforcement of Institutional Rules

As an institution consists of a set of rules agreed as a negotiated solution to a collective action problem, the issue of enforcement of the rules, and the corresponding penalties is pertinent to the discussion. In the case of formal institutions, or "parchment institution" (Carey, 2000), the rules are written down. Indeed, Carey states that "the act of writing rules down can contribute to their binding force" (p.757). As mentioned above, it is unlikely that the designers of the institutions were able to envisage every possible situation involving the implementation of the institution (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010). Indeed, following the establishment of an institution, a period of institutional consolidation through increasing returns processes will take place. Therefore, as with any set of rules, some interpretation will be required in a number of situations. Some interpretations extend beyond what may have been perceived to be the shared understanding among the interested parties of the extent of the institution's remit. These interpretative episodes could be characterised by on-going negotiations between the parties. Indeed, such negotiations might also be initiated by a change in the socio-economic or political environment within which the institution operates. Such on-going negotiations in response to either external (exogenous) or internal (endogenous) stimuli, in effect, result in an institution which is dynamically responsive to its environment. Conran and Thelen (2016) argue that such interpretive processes are by their nature highly political and potentially contentious. In some cases, a decision of the courts may be required in such interpretations. As Conran and Thelen state, "this is why courts can be such influential (and unpredictable) actors" (p. 65).

2.2.5.3   Variation in Institutional Strength

Much of the literature on institutional genesis, continuity and change presupposes that the rules which make up an institution will be enforced. However, Levitsky and Murillo (2009) examine the issue of institutional strength which they define as having two dimensions – enforcement and stability. They view enforcement as the degree to which the rules are actually complied with, and where breaches attract a high risk of sanction. Stability is seen as the durability of an institution over time, taking changes in the environment into account. They elaborate further in respect of instability:

> "Because even the most robust rules evolve, one or more instance of institutional change cannot necessarily be taken as an indicator of instability. Rather, institutional instability is best understood as a *pattern* in which, given a common environment (i.e., exogenous shocks, changes in power and preference distributions), a particular institutional arrangement changes with greater frequency than other similarly designed ones" (p.117).

Taking this view, critical junctures or periods of institutional change could be seen as corresponding to periods of weaker institutional stability. Levitsky and Murillo's work in this area would suggest that all institutions vary in strength in comparison with each other, individually at different stages of their development, and as circumstances, either exogenous or endogenous, undergo different periods of change. Weaker institutions are equally more vulnerable to challenge and subsequently to change.

2.2.5.4   The Role of Ideas

All new public policy initiatives begin with an idea. In other words, ideas play a role in public policy, including institutions (Campbell, 1998). Lieberman (2002) describes ideas as "a medium by which people can imagine a state of affairs other than the status quo" (p.698). This view is

echoed by Béland and Cox (2011) when they contend that ideas "give definition to our goals and strategies, and are the currency we use to communicate" (p.3). They further state that it is these beliefs or ideas that guide the actions taken. According to Weishaupt (2011) one of the key causes of change is the changing beliefs of policymakers. Ideas are categorized into two types: cognitive and normative. Cognitive ideas are based on the proposals that justify particular policy approaches, for example, based on the logic and requirements of the situation from the actor's perspective. Normative ideas seek to provide legitimacy for the particular policy approaches based on how they coincide with the society's "sense of appropriateness". In general, these two types of ideas are inseparable (Schmidt, 2008). Campbell (1998) proposes a typology of ideas (see Table 2.1) based on structural distinctions and identifies effects each type of idea has on policy making.

Beginning with the background to the policy debate, Campbell defines *paradigms* as "cognitive background assumptions" that place limits on the availability of the perceived options available to policy makers. Hall (1993) similarly describes a paradigm as:

> "… a framework of ideas and standards that specifies not only the goals of policy and the kind of instruments that can be used to attain them, but also the very nature of the problems they are meant to be addressing" (p.279).

Campbell defines *public sentiments* as "normative background assumptions" that place constraints on available options based on their perceived acceptability and legitimacy with the public. Mehta (2011) expands on this notion of public sentiment with the concept of zeitgeist which he defines as "a set of assumptions that are widely shared and not open to criticism" (p.27).

Moving to what Campbell refers to as the foreground of the policy debate *programs* are defined as "cognitive concepts" that specify specific policy

responses. Mehta (2011) uses the term "policy solutions" to describe this particular category of idea. The final idea-type is *frames*. Campbell describes these as "normative concepts used to legitimize the programs to the public" (p.385). Mehta (2011) uses the term "problem definition" and states:

"The way a problem is framed has significant implications for the types of policy solutions that will seem desirable, and hence much of political argument is fought at the level of problem definition" (p.27).

Table 2.1   Types of ideas and their effects on policy making
Source: Campbell, 1998, p.385.

	Concepts and theories in the foreground of the policy debate	Underlying assumptions in the background of the policy debate
Cognitive Level	*Programs* Ideas as policy prescriptions that help policy makers to chart a clear and specific course of policy action.	*Paradigms* Ideas as assumptions that constrain the cognitive range of useful solutions available to policy makers.
Normative Level	*Frames* Ideas as symbols and concepts that help policy makers to legitimise policy solutions to the public	*Public sentiments* Ideas as public assumptions that constrain the normative range of legitimate solutions available to policy makers

2.2.5.5   Modes of Change

Streeck and Thelen (2005), in examining gradual institutional change, identify five modes of gradual transformative change –displacement, layering, drift, conversion and exhaustion. The first four modes require the proactive participation of policy actors. The fifth mode – *exhaustion* – does not necessarily require the active involvement of actors. Streeck and Thelen see this as a process that "leads to institutional breakdown rather than change – although the collapse is gradual rather than abrupt" (p.29). For the purposes of this study, the focus will be on the other four modes of institutional change.

The first mode, *displacement,* is said to occur when doubt is cast upon an existing institution and it is replaced by another institution. Streeck and Thelen state:

> "…institutional configurations are vulnerable to change through displacement as traditional arrangements are discredited or pushed to the side in favour of new institutions and associated behavioural logics" (p.20).

Displacement could be the outcome of a sudden breakdown of an institution or of a more gradual process. Streeck and Thelen make reference to *displacement through defection* whereby one institution falls out of favour, for example, and is replaced by that which has gained favour. At the macro-economic level, the move from Keynesian to monetarist economic policies would be an example of one institution being replaced by another in such a manner (Crouch and Keune, 2005).

Layering, the second mode, occurs when a new set of rules are added to the existing rules of an institution in such a manner as to alter the way in which the existing rules operated (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010). Layering can involve a series of amendments to and revisions of existing rules as well as

the addition of new rules. As the number of changes increase, the process of layering can result in an institution which serves a purpose significantly different from that for which the existing institution was established. The process of layering could take a period of time to have an effect. This approach to institutional change can often occur where the existing institution is politically dominant, and those promoting change do not have sufficient political capital for a direct challenge. Therefore, the change strategy is to work within the current system, and effect change gradually but systematically on a rule by rule basis over a period of time. Public service reform programmes often display properties akin to institutional layering with new features "grafted" onto existing institutions (Thelen, 2003). In Ireland, the development of further education and training provides numerous examples of layering. The Post-Leaving Certificate courses, for example, were 'grafted' onto the existing post-primary system, and continue to operate within the post-primary system.

The third mode, *drift,* occurs when the formal rules of an institution remain the same but circumstances have changed to the extent that the effect of the rules has also changed (Hacker, 2005). This mode of change also requires active participation by policy actors. Drift can occur through the active non-decision of policymakers, for whatever reason, to change the institutional rules in response to changing circumstances (Hacker, 2005). As Hacker, Pierson, and Thelen (2015) state:

> "*Drift* is defined as the failure of relevant decision makers to update formal rules when shifting circumstances change the social effects of those rules…Drift occurs when such shifts alter rules' outcomes without a change in the rules themselves" (p.184, emphasis in original).

The fourth mode of change is c*onversion* and involves reinterpreting, rather than changing, the existing rules to serve a new purpose (Thelen 2003). Similar to drift, conversion involves combining the existing institutional rules with changes in their impact (Hacker et al, 2015). Conversion occurs

when political actors, who were not necessarily part of the coalition that established the existing institution, seek to redirect, through political contestation, its resources to their ends and away from the existing purpose of the institution (Streeck and Thelen, 2005). These efforts at redirection are facilitated by ambiguity in the rules that were either part of the original design or that has emerged due to contextual changes over time. Hacker et al, 2015 state:

> "Conversion…feeds off rule ambiguity and the multiplicity of political arenas in which ambiguous rules can be interpreted" (p.181).

Hacker et al. also observe that drift and conversion are very common in advanced industrial societies (p.181).

2.2.5.6   Complexity of Institutional Change

While theories and models of institutional change are by their nature a simplified version of reality, the incidence of institutional change can often take place in a much more complex environment. Political contestations over resources, for example, can be a powerful motivation for institutional change. As discussed earlier, the relative power of the various actors involved often results in the most powerful getting the institutions that they want. As Campbell (2010) observes:

> "…as a result of power struggles, it is by no means guaranteed that the most efficient models will win out in the end, or that institutions will change at all, even when they are found to be deficient in important ways" (p.98).

Given the interdependent nature of the macro-institutions of the state across adjacent policy domains, change in one institution can often involve corresponding changes, to a greater of lesser extent, in others. This interconnectedness often referred to as institutional complementarity, results

in the emergence of an institutional regime (Conran and Thelen, 2016) or an institutional eco-system (Hall, 2010). Institutional change in response to exogenous stimuli can affect all of the institutions within the ecosystem to varying degrees, making the analysis of such change a complex undertaking. It is also arguable that such complementarity can also present a resistance to change, and thus often result in institutional reproduction of that change. As Campbell (2010) states:

> "...the interconnectedness of institutions, and the complementarities or synergies that result, makes it difficult to change one institution because changing one implies changing others as well since they are tightly coupled. And changing one could undermine the benefits resulting from institutional complementarity. Hence, the institutional configuration of different types of national political economies tends to be rather stable, even in the presence of considerable pressure for change" (p. 91).

In such a complex socio-economic, and political environment, both nationally and internationally, the resultant institution following a change process may actual involve a combination of one or more of the four modes of change discussed above. Indeed, just as the existing institutional landscape can provide constraints within which institutional change must take place, Conran and Thelen (2016) argue that it can also provide a resource for what Campbell (2010) refers to as 'institutional bricolage'. The process of institutional change, particularly in public service reform programmes, can often involve the rearrangement of existing institutional elements into new forms:

> "...the process by which institutions change may often involve the rearrangement or recombination of institutional principles and practices in new and creative ways, or, similarly, the blending of new elements into already existing institutional arrangements" (pp. 98-99).

Campbell describes these change processes as institutional bricolage and institutional translation, respectively. During periods of public service reform, as was recently the case in Ireland, reducing the number of state agencies through amalgamations to make savings can result in new institutional and organisational arrangements. Such processes can often commence in response to economic recession, as in the Irish case. By their nature, processes of institutional bricolage and translation are based to a large extent of the existing institutional arrangements, as well as perhaps any elements of models that were previously attempted – what Hanké and Goyer (2005) refer to as institutional flotsam and jetsam. Campbell (2010) observes that institutional bricolage and translation can account for the institutional change being path dependent:

> "Through bricolage and translation actors create new institutional combinations, but combinations that still resemble their predecessors to a significant degree in so far as they are made up of institutional principles and practices that entrepreneurs have inherited from the past" (p.99).

2.3 Conclusion

This chapter established and discussed the theoretical framework for this study. While vocational and technical education, the predecessor of FET, in Ireland, was traditionally viewed as a system of education, recent policy developments have placed this sector of post-secondary education and training provision, along with higher education, within the broader skill formation policy arena. Consequently, cognisance of developments in the associated policy domains, such as labour market and employment policy, as well as economic development and competitiveness, must be taken into account when placing the development of FET within this broader skills formation space.

This chapter discussed a theory of institutional genesis, continuity and change. It began with an outline of the three perspectives to institutionalism

– rational choice, sociological, and historical. The discussion progressed on to examine the circumstances which led to the establishment of an institution as well as some of the key limitations or constraints on the designers of the institution. The traditional stability-biased approach to institutions in the literature based on the punctuated equilibrium model was also discussed. This was followed by an examination of the more recent literature on gradual institutional change made up the next element of the discussion. This includes the identification of some of the key causes of institutional change. The section concluded with a discussion of the modes of institutional change.

3 SKILL FORMATION – THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

3.1 Introduction

Since the beginning of industrialisation ensuring the availability of sufficiently skilled workers has been a matter of concern in all political economies. The skill formation system, and the associated institutions and organisations within any political economy, are crucial to ensuring that the skills of new workers, as well as of the existing workforce, keep pace with the evolving needs of the economy. Consequently, the skill formation system of the state is of key importance to the political economy of any advanced economies.

Before proceeding it is necessary to clarify some of the terminology to be used in this study. What is referred to as further education and training (FET) in the Republic of Ireland has several different names internationally, e.g. vocational education and training (VET), technical and vocational education and training (TVET), and post-compulsory education and training (PCET). Indeed, there are as many definitions for FET/VET as there are names. Internationally, the most commonly used term is vocational education and training (VET). Therefore, through this study the term 'vocational education and training (VET)' will be used in reference to the international context, while 'further education and training (FET)' will be used in reference to provision in Ireland.

The skill formation system in any country, which consists of VET and higher education, does not operate in isolation. In the first place, it is part of a country's education and training system which only includes pre-school, primary and post-primary education. In all education and training systems there is progression from one level of the system to the next – from pre-school to primary, from primary to post-primary, from post-primary to either VET or higher education, and from VET to higher education. Given the interconnectedness of the education and training system what happens in one

part of the system could have an impact on another. Changes in higher education admissions arrangements, for example, impact on the post-primary and VET sectors. Indeed, the overall approach taken to education and training by a particular government will impact all parts of the system. Equally, in an increasingly globalised world, and for Member States of the European Union in particular, factors external to the country could impact on the entire education and training system or any part thereof. While it can be argued that every part of the education and training system within a country can have an impact, to some degree, on the overall skill formation of students, it is the post-compulsory/post-secondary dimension of the system, with its direct connection to the labour market that is regarded as the skill formation system. While appropriate reference is made to developments within the higher education space, the focus of this study is on the vocational education and training (VET) element of the skill formation system.

The VET system provides the intermediate-level skills for the economy, while the high-level skills are provided by higher education. In general terms, the skills at all levels within any economy can be broken down into three broad headings – general skills, industry-specific skills, and firm-specific skills. While all three types of skills can be found in every economy, each country will be a dominant skill type which related to the particular skill-bias of its form of economic activity.

The National Further Education and Training Strategy (SOLAS, 2014) set the vision for the FET sector to become "a world-class integrated system of further education and training in Ireland" (p. 3). Therefore, an examination of the international context of skill formation, and how the developments in Ireland are placed within such a context, is pertinent. The discussion in this chapter will examine skill formation within the international context and is divided into three main sections. As the skill formation system evolves in response to the skills needs of a country's economy, the first section of the discussion will begin with an overview of the different types of political economies in the industrialised countries.

The second section of this chapter will discuss in more detail skill formation systems within advanced political economies. It will begin with a presentation of a number of typologies of skill formation systems. These typologies, by presenting a comparative view across the skill formation systems in different countries, take a cross-section perspective of the international context. However, in order to understand how skill formation systems evolve over time, the evolution of the skill formation systems in Germany and Britain are examined in more detail. The final part of this section discusses the developments of skill formation within the realms of the European Union. Given that Ireland is a Member State of the EU, developments within this space have a great deal of relevance to this study.

The final section of this chapter examines the issue of skills in relation to employment and labour market activation. With increased levels of technological change and, in particular, the emergence of the knowledge economy at a global level, the impact of this technological change on the demand for skills, and the subsequent pressure on skill formation systems to respond is discussed in this section. The related area of labour market activation, and the use of education and training programmes to respond to unemployment, will bring the discussion in this chapter to a conclusion.

3.2 Comparing Political Economies

This section begins with an overview of the historical origin of the different approaches to economic activity in industrialised countries based on the degree of coordination or regulation within the economy. From within institutional theory, the Varieties of Capitalism model (Hall & Soskice, 2001) is used to compare political economies. It identifies the institutional configuration, and their degree of complementarity within each country as being the locus of the differences within political economies. This section concludes with a discussion of how political economies change in response to changing environments.

3.2.1 Beginning with Industrialisation

The origins of the skill formation systems in each country can be traced back to the pre-industrial times and the craft guilds. The genesis and subsequent development of these systems were in response to the labour markets demands of each country. Equally, the development of these systems has been related to the timing and characteristics of the industrial development in each particular country. While the origins of the economic model in the advanced economies of today are rooted in history, many skill formation systems began with the Industrial Revolution of the early nineteenth century. Beginning in Britain, industrialisation spread to Europe, and then to the United States, and beyond.

The introduction of an industrialised approach to economic activity did not take place on a blank canvas in each country. Pre-industrialisation models of economic activity were already in operation. Consequently, the transition to industrialisation was mediated by the local context, such as the degree to which economic interests were locally rooted; the existence of strong craft guilds; agricultural activity being dominated by small land-owning farmers, or large land owners who employed landless peasant workers. The economies that emerged clustered into two broad categories – coordinated market economies (CMEs), and non-coordinated or liberal market economies (LMEs). The CMEs could be further divided into social democratic, whose origins would be primarily seen as coming from Scandinavia, and conservative or Christian democratic, centred mainly in Germany. The LMEs are rooted historically in Britain. It is worth noting that, at the time of industrialisation in most countries in the nineteenth century, the bulk of the workforce lived in rural areas. Consequently, until after World War II, political dominance was primarily based on rural class politics (Esping-Anderson, 1990).

3.2.2 Coordinated Market Economies

In Scandinavia, and many continental European states, the rural and urban economies were based on locally coordinated networks. In rural areas the small farmers often owned their land, while in the urban areas the artisan work performed by guild members was regulated to varying degrees. This coordinated approach derived from the preindustrial corporate state or Ständestaat tradition (Iverson and Soskice, 2009). Within this tradition the approach to governance was based on collective action through the various interest or representative groups, e.g. landowners, guilds, and the church. Iverson and Soskice (2009) suggest that the Ständestaat could be seen as the historical roots for the neo-corporatist institutions of modern day CMEs. Variations in the rural-urban relations resulted in the development of the social-democratic type of CME in Scandinavia, and the Christian-Democratic type of CME in continental Europe, particularly Germany.

An important consequence of this coordinated approach was that there were, in many cases, corresponding training systems in place through the established craft guild traditions. Therefore, a large proportion of the available workers were likely to have craft skills. At the time of industrialisation, given the large pool of skilled workers, industrial development attracted enterprises that required a more skilled workforce. Consequently, industrial development in a CME tended to have a bias towards skilled labour. As this development took hold and expanded the need for a steady supply of skilled labour correspondingly increased. This, in turn, meant that the need for a structured skill formation system was important to the employers. In other words, it was in the interests of both the employer and the employees that there was an effective skill formation system in place. Similarly, the strong ties between the employers and the skill formation system led to the development of more industry-specific skills. Consequently, as the technology associated with industrial production in a sector of the economy improved there was a need to ensure that the skills of the existing workforce were kept up to date. This further

reinforced the co-dependency between employers and the employees in relation to on-going investment in the skills of the workforce.

3.2.3 Liberal Market Economies

By contrast with the CMEs, the pre-industrialisation situation in LMEs did not have a history of coordinated activity. Agriculture tended to be dominated by large farmers employing landless workers. The guild tradition was often weak. Consequently any training that took place lacked consistency as well as any form of standardisation or certification. As a result the workforce was predominantly unskilled and, without any recognisable training system in place, the subsequent industrial development tended to have an unskilled or semi-skilled bias.

In these economies the trade unions that emerged were primarily craft based as these workers were the predominately skilled group. In industrial relations terms they had leverage in that they could withdraw the skilled labour upon which employers depended. Correspondingly, unskilled workers had no skills to withdraw and consequently no leverage as one unskilled worker could replace another if needed. The trade unions also sought to use this bargaining power to exercise control over the skills supply as part of their strategy to maximise their bargaining power. The resultant employer–trade union relationship tended to be more adversarial than in CMEs. The corresponding strategy from employers was to use more technology in their companies and so reduce their dependence on skilled labour (Iverson and Soskice, 2009). In CMEs, by contrast, given the greater proportion of skilled workers, the unions and employers reached a point where both groups saw that it was in their mutual interest to promote the development of the skills of the workers. This resulted in the development of the existing training system with their emphasis on the development of specific skills. Given the lack of coordination in LMEs the skill formation systems tended to focus of the development of general transferable skills as opposed to industry specific.

3.2.4 *Varieties of Capitalism*

In comparing political economies scholars are interested in understanding the similarities and differences across countries (Hall and Soskice, 2001). The literature contains a wide variety of typologies of capitalism each with their own perspectives. Schonfield's work (1965) is regarded as the first comparative study in modern times (Hall and Soskice, 2001; Crouch, 2009). In the 1960s one of the key issues for political economies of the day was modernisation. Many countries saw their industries as still engaged in pre-World War Two practices. Schonfield describes the differences between countries based on the role of institutions surrounding the economy such as state organisations, banks and stock exchanges with reference to the degree of planning in the economy (Crouch, 2009). Some studies focused the comparative study on a particular sphere of the political economy. Esping-Anderson (1990) conducted a comparative study of welfare capitalism in which he identifies welfare-state variations clustered around three "regime-types" – the liberal, the conservative and the social-democratic which correspond to the three types of political economy mentioned above, namely, LMEs and the two types of CME's, as discussed earlier.

Within institutional theory, the Varieties of Capitalism (VoC) model of comparative political economy is used extensively in the literature. Blyth (2003) refers to this work as the "most theoretically rich and complex version" (pp.251-216) of the comparative political economy literature. Crouch (2009) refers to VoC as "the most ambitious and significant contribution to date". Goodin (2003) describes VoC as the "most recent and most sophisticated expression" of the comparative capitalism scholarship.

In 2001, Hall and Soskice propose an approach to the comparative study of political economies called the Varieties of Capitalism (VoC). They see the political economy of an advanced economy as actor-centred and being a "terrain populated by multiple actors" (p.6) who interact with each other in an attempt to advance their interests. This VoC approach looks at the

political economy from the perspective of the firm and examines the quality of its strategic interactions or relationships with other actors within five key areas:

1. Industrial Relations –the approach to negotiating wages and working conditions;
2. Vocational Education and Training – ensure that workers have the appropriate skills;
3. Corporate Governance –issues of corporate governance and access the necessary finance;
4. Inter-firm relations –relationships with other firms such as clients and suppliers; and,
5. Employees – management of employees and ensure that their skills are kept up to date.

Hall and Soskice (2001) see these five areas as representing five types of coordination problems to be resolved by firms. They see the differences between national political economies emerging from how firms in different countries resolve these coordination problems. Central to a firm's approach to dealing with these coordination problems will be the quality of its relationships, both internally and externally, with a variety of other actors, such as state agencies, suppliers, customers, and trade unions. The particular characteristics of these relationships in each country are mediated by the institutional framework in the country. Using the VoC approach, Hall and Soskice identify different countries clustering around two ideal types of political economy in terms of their institutional arrangements – liberal market economy (LMEs) and coordinated market economy (CMEs). They describe these as being at opposite ends of a continuum along which different countries can be placed based on the degree of coordination between the institutions in the political economy. In particular, they observe that

> "…in any national economy, firms will gravitate towards the mode of coordination for which there is institutional support" (p.9).

In LMEs, where coordination is lowest, firms' activities are coordinated mainly by way of a hierarchy of firms and a competitive market. On the other hand, in CMEs, where coordination is highest, it is through relationships, other than the market, that firms address the coordination of their activities. The role played by business organisations, such as chambers of commerce and trade unions, are of particular significance in CMEs. Despite the difference between LMEs and CMEs there is no tangible difference in terms of economic advantage. One type is not necessarily any better than the other. As Hopkins and Blyth (2004) state:

> "The crux of the 'varieties of capitalism' argument is that neither model is inherently more economically efficient and both harness their respective institutional comparative advantages to good effect in the unforgiving economy" (p.3).

3.2.5 Institutional Complementarities

While comparing national economies across the five key coordination problems for firms, the differences that emerge between countries have much to do with the blend of the institutional infrastructure within a country. The particular configuration of institutions which exists within a country has emerged over time, and has reached a degree of mutually complementary equilibrium as a product of the multiplicity of competing forces within the political economy and society. Pierson (2004) refers to this as institutional coupling. Hancké (2009) argues that "the presence of several 'correctly calibrated' institutions that govern different markets determines the efficiency of the overall institutional framework" (p.3). Hall and Soskice (2001) refer to this as the institutional complementarity of a political economy and is the source of comparative difference between LMEs and CMEs. They describe institutional complementarity thus:

> "…two institutions are said to be complementary if the presence (or efficiency) of one increases the returns from (or efficiency of) the other" (p.17).

It is through these differences in institutional complementarity that an "architecture of comparative advantage" (Hancké, Rhodes, and Thatcher, 2007, p.5) emerges between countries. Distinct patterns of institutional complementarities can be identified as clustering along the LME-CME continuum. Hall and Soskice (2001) classified the six Anglophone countries of the USA, Britain, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Ireland as liberal market economies, and ten other countries as coordinated market economies – Germany, Austria, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland and Japan. They also identified a further group of six countries as the 'Mediterranean' group as clustering between the LME and CME groups on the continuum – France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Greece and Turkey. Hall and Gingerich (2004) describes this group as the "mixed market economy" (MME) group.

In the area of vocational education and training (VET) there are distinctive patterns of complementarity evident between CMEs and LMEs based on what Busemeyer (2009) refers to as "the variation is the 'portability' of skills" (p. 377). In CMEs there tends to be high demand for industry-specific skills by virtue of the skill-biased nature of their pattern of industrial development. Consequently, there tends to be a strong co-dependency between firms and the VET system and a high level of coordination within CMEs between employer organisations, trade unions and the VET system. The VET system is likely to have a high dependency on apprenticeship-type provision with a high degree of on-the-job training. In LMEs by contrast, where the labour markets are more fluid, VET systems are geared more towards providing general skills. This approach to skills development has arisen from the historical bias towards unskilled or semi-skilled work at the beginning of industrialisation. In this case, the institutional complementarity between the VET system and the labour market is based on the assumption that, by virtue of the transferability of the

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skills, a worker losing a job could find another job with relative ease. Equally from the employers' point of view replacing one worker with general skills with another is not particularly difficult. Therefore, the model of provision in LMEs is likely to be based in formal education and training establishments. There is a much lower incidence of apprenticeship-type provision in LMEs as firms are not inclined to invest in workers' skills for fear of them being poached by a competitor company once the training is completed. Known as the 'free rider problem', a competing company would then benefit from the skills of the worker without the cost of the training. The wide-spread provision of general skills has led to a corresponding demand for certification of general skills in LMEs. Hall and Soskice (2001) observe that, in many cases, the education and training systems of LMEs, at all levels, tend to stress the "certification in general skills" rather than acquisition of particular competencies. In other words, the education and training systems in LMEs institutionally complement their more fluid labour markets (Hall and Soskice, 2001, p.30).

3.2.6 *Political Economies Response to Changing Environments*

Political economies are not static entities. They are continually responding to developments both nationally and internationally. Processes of globalisation and liberalisation, for example, are resulting in significant changes to political economies in advanced democracies (Hall, 2007). Within the European Union (EU), for example, the range of Treaties that have come into effect since the mid-1980s in particular have had a cumulative effect on both the social and economic fabric of Member States. The Single European Act of 1987, the Maastricht Treaty of 1992, and the subsequent treaties of Amsterdam (1999), Nice (2003) and Lisbon (2009) led to the introduction of significant institutional reforms. In 1989 the EU took the decision to begin the process of establishing the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). In 2002 the European single currency, the Euro, was launched involving 19 Member States. In addition, the number of Member States of the EU has expanded from 19 to the current 28. The political economies of all EU Member States are impacted by these

changes, as well as the non-EU countries with whom they trade. Equally, from an EU point of view, the heterogeneity of the European VoC presents its own difficulties in terms of a coherent EU response to particular issues. The firms in EU Member States adapted to each new situation as it presented. The manner of the adaptation, however, was in line with the institutional configuration within each country (Menz, 2005).

But what of the institutional complementarity within political economies? How do they respond to change? Given the relationship that exists between complementary institutions, a change in one institution necessarily requires a corresponding change in all of the others so as to maintain complementarity (Thelen, 2004). Hall (2007) describes the VoC as continually adapting and evolving in response to the ever changing environment, both national and international. Just as firms in different Member States respond differently so too the entire political economy within each country reacts in accordance with the characteristics and attributes of its own VoC. Indeed, Hall (2007) states that the "VoC are constituted, not by static sets of institutions, but by distinctive trajectories that are institutionally conditioned" (p.76). He goes on to describe political economies as "institutional ecologies built up gradually over time" (p.80).

3.3   Skill Formation Systems

The skill formation system in every country is the interface between the education and training system and the labour market. Therefore, the institutional configuration of the post-primary system, which interfaces with the skill formation system, has an effect on its configuration. In other words, the output of the post-primary system has an impact on the input of the skill formation system, and vice versa. It is equally the case that the interface between the skill formation system and the labour market is also a two way process. This section of the chapter begins with a discussion of the interface between the post-primary system and the labour market. The transition pathway for the 'school-to-work transition', as it is known, is increasingly by way of the skill formation system, by way of either VET or higher education.

The discussion will proceed to examine different typologies of skill formation systems. This will be followed with a longitudinal view of the evolution of the skill formation system in Germany and Britain. This section of the chapter will conclude with a discussion of the developments in skill formation at a European level.

3.3.1 Education Systems and the Labour Market - The School-to-Work Transition

The structure of educational systems, providing either general or specialised education and training effect the structure of the labour market entry processes – the transition process between education and work - by way of the linkages that exist, and their extent, between the education and employment systems (Gangl, 2001). Allmendinger (1989) argues that

> "Educational *systems* define occupational opportunities for individuals at entry into the labour market, and that these systems have long-term implications for how people are matched to jobs" (p.232, emphasis in the original).

There have been many studies on the nature of school-to-work transition processes (Maurice, Sellier and Silvestre, 1986; Shavit & Müller, 1998; OECD, 2000; Smyth, Gangl, Raffe, Hannan and McCoy, 2001; Ryan, 2001; Raffe, 2008). Several researchers (OECD, 2000; Smyth et al., 2001; and Raffe, 2008) focus on the concept of a transition system. Raffe says that the 'transition system' describes the features of a country's institutional arrangements which shape young people's education-work transition. He observes that, "despite the pressures for cross-structural convergences arising from modernisation, globalisation and shared policy discourses, the processes and outcomes of education-work transitions continue to vary widely across countries…they reflect different institutional and structural arrangements" (p.277). Smyth et al. (2001) make similar observations and remark that "given the diversity in education, training and labour market systems across Europe, the same policy interventions are unlikely to be equally effective in

different contexts" (p. i). They observe that the different dimensions of the education and training system, such as, standardisation and stratification, the strength of the linkage with the labour market and the role of employers in the education and training system - can be seen to "interact with contextual features to produce a 'transition system': the relatively enduring features of a country's institutional and structural arrangements which shape transition process and outcomes" (p.4).

Consistent with the observations of OECD (2000), Smyth et al. (2001) find that, while there were variations between countries on the length of the transition process, it was found to be generally on the increase. This is due in part to the continued expansion of education across Europe and the increasing number of young people staying in full-time education for longer (OECD, 2000).

3.3.2 Typologies of Skill Formation Systems

There is considerable variation between countries in the relative magnitude of VET and how it is organised. Prior to industrialisation in the 18th and 19th centuries, in nearly all of the countries in Europe after the establishment of the craft guilds, the work of craftsmen and their vocational education and training were very similar (Wollschläger, 2004). However, the growth of industrialisation did not produce one uniform vocational training model. Instead, a variety of education and training systems have evolved which appear to have little in common. Parry (2013) observed that "there is no one model one can recognise globally, which is responsive to, and reflecting, sets of economic and changing social circumstances" (p.95).

Greinert (2004b) states that

> "A society's values, norms, attitudes, convictions and ideals shape education system, work organisation and professional relationships as well as more or less stable interaction between specific national job

training and other subsystems such as general education and the various employment system paradigms" (p.19).

Deissenger (2004) states that "education and vocational training should not and cannot be separated from the history of a country, its social development, and its institutions" (p.39). Unlike general education, skill formation systems and VET, in particular, are considerably more heterogeneous. VET systems involve the state, education and training providers, employers, and trade unions in the governance, provision and regulation of VET provision to varying degrees. While all of these stakeholders are involved in the VET institutions in each country, the degree to which they are involved, or the particular blend of stakeholder involvement is where the variations can be seen. Other sources of variation can also be seen in relation to the primary venue for the VET provision. In the German dual system, the VET provision is both school- and work-based. In Sweden and France it is school-based, while in Japan it is primarily work-place based. As with the stakeholders the blend of primary venue will differ between countries. Despite these variations, some typologies have been proposed in the literature.

Greinert (2004a) proposes a typology of European VET systems identifying what he terms three 'classical' training models:

1.   Liberal market economy model
2.   State-regulated bureaucratic model
3.   Dual-corporate model

The liberal market economy model emerged in Britain during the years of the industrial revolution and is based on a liberalist ideology. In this model, Greinert sees market forces are the primary 'regulator' of training. The state-regulated bureaucratic model, based on a rationalist ideology, first emerged in France. In this model bureaucratic controls 'regulate' training and the emphasis is academic. Finally, the dual-corporatist model, exists in German-speaking countries based on a traditionalist approach, and emphasised the vocational principle in the training.

Greinert expresses the view that these three models constitute 'prototypes' and that the various approaches to VET which have emerged since industrialisation are "variations and/or combinations of these three prototypes or basic models" (p.22). Indeed, in observing the various reform programmes across Europe in recent years, he observes that "the European structures and control models established in the first Industrial Revolution are displaying remarkable endurance" (Greinert, 2004a, p.25).

The 'Varieties of Capitalism' (VoC) approach identifies skill formation as one of the five key institutions within a political economy. In particular, it distinguished between the approaches to skill formation taken in liberal market economies (LME) and the coordinated market economies (CME). However, Busemeyer (2009), in discussing the variety of skill formation systems in CMEs, is of the view that the VoC approach to skill formation "should be seen as the first step into the exploration of the political foundations of skill regimes" (p.376). He argues that the simple distinction between 'general' and 'specific' skills is insufficient to explain the variety of skill formation systems. Vossiek (2015) makes similar observations in relation to skill formation systems in LMEs. While the underlying issue in a labour market is the 'portability' of a skill-set, Busemeyer argues that the VoC approach pays insufficient attention to the issue of a system for the authoritative certification of skills. For the skills and their certification to have 'value' in the labour market, employers need to have confidence in the process. This includes not only the robustness of the quality assurance processes associated with the certification process but that the skills being certified are relevant to the needs of the workplace. Busemeyer highlights the degree of employer involvement in the skill formation system as a key variable. In addition, the degree of standardisation of the skills being certified is an important dimension of the certification system. Consequently, Busemeyer argues that the single dimension of skill specificity is insufficient for the differentiation of skill formation systems in CMEs. He proposes that the two dimensions of the manner in which skills are certified, and the degree of involvement of employers in skill formation, particularly in ensuring the

relevance of programme content to the work-place, are key elements of skill formation systems. These dimensions were incorporated into a typology proposed Busemeyer and Trampusch (2012) of skill formation systems in advanced democracies based on two dimensions – the degree of firm involvement and the degree of public commitment to vocational training. This typology generates four varieties of skill formation system (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1   The variety of skill formation systems in advanced industrial democracies.

Source: Busemeyer and Trampusch, 2012, p.12.

Public commitment to vocational training	High	Statist skill formation system (SW, FR)	Collective skill formation system (GE, ...)
	Low	Liberal Skill formation system (US, IR)	Segmentalist skill formation system (JAP)
		Low	High
		Involvement of firms in initial vocational training	

The first dimension, firm involvement, relates to the degree to which firms are willing to invest in the process of skill formation particularly in the initial phase which would include apprenticeships. The second dimension, the degree of public commitment to VET consists of a number of elements:

> "State subsidies to vocational training and public policies which monitor skill formation by certification and standardization and by formulating occupational training profiles. With this dimension, we also include the degree to which the institutional set-up of the educational system acknowledges and supports the existence of VET as a viable alternative to academic higher education" (p.12).

The statist skill formation system, which would best describe the systems in Sweden and France, is characterised by the integration of VET into the secondary school system. Students can progress from the vocational track into higher education. This system is also characterised by limited employer involvement. The liberal skill formation system is primarily dependent on market forces as a means of coordinating skill formation. This system would have a strong biased towards individual responsibility for skills with the provision being biased towards general skills. These systems are evident primarily in Anglophone countries, namely, the USA, UK, Ireland, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. As illustrated in Table 3.1, these systems are characterised by low employer involvement and a low public commitment. The collective skill formation system best describes countries with a strong VET system such as Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Denmark and the Netherlands. In these systems there is a high involvement of employers and high public commitment. These systems would provide industry specific skills. The fourth system is the segmentalist skill formation system. This system is characterised by skill formation taking place with firms and the skills provided are firm-specific. Japan is the country that best represents this category of system.

Busemeyer and Schlicht-Schmälzle (2014) refine this typology further and apply the two dimensions to the VET systems discussed above – degree of firm involvement and public commitment – and standardised the data based on what they refer to as the 'extensiveness of the VET system'. They cite the following rationale:

> "There is a great difference between a country in which both employers and the state are committed to initial VET, but few students participate (as in Ireland), and one with high levels of commitment from the state and employers *as well as* high participation (Germany)" (p.59) (emphasis in the original).

The public commitment dimension is weighted by the proportion of upper-secondary pupils in vocation education and training – both school-based and work-place based. The firm involvement measure is adjusted according to "a qualitative indicator that measures the actual relevance of apprenticeships in these countries" (p.59). Having adjusted the data they show that countries with less extensive VET systems and low participation rates in apprenticeship show correspondingly weaker public commitment and employer involvement.

Figure 3.1   Matrix of employer involvement and public commitment
Source: Busemeyer and Schlicht-Schmälzle, 2014, p.60.
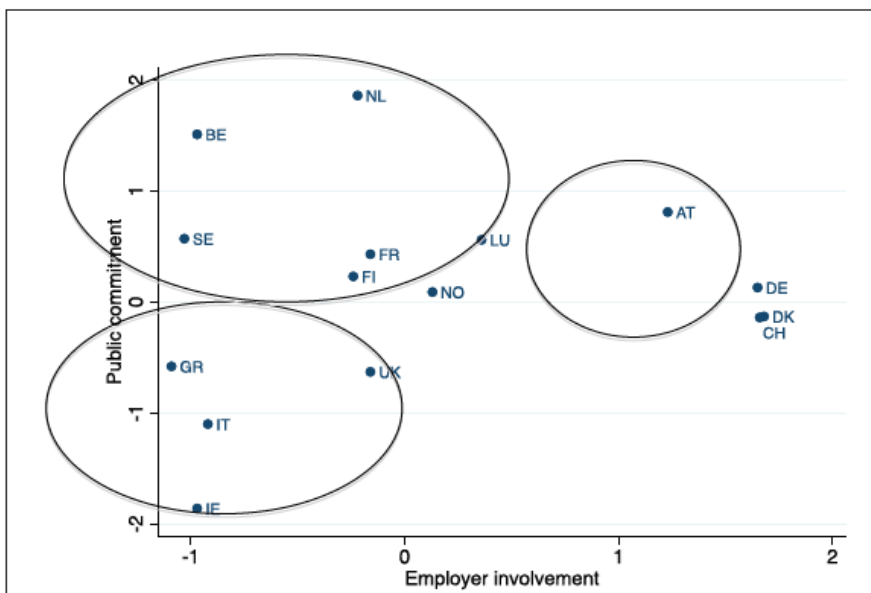
The graphical representation of the adjusted data shows that of the 15 European countries involved in this study Ireland (IE) has the lowest public commitment to VET while the Netherlands has the highest. The countries with collective skill formation systems are clearly clustered together in the upper right quadrant of the graph – Germany, Denmark, Austria and Switzerland. The statist system countries are in the upper left quadrant but somewhat more dispersed than the collective group suggesting more variation between the different statist systems. The bottom left quadrant represents the liberal systems group. However, as Busemeyer and Schlicht-

Schmälzle point out, the countries of Southern Europe in this group are not best described as liberal market economies in the sense of VoC. These countries would not have a developed higher education system to compensate for a lack of commitment to VET (Busemeyer and Schlicht-Schmälzle, 2014, p.57). The absence of any countries in the bottom right quadrant of the graph supports the fact that none of the 15 European countries involved could be described as have a segmentalist system. However, as will be discussed below, recent developments within Germany have seen segmentalist characteristics emerging in elements of its skill formation system.

3.3.3 Skill Formation Systems as Dynamic Entities

Typologies by their very nature are a simplified version of reality (Busemeyer and Trampusch, 2012). While they can be helpful in understanding the institutional connectivity and, perhaps, the complementarity of systems, they are also static in their representation. Explaining the dynamics of a system requires a different approach. As Figure 3.1 illustrates, although the systems in groups of countries cluster around an ideal-type system, there are differences, otherwise they would all be represented by the same point on the graph. The skill formation system in any country responds to the skills needs of the economy on an on-going basis. As Mayer and Solga (2008) state

> "Changes in the demand for skills and qualifications in the workplace have been a constant feature of economies since the onset of industrialization" (p.1).

Given the interdependent relationship between skill formation systems and the other key institutional components of the political economy in a given country, not to mention the wider education system and the welfare state, focusing solely on the skill formation system in an attempt to understand the dynamic nature of its changes would be insufficient.

Over time some occupations, with the advance of technology and the on-going automation of work-place tasks, have become practically obsolete, e.g.

blacksmith, while new occupations have emerged, e.g. mobile app developer. The development of internet-based economic activity and the growth of mobile technologies have spawned a whole new range of occupations which did not exist even ten years ago. In more global terms the increasing globalisation and, within the EU, ongoing Europeanisation, has seen the 'knowledge economy' coming to the fore. The increasing liberalisation of world trade since the 1980s, and the spread of a neo-liberal ideology, has led to a deregulation trend evident to varying degrees in many industrialised economies. Changes are also evident in the relationships between the skill formation system stakeholders, namely, employers, trade unions and the state.

Bosch and Charest (2008) analyse vocational training across five countries, some of which are LMEs and some CMEs. They observe that since the 1960's there has been an increase in the variation between the vocational training systems in LMEs and CMEs but they question whether this divergent trend has begun to reverse. This question is based on their contention that VET systems are far more sensitive than general education systems to changes in the labour market and the wider economy. They suggest that in LMEs, deregulation has had a negative the impact on vocational training in general, and apprenticeship in particular (p.429). However, they observe that LMEs are increasing experiencing skills shortages at the intermediate skill level and have started to increase investment in intermediate skills, i.e. VET systems, while correspondingly, CMEs are investing more in higher education. The trend in CMEs is being attributed to some extent in the shift from manufacturing to service industries. Thelen and Busemeyer (2012) make similar observations.

3.3.4 Evolution of Skill formation in Germany and Britain

By way of illustration, the evolution of skill formation systems in Britain, an LME, and Germany a CME, will be discussed in this section. In both cases the main actors are the state, the employers and the trade unions. Issues of cross-class conflict, partisan political power, and the balance of power

between employers and unions prove to be the telling variables in both cases although with different results. Busemeyer (2009) suggests that rather than discussing a skill formation system it would be more informative to consider what he refers to as a 'skill regime' as this will "capture the existence of institutional complementarities" (p.387.). He defines a skill regime as

> "…an interconnected set of institutions in vocational education and training, industrial relations and labour market and welfare state policies that shape the incentives of workers and firms to invest in different kinds of skill formation and thus impacts on the overall skill profile of a given economy" (p.387).

Regarding the decision by both employers and potential employees in relation to which skills investment to make, Hillmert (2006) suggests that they are largely "based on expectations concerning the consequences of qualifications in the labour market" (p.13). In discussing the evolution of skill formation in Britain and Germany a skill regime perspective will be required. Skill formation in both countries began with the craft guilds in the pre-industrial era and, also in both cases, the guilds played an important role in the regulation of apprenticeships (Thelen, 2004). Both countries had considerable industrial involvement in the metalworking/engineering/machinery sector, which was the source of the demand for skills within each country. Therefore, in both cases, many of the same elements and actors were present but their respective skill formation systems evolved in different directions. The discussion will begin with examining the key developments in the German system and will be followed by the milestones in the British system.

3.3.4.1 Skill formation in Germany

In Germany, the historical development of the skill formation system consists of three phases based on the key issue of the period (Thelen 2004, Thelen and Busemeyer, 2012):

1. 1897 – c.1920   Skill Certification
2. c.1920 – 1969   Skill Standardisation
3. 1969 – present day   Skill Broadening and Occupational Profiles.

Industrialisation in Germany took place under an authoritarian regime. In the mid-nineteenth century German economic activity could be described as liberal in orientation (Thelen, 2004). Legislation in 1860 had removed a number of the restrictions in apprenticeship training. The artisan sector was coming under pressure as restrictions were removed on who could establish a handcraft business and take on apprentices. At the same time, the rise in support for the social democratic labour movement was a cause of concern for the conservatives who were in power. The 1897 Handicraft Protection Law was a move by the Imperial authorities in Germany to court the support of the artisanate in opposition to the strengthening labour movement. This legislation created a new structure of handicraft chambers (*Handwerkskammern*) which were mandatory for all artisans. These chambers were given the authority to regulate the content of the training programmes and to monitor the quality of the apprenticeships. While neither the employers nor the unions were party to the establishment of the new system they ultimately became supporters of it as they came to see that it served their interests to do so. The passing of the 1897 legislation pitted the small to medium enterprises of the artisan sector against the large manufacturing firms that had been developing a training system that, under the liberal-type economy in operation, was akin to the segmentalist type firm-based training currently operating in Japan. Thelen and Busemeyer (2012) state that "state policy was decisive in tipping the scales towards a more collective approach" (p.73). Thelen (2004) says that "the 1897 law was absolutely key to the future trajectory of German vocational training" (p.47). She goes on to say:

> "The Handwerk-based system of skill formation that came out of the Imperial period began some of the scaffolding on which Germany's system of vocational education and training would ultimately be built" (p.62).

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In the early twentieth century, just after the 1897 law came into force, manufacturing firms were at a disadvantage recruiting new young people because of the lack of certification powers. The 1897 legislation also had an impact of how the labour movement organised. The monopolistic position of the craft chambers in regulating training meant that the option for trade unions to organise around the control of skilled labour was not available. Ultimately, the unions organised around sectors of industry. Their ranks were filled with skilled workers trained and certified through the craft chambers. It was in the workers interest, therefore, to support the training and certification of the craft chambers. Indeed, they sought to gain influence in the management and development of the system.

For the employers, and in particular the engineering and machinery industries that had a high requirement for skilled workers, the early period of the twentieth century saw them establish a parallel training system through the industrial chambers. However, the embeddedness of the artisan training system within German society and economy was such that their training strategies ultimately converged to working with the craft chambers rather than competing with them. This convergence saw the beginning of the second developmental phase of skill formation in Germany – skill standardisation.

Skill standardisation was the inevitable outcome of the two parallel training systems converging on similar strategies. This process began to emerge during the Weimar years in Germany (1919-1933) and according to Thelen (2004) had a significant effect on the overall trajectory of the VET system.

> "The coexistence of the two [training systems] created interaction effects that altered the overall trajectory of skill formation in Germany, pulling it in the Weimar years away from the very decentralized, and often unsystematic, training characteristic of the older handicraft model towards a much higher degree of standardization and uniformity – both of which are now considered

hallmarks and defining features of the German system as a whole" (p.41).

The third developmental phase commenced with the Vocational Training Act of 1969. This legislation gave the trade unions a significant involvement in the governance of the training system. It incorporated many of the proposals that had emerged during the Weimar years. This developmental phase saw a broadening of the skills profiles. While the earlier developments of the systems were driven by employers, the later developments were at the behest of the unions. This development was the latest in a series of corporatist arrangements that employers and unions had become engaged in since the end of the Second World War. Wage bargaining, for example, had been centralised at a national level. Indeed, the collective bargaining process led to a linkage being made between vocational qualifications and wage levels regardless of the actual job that the workers was employed to carry out.

As discussed above, the German skill formation system or regime has gone through a series of developmental phases. It has survived, not by a strategy of institutional defence in which all parties stick to their positions, but by collaborating through the corporatist structures to adjust the system as circumstances require. As Thelen (2007) puts it:

> "This system has survived not because of an inherent 'stickiness' but instead through its ongoing, active adaptation to new problems thrown up by shifts in the political and economic context" (p.248).

In recent years, despite the on-going adaptation of the system, there have underlying pressures resulting in a shift from the collective system to a more firm-based segmentalist system. Thelen and Busemeyer (2012) identify three key developments. Firstly, the number of firms offering apprentices is falling. The three main factors contributing to this decline are the increasing costs for firms of training apprentices, the on-going employment difficulties in East Germany following re-unification, and the decline in manufacturing, the traditional core of the dual system (Thelen, 2007). This decline is

particularly the case in small firms across all sectors of industry. As Thelen and Busemeyer observe:

> "…the centre of gravity of the system, in terms of participation, has shifted from small to medium and large firms" (p.77).

The second key development they identify is that, as a result of the decline in apprenticeships and the continued attractiveness of apprenticeships for school-leavers, the demand for apprenticeships has exceeded supply. This has seen the emergence of a system of a type of pre-apprenticeship vocational qualifications at a lower level than the full apprenticeship. This system is a combination of education, training and labour market programmes to facilitate transition from school to full apprenticeship. Recent research (Beicht, Friedrich and Ulrich, 2007, cited in Thelen and Busemeyer, 2012, p.77) has shown that the majority of young people in this transition system are successful in securing an apprenticeship. However, Thelen and Busemeyer are critical of the transition system:

> "Rather than upgrade a viable full-time school-based alternative, government policy has mostly supported the expansion of a stop-gap 'transition system' aimed simply at 'mopping up' excess demand for training among the academically weakest youth until the system can be rescued by demographic changes (low birth rates are bringing smaller cohorts)" (p.90).

The third development Thelen and Busemeyer identify is that the collective mechanism used to support the apprenticeship system during temporary crises in the past no longer works. In the past employers could be exhorted by the state to take on more apprentices during a down-turn but this is no longer the case. The *quid pro quo* being demanded by employers for such accommodations is increased flexibility in training. As the coverage of the collective bargaining system in reduced, so the level of fragmentation increased. Thelen and Busemeyer (2012) observe that the German government's policy is increasingly supporting flexibility resulting in the

collectivist training system having to increasingly make way for a more firm-based segmentalist approach. They conclude:

> "To the extent that large firms strive increasingly to train only for their own needs, that smaller firms become reluctant to offer apprenticeship training in general, and that the state refuses to establish full-scale school-based or out-of-firm training alternative, we can anticipate that those who do not succeed in securing a high quality apprenticeship early on may also be at a higher risk of slipping into the growing underclass of irregular or atypical workers" (p.91).

3.3.4.2   Skill Formation in Britain

In contrast to the strength of the craft guilds in Germany, the demise of the guilds in Britain began in the pre-industrial period when they began to lose prominence (Thelen, 2004). The approach to skills in British industry at the time could best be described as voluntarist, and an issue of growing concern. In the late nineteenth century interest in skills at a policy level in Britain was ignited by the poor performance of British industries at the International Exposition in Paris in 1867 (Sanderson, 1999). While British industry had won most of the prizes at the previous event in 1851, in 1867 they only won ten out of the ninety classes. Streeck (2010) argues that the 1867 event was where

> "…they had to face technologically superior German machinery...It was then...that German 'competitiveness', as it later came to be called, became a central topic of British political and economic discourse" (p.8).

This event sparked a number of investigations in Britain which were critical of the standard of technical education in Britain, in particular the Devonshire Commission of 1875 and the Samuelson Commission in 1884 (Sanderson, 1999). The legal framework of nineteenth century Britain prohibited the formation of trade unions among unskilled workers but encouraged the

formation of benevolent societies for skilled workers to provide assistance as required. These societies laid the foundations for the modern craft trade unions. In their formation these societies reinforced the skills demarcation lines, with skilled or craft workers separating from unskilled. Membership of a trade union required that you were a skilled worker. Therefore, early trade union strategies were based on controlling the supply of skilled labour. Zeitlin (1996, cited in Thelen, 2004, p.100) observed that the unions were more focussed on controlling the number of apprentices rather than the quality of the apprenticeships. This resulted in cross-class conflict between employers and workers with the employers defending their managerial position in firms.

The apprenticeship was the primary method of formal training for manual workers in Britain (Gospel, 1995). In contrast to the German system, the British apprenticeship system was lacking in standards and uniformity. It was based on a time-served model and there was no certification or examination system in place. There were no sanctions in place against employers in the event of their not providing training of sufficient quality or breadth. From a young person's point of view, the absence of any formal certification or guarantees relating to the quality of the training provided made an apprenticeship less attractive as an option. The confrontational environment between employers and unions did not encourage the improvement of the skill formation system. The absence of a legislative framework for apprenticeship, and the consequential lack of obligation on the employers meant that the voluntarist approach to training persisted and, in many cases, apprenticeships deteriorated. In response, some of the larger engineering firms in Britain attempted to develop more structured training programmes in work-based technical schools. Some firms required a higher standard of education beyond the minimum as an entry requirement into apprenticeships while others requiring their apprentices to attend night classes. Some agreements between employers and unions were achieved in some industries but the prevailing situation was that apprenticeships were lacking formality or regulation. This weakness resulted in a situation where any settlement between employers and unions would rest on the balance of

power between both sides and the prevailing market conditions (Thelen, 2004).

This voluntarist approach remained until the 1960s when the British government decided that, within the context of growing international competition, a more interventionist approach to industrial training was required. It is important to note at this point that, in the period from the Second World War until the move to monetarist economic policies in the late 1970s and 1980s, Britain would best described as a mixed market economy (Hall, 1992). It was after the move from Keynesianism to monetarism by the Thatcher government that the British economy became more liberal. Vossiek (2015) identifies three periods in the development of VET in Britain since the Second World War.

The first period ends with the Thatcher government taking office in 1979. It is characterised by the change to a more interventionist approach to training policy and what Vossiek characterises as the "corporatist experiments in VET and industrial relations" (p.63). The second period coincides with the period of the Thatcher premiership (1979-1990). This period is notable for the measures taken to reduce the power of the trade unions, and the dismantling of the tripartite institutions established in the first period. The last vestiges of a collective approach were removed and Britain was firmly placed on a trajectory to a liberal skill regime. The final period Vossiek identifies covers the premierships of Major, Blair, and Brown from 1997 until 2008. This period features attempts to reform the apprenticeship system. In particular, it is notable that the 1997 to 2008 period of a Labour party government saw a consolidation of the liberal approach to skill formation.

The first developmental phase, the period from the end of the Second World War until the late 1950s, saw both Labour and Conservative governments taking a non-interventionist approach to training and a voluntarist approach by firms. There was growing concern in government circles regarding Britain's international economic competitiveness largely following the Carr Report of 1958 that "stressed the necessity of greater industry involvement in

skill formation" (Vossiek, 2015, p.66). The outcome of this process was a government White Paper entitled *Industrial Training – Government Proposals* which was followed by the Industrial Training Act of 1964. This led to the establishment of 27 Industrial Training Boards (ITBs) that had the authority to impose training levies on firms in their respective industry sectors. Training grants were also available to support skill formation. The ITBs were a tripartite structure consisting of representatives of education, employers, and trade unions within different sectors of industry. Busemeyer and Trampusch (2012) express the view that after the 1964 Act the British training system had several features of a collective skill formation system. A national tripartite body, the Central Training Council, was also established under the Act but it was a weak corporatist structure as it only had an advisory role (King, 1993). Despite the significant improvements made under this reform Vossiek identifies some shortcomings with the 1964 Act. Firstly, the apprenticeship structure remained largely unaffected, continuing to be without any statutory basis and was still based on a time-served rather than on achieving predetermined standards. Secondly, as the ITBs were based on industry sectors, there were significant variations in size of sectors being represented. In addition, the ITBs authority to set the levy for its respective industry sector meant that, not only was there variations in the amount between sectors, but that in many cases the relative power balance between the parties within an ITB could influence the amount of the levy charged. Equally, the sectoral structures of the boards did not facilitate a common approach to these issues. King (1993) observes that "government responses to concerns about skill shortages were shaped by the prevailing voluntarist framework" (p.219).

The second piece of legislation of this period was the Employment and Training Act of 1973. In response to the growing criticisms of the ITBs and, in particular, the levy-grant system, especially from small companies, under this legislation the levy/grant systems became a levy/grant/exemption system. This Act also created the tripartite Manpower Service Commission (MSC) as a centralised body with the aim of developing a more comprehensive national approach to the formulation of training policy (King,

1993). However, as Vossiek observes "it increasingly undercut the effectiveness of the ITBs" (p.70). The unemployment crisis of the 1970s caused the MSC's mission to be altered from developing a comprehensive manpower and training plan to address the problem of long-term unemployment (King, 1993). From an institutional theory perspective, this constituted an example of institutional conversion (Streeck and Thelen, 2005). Vossiek (2015) observes that the primary reason for the minimal effects of the reforms of this period was the failure to effect the necessary institutional change to underpin the reforms. In particular he highlights the failure to significantly change the conflictual relationship between employers and trade unions in relation to training.

The second developmental period, and what Vossiek refers to as the critical juncture in the move towards a liberal skill regime (p.62), covers the years of the three governments led by Margaret Thatcher from 1979 to 1990. King (1993) identifies four elements of the training objectives of this period. Firstly, they set about weakening the influence of the trade unions on training. This was primarily achieved by undermining the MSC and deregulating the apprenticeship system - the MSC was ultimately abolished in 1989. Secondly, there was a marked shift towards individual choice and responsibility in relation to training. Thirdly, while weakening the unions influence, they supported employers' preference in training, particularly in relation to their influence on training programmes, as well as maximising their flexibility. In keeping with neoliberal principles, the government set about a process of deregulation in the labour and training markets. Fourthly, the Conservative governments took a non-interventionist approach to skill formation and so the emphasis in training policy shifted towards training as an instrument to tackling unemployment. The Youth Training Scheme (YTS), launched in 1983, was central to this approach and was seen as a dilution of the old-craft apprenticeship (Vossiek, 2015). Lee (1989) describes the YTS as a "watershed in the transition from the employer-led style of apprenticeship to a State-led approach" (p.165). This policy in relation to unemployment also saw the introduction of what Jessop (1993) refers to as a 'workfare' approach to unemployment policy. This involved a restriction of

the eligibility criteria for benefits, cutting the level of benefit, and establishing a connection between training programmes and benefits, similar to the American system (King 1993).

Training during this period was the target of increasing criticism for poor standards and high attrition rates. The YTS trainees, in receipt of government allowances, were increasingly being used by employers to displace apprentices, thus further undermining the British apprenticeship system. Indeed, state policy in Britain contributed to the deregulation of traditional apprenticeship (Thelen, 2004). The establishment of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications in 1986 was in response to the ongoing criticism of training standards. It was set the task of developing the system for the National Vocational Qualification (NVQs) which came into operation in 1990. This system was competence-based, outcomes-oriented and was based on a modular approach to training in contrast to the occupational principle of the German system (Busemeyer, 2015).

From a political perspective, the weakening and ultimately, the effective removal of trade union influence from training politics was part of a broader neoliberalist agenda pursued by the Conservative governments of this period (Vossiek, 2015). During this period the status of vocational training in general, and apprenticeship in particular, continued to diminish as criticism of skill levels increased. As King (1993) states:

> "Criticisms of Britain's skills level persisted, as the priority of containing unemployment overshadowed those in employment. Training became associated with programmes for the unemployed rather than with skills enhancement" (p.222).

The third developmental period of the training system in Britain could be described as consisting of "instances of *policy change* that did not produce *institutional change*" (Vossiek, p.88, emphasis on the original). Following the 1993 White Paper of Competitiveness, which highlighted the need to focus on intermediate skills development, the Conservative government

under John Major, introduced the *Modern Apprenticeship* (MA) in 1994. The MA signalled a break from the traditional time-served model of apprenticeship by stipulating that apprenticeships will be trained to NVQ level 3 – in other words, a standards-based approach. The MA evolved from the youth training programmes, such as YTS, and was aimed at providing a higher standard (YTS was aimed an NVQ Level 2). However, the underlying principle of voluntarism still applied to employer participation and, accordingly, the system struggled. The absence of a statutory framework, such as in Germany, left the system at a disadvantage. Ryan and Unwin (2001) describe the governance of MA as being "leaflet law: ministerial powers, legislated from the 1970s, to modify labour programmes" (p.104). Indeed, in the absence of such statutes and regulations, Ryan and Unwin remark on the opportunism of employers and apprentices in relation to the MA:

> "Employers and apprentices often use MA opportunistically, as a vehicle for their immediate economic interests, rather than a programme of education and skills. Many employers adopt a cafeteria approach, selecting the components of a training framework that suit their own limited requirements, claiming the corresponding funding, discarding the remainder – and leaving the government to re-jig the incentives and rewrite the regulations in vain attempts to discourage their behaviour" (p.110).

The voluntaristic nature of the British training system remained unchallenged under the Labour government which took office in 1997 with the focus of reforms shifting to include older as well as younger workers. Steedman (2011) refers to the period of Labour governments (1997-2010) as "prioritizing social inclusion over skills" (p.2). As in previous developmental periods, the emphasis was increasing the number of people in training, in other words, the amount of skills, rather than the quality of skill formation. The increase in the number of apprentices over the period was more a function of government initiatives and funding than increased employer involvement (Steedman, 2011). In 2011 the Conservative-led coalition

government introduced the Education Act which removed an entitlement to an apprenticeship for any suitable young person brought in by the previous government. Steedman observes that this legislation shifted the emphasis from social inclusion to skills development and opened up the apprenticeship programme to older people. It was in this age group (i.e. over 25 years) that the largest rate of growth in apprentice numbers occurred.

Britain has had long-standing difficulties in the formation of intermediate skills through the VET system. The persistence of the voluntarist approach to training on the part of employers, coupled with the prevailing confrontational industrial relations environment has not facilitated a more proactive approach to skill formation. Finegold and Soskice (1988) analyse what they view as the failure of education and training policy in the Britain. They criticise the failure of policymakers to see as crucial the "two-way nature of the relationship between education and training and the economy" (p.21). They argue that this failure to train the UK workforce to the same levels as their competitors was "both the product and the cause of the nation's poor relative economic performance" (pp.21-22). The issue of access to higher education for disadvantaged groups in society was raised during the Blair administration. Combined with the shift of apprenticeships and VET to social inclusion purposes, skills policy in Britain, with the emphasis on 'high skills', focussed increasingly on higher education. Consequently, rather than a gradual incremental approach to raising skills levels, Hillmert (2006) takes this as evidence that, in Britain, there has been "a more radical change in its skills policy" (p.19).

3.3.5 Skill Formation and the European Union

As this study's primary focus is on Ireland, a Member State of the EU, a discussion of the issue of Europeanisation with respect to skill formation is pertinent. Following Cort (2009) a distinction is made between 'harmonisation' and 'Europeanisation'.

"Harmonisation implies the top-down adoption of European regulation which is directly applicable in the Member States. Europeanisation describes the interconnectedness between European and national policies on the basis of common objectives, common concepts, common tools, benchmarks, etc." (p. 90).

Europeanisation includes modes of governance that involve Member States collaborating to achieve common goals and objectives. The Open Method of Coordination (OMC) is a case in point and relates to the sharing of best practice among policy makers, institutions and practitioners leading to the achievement of overall goals. It constitutes a so-called 'soft-method' of governance, as opposed to the 'hard-method' involving EU directives, legislation and regulations.

While there are many regional trade associations around the world, e.g. the North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA) and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the European Union (EU), while coming into existence as an economic trade association, has evolved into a sophisticated set of laws and institutions across many fields of public policy beginning with the economic and extending to include social, education and training, and environmental. Through a variety of treaties it has grown in membership and degrees of integration. It has also involved the pooling of sovereignty among the Member States and limits the capacity of each Member State to respond to events that may arise in certain areas. As Schmidt (2002) states:

"While Europeanization has served to moderate the impact of globalization, it has even further diminished national autonomy and control in exchange…for much greater shared supranational authority and control" (p.41).

This was particularly manifest following the establishment of the European Monetary Union (EMU) and the introduction of the single currency, the Euro.

During the Euro zone crisis Regan (2013) highlights the limits on the policy options open to governments when he states:

> "The EMU Member States currently have limited policy discretion to pursue an autonomous response to the crisis. In the absence of exchange rate or interest rate adjustment, the entire burden of adjustment must fall on domestic prices and wages. In effect, membership of the EMU means that national governments only have two policy instruments at their disposal: internal devaluation and structural reforms of the labour market" (p.1).

The impact of Europeanisation extended beyond the economic arena to the wider national institutions, with European economic policies gaining dominance over national policies in many areas. Similar dominance is evident in relation to the institutional governance at the European level and their equivalence at the national level (Schmidt, 2002). The field of education and training policy is no exception and the developments within European policy in this area are the focus of the next section.

3.3.5.1   European Education and Training Policy

The involvement of the EU in education and training is relatively recent and can be seen as consisting of three main phases separated by the Maastricht and Lisbon Treaties (Ertl, 2006; Pépin, 2007; Walkenhorst, 2008):

1. 1957-1992: Pre- Maastricht
2. 1992-2000: From Maastricht to Lisbon
3. 2000 - present: Lisbon Strategy

Cort (2009) argues that, while education was not included in the competences of the EU until the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, it was the fact that Article 128 of the Treaty of Rome gave the EEC competence in the area of vocational training that acted as a "lever for the gradual expansion of the policy field of

both general and higher education and the establishment of the European discourse on Lifelong Learning" (p.87).

<u>1957-1992: Pre-Maastricht</u>

Pépin (2007) divides the first phase in two in identifying the 1971-1992 as the foundation years for cooperation in education and training. Prior to 1970, while vocational training was included in the competences of the EEC in Article 128 of the 1957 Treaty of Rome, it was not regarded as a priority. A great deal of the proposals put forward under this Article, including the adoption of general principles for the implementation of a common vocational training policy (European Council, 1963), were contested by Member States "as a reaction against the attempts to harmonise the area" (Cort, 2009, p.92). In institutional theory terms, while Article 128 may constitute an attempt to establish a form of parchment institution (Carey, 2000), the lack of cooperation, and indeed, outright resistance from the Member States resulted it being institutionally weak, particularly from the enforcement perspective (Levitsky and Murillo, 2009). In this period, the priorities for the EEC were primarily in the areas of agriculture and economic integration. While the reluctance to grant authority to the EEC was a key reason for the failure to adopt a common vocational training policy in the 1960s (Petrini, 2004), Cort (2009) suggests that an alternative explanation for the failure of this policy:

> "…is the lack of a defined common problem among the Member States. The 1960s were characterised by the economic boom, the education boom and increased welfare in Europe…In a sense, the discourse which the Commission attempted to establish in the 1960s within this area was not in line with the wider economic and societal development of the time" (p.93).

Raising education and training in the European agenda was often the result of events in another policy arena (Ertl, 2003). So it was in the 1970s with the economic recession brought on by the oil crises of 1973 and 1979. 1971 saw

the first meeting of European Education Ministers and the first steps towards cooperation in the field of education and training in Europe (Pépin, 2007). During this period the traditional division between general and vocational education was maintained at European level, mirroring the situation in most European countries at this time (Neave, 1988). Ertl (2003) observes that "it was the economic pressure of the time that made a new relationship between general and vocational education possible" (p.18). The emerging relationship between education and training at the European level found its first expression in the Janne Report of 1973 (European Commission, 1973) which highlighted the traditional separation of general and vocational education to be a barrier to progress. The issue of unemployment, and in particular youth unemployment, was a catalyst for an increase in the profile of education and training on the European Agenda (European Council 1976a, 1976b, 1983; European Commission 1977, 1980). The focus was on the vocational preparation of young people transitioning from education to working life (Ertl, 2003).

The late 1970s and the 1980s witnessed the decline of Keynesian approaches to economic policy and the emergence of a neo-liberal ideology in many European Member States. Indeed, according to Gillingham (2003), the Single European Act of 1987 contained numerous neo-liberal characteristics as well as of the French statist approach. This period was also noted for an increasing number of disputes over the legitimacy of expanding European involvement in policy arenas or 'creeping competence' (Pollack, 2000). Ertl (2006) points out that as there is no specific reference to education in the Treaty of Rome, all involvement in education until the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 could be described as the EEC claiming an 'implicit' competence. The European Court of Justice provided a number of rulings on Article 128, notably the Gravier Judgement in 1985 (Case 293/83). In its judgement in this case the Court ruled that higher education programmes leading to an occupation came within the definition of vocational training as laid down in the Treaty, taking into account the 1963 decision on the general principles of a common vocational training policy (Pépin, 2007). This judgement led to

an expansion of Community activities in higher education, including the Erasmus programme.

1992-2000: From Maastricht to Lisbon

The second phase of the development of EU involvement in education and training began with the Maastricht Treaty by the then 12 Member States in 1992. For the first time the EU was formally given competence in education and training in Article 126 referring to education and Article 127 referring to training thus addressing any ambiguities of the competence of the EU in this regard. Pépin (2007) describes the Maastricht Treaty as a "major turning point for education cooperation at Community level" (p.125). Cort (2009) observes that, with the fall of Communism, the discourse in European policy documents shifted towards European competitiveness on a global stage. This globalised economy was described in terms of rapid on-going technological change especially with the growth of the internet. Education and training were no longer viewed as being part of just the school-to-work transition but also the increasing need to maintain and update skills in response to the changing economic needs. Both initial and continuing education and training were required. Education and training were increasingly seen as an integrated single entity under the banner of lifelong learning which served the overall objective of economic competitiveness.

Despite education and training being in separate articles, the 1990s saw an integrated approach to education and training policy. Both areas were included under the lifelong learning banner with an emphasis on the recognition and accreditation of competences acquired outside formal education systems. Notably, the focus had shifted from input or process, as in formal education, to learning outcomes. The catalyst for the EU, and its Member States, regarding lifelong learning as a common policy area, was the 1993 White Paper *Growth, Competitiveness, Employment* (European Commission, 1993). Referring to the general objectives of a reform of education and vocational training systems, the White Paper stated that:

"The main principle of the various types of measures to be taken should be to develop human resources throughout people's working lives, starting with basic education and working through initial training to continuing training" (p.119).

The EU White Paper on Education and Training (European Commission, 1995a) saw the re-emergence of the concepts of informal and non-formal learning:

"Education and training whether acquired in the formal education system, on the job or in a more informal way, is the key for everyone to controlling their future and their personal development" (p.2)

These concepts are based on the assumption that everyone continues to learn after the completion of formal education & training. Recognition of a person's non-formal and informal learning as well as their formal learning would play an important role in facilitating entry to further formal learning (Werquin, 2010). This recognition would manifest itself in the validation of the knowledge, skills and competences through the assessment of the learning outcomes demonstrated within the national certification system.

Jones (2005) reviews this period from a structural policy perspective and sees the 1993 White paper as the "launching point for the structural reform agenda" (p.247). He describes how Jacques Delors, the President of the European Commission from 1985 until 1995, put in place a suite of policies aimed at structural labour market reform as well as macro-economic policies aimed at stimulating economic growth. Jones argues that this White Paper sowed the seeds of reform that are still evident in the Lisbon strategy. The Luxembourg Summit in 1997 (European Council, 1997) was the next important step in the reform process which launched the so-called 'Luxembourg process'. This was established to coordinate the development of an employment strategy of the first time in the EU (Jones, 2005). The Amsterdam Treaty of 1997 formally linked the employment strategy with skill formation for the first time:

"Member States and the Community shall…work towards
developing a coordinated strategy for employment and particularly
for promoting a skilled, trained and adaptable workforce and labour
markets responsive to economic change…" (Article 109n).

There is an identifiable shift within policy discourse towards the increasing
individualisation of learning (Boshier, 1998; Biesta, 2006). Learning is
becoming an increasingly individual activity and is becoming an individual
issue and responsibility (Biesta, 2006). Prior to the 1990s EU policy
documents referred to Member States and the problems that the states should
address. Since the 1990s these documents increasingly contained a more neo-
liberal tone with the emphasis shifting to the responsibility of the individual
and the primacy of the free market. Throughout the 1990s a great deal of
attention in EU policy-making was given to finalising the Single Market and
preparing for monetary union. In addition, during this period, applications
for EU membership were received from ten countries in Central and Eastern
Europe. This all occurred in the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall in
1989. This situation presented a considerable challenge to the EU.
Cooperation in education and training and indeed lifelong learning was seen
as a central element of the EU response (Ertl, 2006).

In the second half of the 1990s the impact of globalisation and European
competitiveness were increasingly to the forefront of policy discussion. The
use of the terms 'knowledge society' and 'knowledge economy' begins to
increase. Lifelong learning is identifies as a key element of the European
Employment Strategy (European Council, 1997). It is, however, couched in
terms of what could be argued as a narrow instrumentalist view of 'training'
– the term 'lifelong training' is used (para, 57, 70) and in reference to the
'low-skilled or unskilled person'. The policy discourse of the 1990s around
the 'knowledge economy' and 'knowledge society', particularly in the EU,
came to be increasingly associated with two categories of learners that had
been discursively constructed. In her textual analysis of European

Commission documents and the discourse they construct of lifelong learning and the knowledge economy, Brine (2006) finds that:

> "...[knowledge] economy and [knowledge] society were used with unflinching consistency to define two distinct 'types' of learner: economy with the high knowledge-skilled learner, and society with the low knowledge-skilled learner." (p.662).

Brine (2008) observes that this dual construct continued post-Lisbon in the EU's trilogy of lifelong learning documents (European Commission, 2000, 2001; European Council, 2002). She finds that the high knowledge-skilled graduate is located within the discourse of 'economic need' as the EU must compete within the global market and be at the cutting edge of technology. The low knowledge-skilled worker is found in the discourse of 'social exclusion' and 'fear of a dual society', first expressed in the 1993 White Paper *Growth, Competitiveness, Employment* (European Commission, 1993). Typically, VET policy is aimed at low-skilled workers and dealing with social exclusion. Interestingly, despite the convergence of VET, general education and higher education, at both international and national levels, the discourse relating to higher education is about achievement and progress, while rarely including any reference to addressing social exclusion. The discourse of VET is associated with skill-deficits and social exclusion.

The 1990s also saw, as a part of the influence of global competitive pressures, an increase in the internationalisation of higher education provision (Pépin, 2007). The OECD (2005) commented that such pressures have resulted in increasing attention being paid at national levels to issues of quality assurance and system monitoring. The absence of quality assurance standards was seen to reduce confidence, both nationally and internationally, in the higher education system within a particular country. Within the EU the response to such concerns (Pépin, 2007) found expression in the signing of the Bologna Declaration in 1999 – a joint declaration by the Education Ministers of 31 European countries to establish the European higher education area (www. http://eur-lex.europa.eu/).

Kenny (2010) describes the Bologna declaration as "a significant policy framework for the integration of the European higher education sector" (p.39). While further discussion of the Bologna process is outside the scope of this study it does constitute an important element of skill formation in the EU. The Copenhagen process in VET, which emerged out of the Lisbon Strategy, was based on the underpinning concept of the Bologna process.

2000 - 2014: Lisbon Strategy

In 2000 the European Council of the 15 Member States adopted what is known as the Lisbon Strategy (European Council, 2000) – a 10-year strategy aimed at strengthening the EU in terms of employment, economic competitiveness and social cohesion. The opening sentence of the Presidency Conclusions of the Lisbon Council meeting of March 2000 indicates the key challenges in the minds of the members of the Council:

> "The European Union is confronted with a quantum shift resulting from globalisation and the challenges of a new knowledge-driven economy" (para. 1).

Jones (2005) argues that Lisbon Strategy is the junction between the end of one development process, which commenced with the Delors White Paper in 1993 (European Commission, 1993), and the beginning of a new process under the Lisbon Strategy. From an education and training policy perspective, some commentators have described the Lisbon Strategy as a 'turning point' (Ertl, 2006; Pépin, 2011) by placing education and training at the centre of the new strategy. However, Walkenhorst (2008) observes that the "there is a paradigmatic shift in policy aims, away from pro-integrationist towards pro-market orientation" (p.567). Powell, Bernhard and Graf (2012) argue that the focus of EU policy in skill formation has shifted from the citizen to the worker of the future. Education and training have been commodified as a mechanism to improve the economic competition of the EU. Nevertheless, the Lisbon strategy gave education and training a place on the agenda for the first time in the history of the EU.

The detailed work programme included reference to the development of instruments and processes to ensure the transparency of VET qualifications similar to the Bologna process in higher education. In their November 2002 meeting, the European Ministers of Vocational Education and Training and the European Commission adopted a resolution, known as the Copenhagen Declaration, on enhanced cooperation in vocational education and training (European Ministers of Vocational Education and Training, 2002). This covered EU Member States, candidate countries as well as countries of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and the European Economic Area (EEA). Following this Declaration, developments in VET took place under what became known as the Copenhagen process. The Declaration identified four priority areas: the European dimension of VET; transparency, information and guidance; recognition of qualifications and competences; and quality assurance. Initial work focused on three areas in which work has already commenced – the development of a single transparency framework, an assessment credit transfer system for VET, and the development of quality tools.

The Copenhagen process included a programme review every two years. This review schedule ensured that VET would maintain its visibility on the Lisbon strategy agenda. The outcome of the 2004 review was the Maastricht Communiqué (European Ministers of Vocational Education and Training, 2004). It states that priority should be given to the development of a European Qualifications Framework (EQF) as well as a European credit transfer system for VET (ECVET). By the time of the next review in 2006, the Helsinki Communiqué (European Ministers of Vocational Education and Training, 2006) reviewed the work done and it noted particular achievements – the Europass single framework for the transparency of qualifications and competences was adopted (European Parliament and Council, 2004). Work was also progressing on the EQF and the ECVET as well as on the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQARF). By the 2008 review and the Bordeaux Communiqué (European Ministers of Vocational Education and Training, 2008), the EQF had been established and a recommendation

had been adopted (European Parliament and Council, 2008) that Member States "relate their national qualifications systems to the European Qualifications Framework by 2010" (para 2). The next review of the Copenhagen process took place in Bruges in 2010 in the middle of the Great Recession (European Ministers of Vocational Education and Training, 2010). Crucially, the Copenhagen process had significantly raised the profile of VET at both a European and national level (European Commission, 2011).

In particular, in facilitating the development of common European tools, the Lisbon Strategy had made significant contributions to what Cort (2009) referred to as the "technology of Europeanisation" (p.90), namely, the EQF (European Parliament and Council, 2008), EQARF (European Parliament and Council, 2009a), and ECVET (European Parliament and Council, 2009b).

Figure 3.2. The Tools for Europeanisation in Education and Training
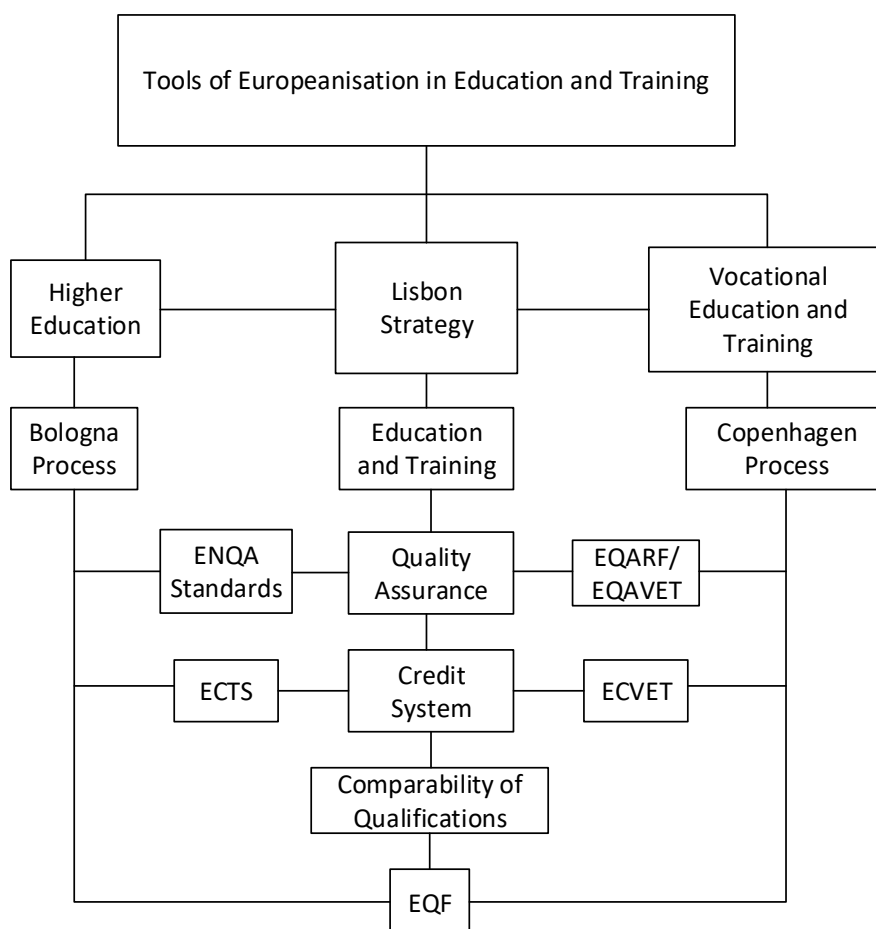
Key: <u>ENQA Standards</u>: European Network for Quality Assurance (ENQA) Standards
       and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area –
       adopted by the Ministers responsible for Higher Education in 2005 (European
       Economic and Social Committee, 2005).
       <u>ECTS – European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System</u>: Adopted in 1989 as
       part of the Erasmus programme (http://ec.europa.eu/).
       <u>EQARF:</u>European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (European
       Parliament and Council, 2009a)
       <u>EQAVET:</u> European Quality Assurance in VET is a community of practice
       bringing together Member States, Social Partners and the European Commission
       to promote European collaboration in developing and improving quality assurance
       in VET by using the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework
       (http://www.eqavet.eu/).
       <u>ECVET:</u>European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training
       (ECVET) (European Parliament and Council, 2009b).
       <u>EQF:</u> European Qualifications Framework (European Parliament and Council,
       2008).

From an institutional perspective, what is evident is that there is a
convergence process taking place between the Bologna and Copenhagen
processes. The theme of convergence has increasingly emerged as the
various instruments became adopted and developed under both processes.
While higher education was further down the development path as the
process started earlier, the Copenhagen process has resulted in the
development of the three instruments for VET – EQARF, ECVET and EQF.
The same issues are being addressed in both VET and higher education -
quality assurance, a credit system, and recognition of qualifications - but in
a manner best suited to each form of provision. As instruments are further
developed, the next developmental step is to see a greater coherence
between them (see Figure 3.2). Indeed, the Bruges Communiqué identifies
a specific objective in this regard:

> "The Commission and the participating countries should work
> towards increasing coherence between the two European credit
> systems - ECVET and ECTS" (p.11).

Powell, Bernhard and Graf (2012) conducted a comparison of the Bologna and Copenhagen processes by way of a content analysis of EU documents produced between 1998 and 2010. While both processes are integrated into the Lisbon Strategy, they identify a number of similarities as well as a number of differences. They observe that the ideals of both processes have much in common, including lifelong learning, contributing to economic competitiveness, enhancing quality assurance and the attractiveness of European skill formation (p.245). While mobility and mutual recognition of qualifications were seen to be high on the agenda of higher education, the VET agenda is more closely linked with the labour market and gave greater emphasis to economic goals, especially competitiveness and employability. As discussed above, there was a convergence between the agendas in areas of qualifications and quality assurance. However, social inclusion and cohesion were prominent on the VET agenda, while "this aspect of fostering a social dimension remained rather abstract" (p.245). Consequently, the target groups of learners in each sector are different. While higher education tends to target the more able learner, in the Copenhagen process VET is focused on the low-skilled, disadvantaged learner. However, this dimension has proven somewhat contentious on those countries with collective skills systems, such as Germany, Switzerland and Austria, in which VET is well regarded and seen as an attractive post-secondary option for many school-leavers. The final key difference between higher education and VET is that, for VET, the work-place is seen as a significant learning setting in combination with classroom settings. It does not feature to any great degree in references to higher education. Powell et al. (2012) surmise that there are more similarities than differences between the two processes and have suggested that a European model of skill formation has begun to emerge.

A European Model of Skill Formation – a 'Bricolage'

Both the Bologna and Copenhagen processes emerged out of the competitive pressures of globalisation, particularly in relation to competing with the United States and Japan. The emergent European skill formation

model is described by Powell et al. (2012) as a synthesis of a number of key influences:

> "…the emerging European model of skill formation, devised in part as an explicit strategy to compete with the United States, relies on different traditional European strengths as well as the American focus on the individual and this exhibits a strong bricolage" (p.254).

While maintaining the overall strategy of lifelong learning, the goal of this new model is to prepare workers of the future (rather than citizens) to be employable. This concentration on employability is explicitly described in terms of being a 'flexible' worker in that this person will take responsibility for, and be proactive in, maintaining and updating their skills level as the changing needs of the economy dictate so that they can 'transition' to the new labour market reality. This dimension of the model is clearly in response to the American and British liberal market approach to skill formation. Powell et al. also regard the standards within the model, such as the credit systems, and the course cycles, e.g. degrees, as also being influenced by the liberal market economy model. Indeed, they suggest that the higher education dimension of the model has a strong biased towards the liberalised approach.

In the VET element of the European skill formation model, while still exhibiting liberal influences, they also identify a stronger European influence which includes various elements of the German and French approaches. The corporatist and work-based learning elements of the German approach are also evident in the new model. The French model's influence can be seen in the multiple levels at which VET qualifications are offered. The social inclusion aspect of the European model finds resonance in the French, British and American model, but, as alluded to above, not some much in the German model. There is a tension evident between the overall aim of the European model, which seeks a comprehensive approach to VET in keeping with the German vocational principle, and the

employability principle on which the liberal model of the USA and the UK are based.

Powell et al. conclude that the approach taken, which has led to this emergent model, is based on "the tradition of learning from other" (p.255). Rather than focus on particular curriculum, the best modes of provision or, indeed, identifying particular changes to be made, the emergent model has tended towards a strategy of standardization:

> "The European processes do less to identify necessary changes to ameliorate persistent educational and social inequalities that they rely on standardization as a strategy to deal with disparities across the dozens of participating countries" (p.256).

The discussion in this section of the chapter has focused on the varieties of skill formation systems. It began with an examination of a number of typologies and was followed by an overview of the evolution of the skill formation systems in Germany and Britain. An examination of the various stages of development in EU approach to skill formation concluded this section. In the next section the discussion will focus on the impact of technological change on skill formation, as well as the policy of using the VET system primarily as an instrument to address social inclusion and unemployment as part of labour market activation policy.

3.4 Skills, Employment, and Labour Market Activation

3.4.1   Skill-Biased Technological Change

The 1970s and early 1980s coincided with the emergence and growth of the new microprocessor-based technologies of computers and information technology. The growth in the use of this technology had a significant impact on labour markets with marked reductions in employment in traditional industries resulting in high levels of unemployment. Many of the workers from the old industries did not have the necessary skills for the new emerging

industries. The response of governments to the growth in unemployment was initially to view the increases as cyclical and in line with normal economic cycles. What became apparent was that, through the emergence of high levels of long-term unemployment, the issue was more structural. Recessionary conditions and the emergence of the new technology industries combined to create a situation where the skills profile of the unemployed was increasingly obsolete. Equally the education and training systems were not aligned with these new developments. Youth unemployment became a significant policy issue for governments across the industrialised world at this time (OECD, 1978a, 1978b, 1980). This period also saw the beginning of the divergence in the skills profile of the labour market with low and high skilled jobs emerging.

The increasing pace of technological change and the emergence of the knowledge economy have resulted in a corresponding increase in demand for workers with a higher level of skill in keeping with the technology. Siegel (1999) refers to this as skill-biased technological change (SBTC). Siegel defines SBTC as "change that is biased by favouring workers with high levels of education and skill over those with lower levels." (p. 1). The increased pace of technological change, and the corresponding increase in demand for new and higher skills, placed a significant pressure on the skill formation system to respond – described by Goldin and Katz (2008) as the race between education and technology. While this could lead to a corresponding increase in the demand for places in higher education, there is a finite limit to the capacity of the higher education sector. Equally, as Busemeyer (2015) argues "not everyone can be turned into a knowledge worker". SBTC can have significant implications for wage inequality within the labour market. Further discussion of this issue is outside the parameters of this study but may be found in Autor, Katz, and Krueger (1997); Autor, Levy, and Murnane (2003); Busemeyer (2015); Di Pietro (2002); Gregg and Manning (1997); Machin and Van Reenen (1998); and, Weiss and Garloff (2011).

These changes in industrial and, consequentially, in labour market profile, presented significant organisational challenges. Skill formation systems with

strong connections to manufacturing industries were faced with significant challenges in relation to not only the training of new recruits but also with the skills development of the existing workforce. In liberal market economies, a weak VET institution, as part of the skill formation system, led to a 'hollowing out' of the skills profile and the growth of higher education participation. This pattern was less apparent in coordinated market economies with strong VET institutions.

The changing industrial profile, combined with the growth of neo-liberal policies and a more private sector-type approach to public administration known as New Public Management (NPM), had a consequential effect on labour market policies as the manpower policies began to shift towards a more activation approach (Weishaupt, 2011). In particular, beginning in the UK in the 1980s the emergence of a workfare approach to unemployment benefits began to emerge, whereby the payment of benefits became contingent on the recipients participation in some work programme or training course. This approach saw a shift from the passive payment of unemployment benefits to one of 'activating' the unemployed by getting them back to work as quickly as possible. Consequently, there is connection between the skill formation system and the social protection system.

3.4.2   Social Inclusion and Labour Market Activation

An increasingly central goal of VET policy in advanced democracies is skills for social inclusion. In Ireland, the National Further Education and Training Strategy (SOLAS, 2014) states that skills are a driver of social inclusion (p.5). This goal is based on the premise that securing employment is the most effective way of addressing social inclusion or, in other words, addressing exclusion from the labour market. Periods of unemployment necessarily involve the welfare state in the provision of income support during these periods and, through activation measures, referral to either education and training programmes, or employment. Within the international context, just as there are 'Varieties of Capitalism' (Hall & Soskice, 2001), so too there are varieties of approaches to the welfare state

and active labour market policies. In his seminal work on the *Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism,* Esping-Anderson (1990) identified what he referred to as three broad regime-types. Firstly, the liberal welfare state, largely associated with the Anglophone countries, such as the United States and Britain, is characterised by "means-tested assistance, modest universal transfers, or modest social insurance plans" (p.26). The second type, he referred to as corporatist welfare states such as Austria, France, Germany and Italy. He describes these types as being "… typically shaped by the Church, and hence strongly committed to the preservation of traditional family-hood. Social insurance typically excludes non-working wives and family benefits encourage motherhood" (p.26). He refers to the third welfare regime-type as social democratic and is primarily associated with Scandinavian countries. In this type these countries seek "a welfare state that would promote an equality of the highest standards, not an equality of minimal needs…" (p.27). In more recent times the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) (2005) referred to these three types as the Anglo-Saxon, the Continental European, and the Nordic welfare models, respectively. With regard to which model would be most appropriate for describing the welfare state in Ireland, the NESC observes that in Ireland the welfare state is a hybrid having "disparate elements" (NESC, 2005, p. xvii) of each of the three models.

Prior to the welfare state, workers were only paid when they were employed. Consequently, during economic down-turns when there was less work they had no income. In other words, their income was based entirely on their ability to 'sell' their skills in the labour market. With the advent of the welfare state, which provided a form of insurance against periods of unemployment, the dependence of the worker on the labour market was reduced in so far as some income support was available during such periods. Unemployment could be due, for example, to a lack of available jobs requiring the particular skill set that a person has, or that the person's skill set is insufficient for the available jobs. From an economic perspective, Estevez-Abe, Iverson, and Soskice (2001) observe that "social protection aids the market by helping economic actors overcome market

failures in skill formation" (p.145). Mares (2001) describes the welfare state as

> "…social insurance as a compensation of workers for their
> disadvantaged position in the labor market. By providing benefits to
> workers during employment-related risks, social policies lower their
> dependence on the labor market…" (p. 184).

As with any form of insurance the level of payment or premium is related to the level of risk. In the labour market, risk is determined on the likelihood of securing employment within a reasonable time-period after losing a job. In liberal market economies (LME's), where general skills are dominant, potential re-employment opportunities are comparatively higher (in normal labour market conditions) than in coordinated market economies (CMEs) and, therefore, the level of risk is lower. In CMEs, where more industry-specific skills are more prevalent, re-employment opportunities are limited to the specific industry sectors resulting in a higher level of risk. In Japan, where the norm is firm-specific skills, the level of risk is highest. Iversen and Stephens (2008) identify "the mutually reinforcing relationships between social insurance, skill formation, and spending on public education" (p. 600). Mares states:

> "Social insurance – the provision of income compensating for
> employment-related risks – comes in a variety of institutional forms.
> The level and generosity of social policy benefits, the relative mix
> between tax- and contribution-based financing, the criteria used in
> the determination of eligibility for insurance or assistance - vary
> dramatically across policies" (p.187).

3.4.3 From Manpower Policies to Labour Market Activation

The approach to social protection has evolved from one of manpower policy in the early 1960s to the labour market activation policies of today. Weishaupt (2011), taking an historical institutionalist approach, identified

three main phases of ideational change in relation to labour market policy and the welfare state in Europe. Firstly, the concept of active manpower policy and a modern Public Employment Service (PES) was initiated in Sweden in the mid-1960s during a period of economic growth when the focus of the policy was ensuring a sufficient supply of appropriately skilled workers. This spread to other countries primarily through OECD proposals and recommendations. This period witnessed a degree of institutional convergence across countries. The second period corresponded to the economic crises of the 1970s brought on by the oil crises of 1973 and 1979. During this period, which saw the Keynesian policies of the time come under scrutiny, institutions across the three welfare regimes responded differently to the emerging challenges of changing industrial profile and structural unemployment. Institutional divergence was a feature of this period. By the 1980s, with the rise of long-term unemployment, there was an increasing acceptance that the welfare state was in crisis and this contributed to the virtual abandonment of Keynesianism during this period. Instead of a single alternative emerging, the OECD (1986) identified three approaches as gaining prominence – one focused on the role of labour market rigidities, one on rising labour costs, while the third highlighted the weakness of demand.

The three distinct responses to which emerged in the 1980s were equivalent to the three worlds of welfare capitalism (Esping-Anderson, 1990) discussed above. The UK, for example, under the premiership of Margaret Thatcher, followed a neo-liberalist strategy of deregulation, reductions in welfare spending, a recalibration of entitlements, the introduction of a workfare approach to unemployment benefits, as well as privatisation. On the other hand, Ireland chose the more consensual, corporatist path more akin to the European model, thus diverging away from the more conflictual path being followed by the UK.

The final phase of ideational change, while commencing in the UK in the 1980s, gained prominence in the mid-1990s within both the OECD and the EU, was the concept of 'activation'. The Conservative governments in the

UK saw VET policy and programmes increasingly as a means of addressing unemployment rather than skills enhancement. The emphasis on social inclusion rather than skills was also a feature of the Labour government from 1997. As Weishaupt (2011) argues, manpower policies devised in times of economic growth had to be redesigned to deal with economic recession and unemployment. Consequently, he states "the goals switched from affecting primarily economic to primarily social outcomes" (p.118).

In addition to policy responses at the national level, the high and persistent levels of unemployment in the 1990s led to policy responses from supranational organisations (Casey, 2004) - the OECD Jobs Strategy (OECD, 1994) and the European Union's (EU) European Employment Strategy (European Council, 1997). Both strategies were based on a shared viewed that the cause of high unemployment and, particularly structural unemployment, was "insufficient ability to adapt to change" (Casey, p.333).

3.4.3.1   OECD Jobs Study

Unemployment in OECD countries in the 1990s began to change both in level and structure. Despite a general improvement in economic activity generally, persistent long-term unemployment, particularly among young people, began to emerge. This pattern coincided with skills shortages across many countries. This emergence, of what was termed structural unemployment, led to the OECD (1990) making a number of policy recommendations involving a shift from passive to active labour market policies. In the education and training area, the focus turned to improving the adaptability of workers through lifelong learning. The 1994 OECD Jobs Study (OECD, 1994) contained ten broad guidelines including "7. Expand and enhance active labour market policies, and 8. Improving labour force skills and competence" (pp. 50-51). Weishaupt (2011) observes that the Jobs Study has been generally regarded as neo-liberal in orientation in which "social policy is viewed as a 'brake' to economic development and a 'burden' to employers, individuals, and the public purse…The Jobs Study

interpretation of flexibility was based on removing 'rigidities' caused by labour unions and governmental regulations" (p.154).

3.4.3.2 European Employment Strategy

After the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, the European Union began to be regarded as increasingly important in the employment policy field. The White Paper on *Growth, Competitiveness, Employment* (European Commission, 1993), placed the emphasis in relation to employment, not in the removal of labour market 'rigidities', but rather on building capacity within state interventions. The European Council meeting in Essen in 1994 proposed a set of five guidelines which had a great deal of commonality with both the Job Study and the EU White Paper, and placed an emphasis on improving employability through education and training. The Essen Guidelines formed the basis for the development of a European employment policy. The Amsterdam Treaty of 1997 formally linked education and training, or lifelong learning policy to the activation of the unemployed. The Luxembourg process in 1997, which involves the coordination of Member States' employment policies, in combination with the commitments contained in the Amsterdam Treaty, led to the emergence of the European Employment Strategy (EES). The EES was based on four policy pillars – employability, entrepreneurship, adaptability and equal opportunities. Of these four pillars the employability pillar was the focal point of the EES (Weishaupt, 2011). Within this pillar there was an emphasis on the provision of training and lifelong learning. In combination with the OECD Jobs Study, the EES promoted the development of performance targets and the roll out of management practices. This approach to public administration, referred to as New Public Management, will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Six.

The activation concept was further refined, primarily in Denmark, to what became known as 'Flexicurity' and adopted by the EU in the mid-2000s as part of the Lisbon agenda. Flexicurity is an integrated approach to enhancing both flexibility and security in the labour market. In 2007 the EU (European

Commission, 2007) proposed four common principles of Flexicurity as part of the European Employment Strategy:

- Flexible and reliable contractual arrangements
- Comprehensive lifelong learning strategies
- Effective active labour market policies
- Modern social security systems

In 2008, the European Commission issued a recommendation that Member States should implement a three-pillar policy on active inclusion (European Commission, 2008a). Active inclusion is defined as "enabling every citizen, notably the most disadvantaged, to fully participate in society, including having a job" (http://ec.europa.eu/). The three pillars of this policy are described as

1. Adequate income support - together with help to get a job. This could be by linking out-of-work and in-work benefits, and by helping people to access the benefits they are entitled to;
2. Inclusive labour markets – making it easier for people to join the work force, tackling in-work poverty, avoiding poverty traps and disincentives to work; and,
3. Access to quality services - helping people participate actively in society, including getting back to work.

3.5 Conclusion

The international context for skill formation systems was the focus of the discussion in this chapter. It commenced with an overview the different types of political economies among the industrialised countries using the Varieties of Capitalism model. This laid the foundation for the discussion of the different approaches to skill formation and the typologies of such systems. Following a cross-sectional view of a comparative perspective of skill formation systems, the longitudinal view of their evolution was presented in the cases of Germany and Britain. This was followed by a

discussion of the developments with the European Union. The final section of the chapter began with a discussion of the impact of technological change on industrial and labour market profiles, and concluded with an examination of the developments within the area of labour market activation. In the next chapter the developments in skill formation in Ireland prior to 1973 will be discussed. In combination with the literature review of the international context of skill formation, the discussion in Chapter Four will lay the foundation for the primary focus of this study, namely the case study of the evolution of further education and training policy in Ireland from 1973 until 2014.

4   SKILL FORMATION IN IRELAND UNTIL 1973

This Chapter will discuss the evolution of skill formation in Ireland from the late nineteenth century until 1973, and Ireland's membership of the EEC. It will highlight the key developments during this period and will lay the foundations for the discussion of skill formation in Ireland from 1973 to 2014 in Chapter Six. Comparisons will be drawn between the evolution of the skill formation systems in Germany and Britain, as described in the last chapter. Given that Ireland was a part of the United Kingdom (UK) until the formation of the Irish Free State in 1922, developments in skill formation in Britain had a significant influence on those in Ireland. While both Germany and Britain had a significant industrial base in the nineteenth century, Ireland was predominantly an agricultural economy and was regarded, in Britain, as being industrially underdeveloped (Byrne, 1999). Consequently, the demand for skills was different to that in Britain. The considerable growth of technical education towards the end of the nineteenth century in Britain and Germany did not occur in Ireland. Ó Buachalla (1988) was of the view that this was primarily due to the "absence of the catalytic effect of heavy industry and the dominance of agriculture in the economy" (p.33).

The evolution of skill formation in Ireland for most of this period is characterised by policy fragmentation, as well as institutional and organisational divergence. The emergence of policy coherence and institutional and organisational convergence can be seen in the 1960s. Developments in Ireland over this period were similar to those in Britain, and in some cases, directly borrowed from them, as was the case in the area of industrial training in the 1960s. The role of key actors will be highlighted including Department of Education officials, politicians, the Catholic Church, the employers, and trades unions. At various stages the level of activity, and in some cases inactivity, of these various actors played a crucial role in the developments.

The evolution of skill formation in Ireland prior to 1973 can be divided into three time periods:

1. From the late nineteenth century until 1931 – fragmentation and divergence
2. From 1931 until 1957 – economic stagnation and Catholic Church opposition
3. From 1958 until 1973 – the beginnings of convergence

While the developments of the first two periods are, in many ways dominated, although not exclusively, by events within Ireland, the policy change from protectionism to free trade in the late 1950s and beyond witnessed the increasing influence of forces external to Ireland.

4.1 From the late Nineteenth Century until 1931– fragmentation and divergence

The history of skill formation in Ireland is very different from the experience in the majority of industrialised countries. While many countries, particularly in Europe, were experiencing the Industrial Revolution in the nineteenth century, Ireland lagged behind in terms of industrial development. Ireland's economy became increasingly dependent on agriculture. From the perspective of skill formation, the consequence of this economic situation leads Garvin (2009) to suggest that this led to the effective deindustrialisation of Ireland, with a corresponding deskilling of the population. In addition, Ferriter (2004) observed that, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, Ireland had also experienced considerable political and social upheaval having seen "considerable turmoil and trauma, most notably in the form of the Great Famine (1845-9), which resulted in widespread death and emigration. The population of the small island ... plummeted from 8,175,124 in 1841 to 4,456,546 in 1901" (p.28).

In the early to mid-nineteenth century in Ireland, technical education was not a matter of public policy but was left to employers and voluntary

groups, such as the Mechanics Institutes. As discussed in the previous chapter concerns in Britain over decreasing competitiveness, particularly in relation to Germany, led to the establishment of the Samuelson Commission on Technical Instruction in 1881. Byrne (1999) draws attention to the criticism in the Commission's Report of the Department of Science and Art in London, which had responsibility for technical instruction. In relation to Ireland, the report criticised the Department "as a rigidly centralised institution whose failure to cope with the disparate demands of industrial Ireland was a persistent defect" (Byrne, 1999, pp. 25-26). The 1889 Technical Instruction Act, which followed the publication of this report, and which applied to England, Wales, and Ireland, was first attempt to legislate for technical instruction in Ireland, and it was the first recognition of the state's role in giving direct support to technical education (Coolahan, 1981). It also established the principle of local and regional administration of the technical education system through local government structures. The absence of such structures in Ireland at the time, other than a small number of municipal authorities in Dublin, Cork, Belfast, and Limerick, meant that this Act would not be implemented to any great degree (Byrne, 1999). In addition, Byrne observes that "the Act failed to address the concern that the Department of Science and Art was far too centralised and distant an institution to respond to the specific needs of diverse localities" (p. 26). During the 1890s the demand for a system of technical instruction designed for the Irish context remained. As Byrne argues, "the urgent requirement was to displace adopted British policy with an adapted Irish one" (p.27).

However, despite the lack of success with the 1889 Act in Ireland, it laid the ground work for the first significant piece of legislation in technical instruction the *1899 Agriculture and Technical Instruction (Ireland) Act*. In 1895, an unofficial committee of Irishmen, both parliamentarians and other interested parties (Byrne, 1999), known as the Recess Committee, under the chairmanship of Mr Horace Plunkett, made a systematic study of the approaches taken in other countries to industrial development (Department of Education, 1927). The Committee's report was published in 1896 and its recommendations resulted in, what Coolahan (1981) described as the "great

break-through for technical education" (p.87) - the Agriculture and Technical Instruction (Ireland) Act of 1899. Byrne (1999) observes that this Act also resulted in "the bonds which kept Irish technical institutions subservient to a lofty and remote South Kensington [in London] were finally severed" (p.28). However, while this separation had been achieved, "technical education in Ireland developed along structures that were generally similar to those employed in England" (O'Reilly, 1998, p.188). A key legislative development, facilitating the implementation of technical education, occurred the previous year in 1898 when the Local Government (Ireland) Act was passed establishing a local authority structure in Ireland. Technical Instruction was seen as separate from the mainstream education provision and was placed under a separate government department. However, England was not ahead of Ireland in the area of primary education, upon which technical education would be based. Byrne (1982, cited in O'Reilly, 1998, p.190) observes that the lack of primary level education system in England until 1851 was an impediment to the development of technical education. Ireland, on the other hand, had a state system of primary education since 1831.

In 1922 the Irish Free State was established. This involved the partitioning of the island of Ireland, which resulted in the six counties of Northern Ireland remaining within the UK. This created a significant economic dilemma with the loss to the newly formed Free State of the only region of substantial industrial development on the island of Ireland at that time. Consequently, the economy of the new state relied even more heavily on agriculture, and had a very small industrial base. According to Haughton (2014) the agriculture sector of the economy in 1926 accounted for 32% of GDP and provided 54% of employment. Indeed, some two-thirds of the very small manufacturing sector in the 1920's was involved in the processing of brewing, distilling and biscuits – activities closely linked to agriculture. Consequently, as Clarke (2016) argues, "there was little demand for a workforce skilled in industrial technology" (p.299).

Shortly after the formation of the Irish Free State in 1922, control of technical education, in addition to primary and secondary education, was transferred to the Department of Education. In the 1920's all modern industrial countries tended to make the technical school responsible for industrial training (Department of Education, 1927). However, initial attempts towards industrialisation highlighted the inadequacy of existing technical education facilities (Coolahan, 1981; Ó Buachalla, 1988). In particular, the building of the Ardnacrusha hydroelectric scheme on the River Shannon was seen as an important development in the direction of industrialisation (Ferriter, 2004). The Minister for Education at the time argued that the anticipated industrial development from this project would only succeed "if a national scheme of technical training was in place" (Logan, 2000, p.239). Consequently, the government was of the view that there was a need to overhaul the technical and industrial training. The Report of the Commission on Technical Education (Department of Education, 1927), established to review the requirements of industry, recommended the development of a new system which would target three categories of provision – continuation education, technical education and higher technical education (Clarke, 2016). Continuation education was to be full-time and for students between 14 and 16 years of age upon completion of primary school. Technical education was for apprenticeship or particular trades, and higher technical education was for more managerial grades.

The report resulted in two pieces of legislation, the first of which was the Vocational Education Act of 1930. This established the system of Vocational Education Committees (VEC) in each of the local authority areas in the country. This new system was based on the existing system established under the 1899 Act. In the area of apprenticeships Part VI of the 1930 Act provided for cooperation between the Vocational Education Committees (VEC) and Apprenticeship Committees, and gave the VECs the authority to provide courses for apprenticeships. Byrne (1999) describes the 1930 Act as creating "an institutional framework that facilitated the comprehensive development of vocational and technical education at both

second and third level over the half-century that followed" (p.34). O'Reilly (1989) says that "vocational education can be seen as the main element of the manpower policy of the new state" (p.153). Indeed, O'Reilly (1998) argues that the VEC system was established as "a major human resource development agency of the state" (p.186). He further argues that "the VECs were the exclusive locus of explicit educational initiatives by the Irish state in respect of economic development until the 1960s" (p.108). However, as Clarke (2016) observes, "vocational and technical education was undervalued both in terms of its contribution to education and to the economy" (p.297).

The Commission also examined the area of apprenticeships. Having examined the apprenticeship legislation in South Africa and Queensland, Australia, the Commission made recommendations in relation to apprenticeship including " the scheduling of trades, the registration of apprentices and the appointment of statutory apprentice committees for each trade of group of trades" (Department of Education, 1927. p.79). The initial drafting of the Vocational Education Act included nine sections dealing with apprenticeship (J.G. Ryan, 2000). However, when this draft was sent to the Department of Finance for comment, the Department of Education discovered that the Department of Industry and Commerce had already submitted draft proposals for apprenticeship legislation. The Department of Education had to subsequently amend its draft. Consequently, a second piece of legislation, the 1931 Apprenticeship Act, emanated from the Commission's Report. This Act assigned responsibility for apprenticeship to the Department of Industry and Commerce. However, J.G. Ryan (2000) observes that, despite taking initial responsibility for apprenticeship, the Department of Industry and Commerce (D/I and C) appeared to have had second thoughts. He cites a note attached to a memo from the Department of Finance:

> "I understand privately that the D/I and C are not anxious to remain in charge of this Bill and are angling to have responsibility transferred to the D/Ed" (p.283).

The two pieces of legislation also resulted in the further segmenting of different aspects of technical education. Responsibility for agricultural education remained with the Department of Agriculture. This proved to be the beginning of the development of sectoral training, to be later joined by similar initiatives in tourism, fisheries and forestry. Technical education, as envisaged prior to 1922, was now the responsibility of three government Departments. With the 1930 and 1931 Acts, responsibility for vocational/technical education was formerly separated from vocational/technical training and assigned to two different government departments. These two separate strands of development continued in parallel under two separate government departments –the Department of Education, and the Department of Industry and Commerce – until the government decision in 2010 to bring both areas under a renamed Department of Education and Skills.

4.2 From 1931 until 1957 – economic stagnation and Catholic Church opposition

For most of the three decades until 1960, Ireland witnessed the stagnation of economic development brought about in many ways by the protectionist approach to economic policy by the governments of the period, and the retarding effects of the three economic crises which resulted in significant levels of emigration. The three economic crises of this period were identified by Ó Gráda (2011) as the Economic War (1934-1938), the 'Emergency' (1939-1945), and, what Ó Gráda refers to as the "lost decade" (p. 23), the 1950s. In addition to this stagnation the profile of the economy changed. On a sectoral basis, while the number employed in agriculture declined by some 41% (from 51.8% in 1926 to 35.7% in 1961), there was an increase in industrial employment (from 14.5% in 1926 to 24.2% in 1961). Employment in the services sector increased slightly from 33.7% in 1926 to 40.1% in 1961 to become the largest sector for employment (Bielenberg and Ryan, 2013). Vossiek (2015), in comparing Ireland with Britain, observes that for this period "agrarian employment was much

higher and industrial employment much lower in Ireland compared to the UK, which depressed the demand for workers with manufacturing and vocational skills" (p.102). After the Second World War, while post-war Europe was experiencing a decade of growth, Ireland was underachieving with the worst growth record in Europe for the 1950-1958 period. The Irish government's protectionist economic policies over the course of this period had been shown to be increasingly ineffective. In the early 1950's representatives of the Irish government began exploring the option of foreign investment and a more outward looking approach to economic policy.

4.2.1 Vocational Education

In 1930 the new VEC system inherited 77 technical schools from its predecessor and began the process of increasing this number. By the end of the 1930s this number had reached 200 (Logan, 1999). With the significant decline in agriculture, the number of jobs available to family members on the family farm similarly declined (Logan, 1999). This led to a corresponding increase in enrolments on continuation courses in vocational schools. "Families who once believed that their children's future was on the land now sought opportunities for them in occupations that would require higher levels of education" (p. 286). Indeed, as Logan (1999) observes:

> "…the relatively low demand for advanced technical education, at a time when there was a growing demand for second-level schooling, ensured that between 1930 and 1965 the continuation second-level education of adolescents became the principal activity of most vocational schools" (p. 281).

For the newly established VEC system, as well as the new apprenticeship system, circumstances would prove difficult. However, it was the opposition of the Catholic Church to the vocational education system, and the state's complicity, that would be a defining feature of this period.

Clarke (2012) states that in Ireland "denominational control of vocational education became a priority for the Roman Catholic Church" (p.483). Clarke points out that, in addition to influencing the Department of Education, the Catholic Church set about spreading its influence at VEC level:

> "Membership of the local VECs was secured for the Catholic clergy by the early 1940s. By this time the Roman Catholic Church had achieved much success in representational terms with clergy holding positions on every VEC committee in the country with the exception of Dublin" (p.485).

Logan (2000) concurs with Clarke and observes:

> "From 1930 to the mid-1960s, the majority of non-councillor [VEC] committee places were allocated to clergymen, and three out of every four committees formed would elect a priest as its chair" (p.241).

Following the passing of the Irish Constitution in 1937, which emphasised the role of religion in society, and in particular, giving a special place in the country to the Catholic Church, there was growing concern among church authorities at the low profile of religion in vocational schools:

> "…if they [Catholic Church] could not contrive to have the act [the 1930 Act] rescinded and the system abolished, they should at least have its functions redefined and secure a formal provision for religious instruction by means of a ministerial order" (Ó Buachalla, 1988, p.269).

In 1942 a departmental committee was established to review the guidelines for continuation education. The outcome of its work was a major document, Memorandum V.40, which stated:

"Continuation education must be in keeping with Irish tradition and should reflect in the schools the loyalty to our Divine Lord which is expressed in the Prologue and Articles of the Constitution. In all schools it is essential that religious instruction be continued, and that interest in the Irish language and other distinctive features of the national life be carefully fostered" (Department of Education, 1942, p.2).

Ó Buachalla (1988) expresses the view that Memorandum V.40 also served de Valera's [Taoiseach/Prime Minister] political purposes in that it addressed church criticism of the vocational system while at the same time bringing the vocational schools into his cause of the revival of the Irish language.

The theme of certification and qualifications in vocational and technical education, and in particular, their absence emerged prior to 1973. This absence of a national system of certification for vocational and technical education, during the first three decades of the twentieth century, led to certification being sought from a variety of bodies. O'Reilly (1998) identified a number of UK based certification bodies, such as City and Guilds, the Royal Society of Arts, the London Chamber of Commerce, and Pitman Institute, as providing certification for technical education in the late 1920s. Following the establishment of the VEC system in 1930, the first state examinations provided by the Department of Education in technical education were taken in 1936. The Trade Examinations were taken at Junior and Senior levels, while the Technological Examinations were held at Elementary, Intermediate and Advanced levels. National certification for continuation education was not available until after the Second World War.

Part III of the 1930 Act required VECs to develop continuation education in response to the needs within its administrative area. The Department of Education inspectorate issued curricular guidelines as a measure to achieve national uniformity. Logan (2000) identifies criticism of the absence of certification of continuation education programmes, particularly in relation

to there being no mechanism to reassure employers and parents of a national uniformity of standards. This criticism viewed the vocational school as "localist, prone to idiosyncratic variation and unsystematic in contrast to the secondary school" (p. 243). A national certification system for continuation education was established in 1947, some 17 years after these programmes commenced. In 1947 continuation courses were certified by the Day Vocational Certificate, more commonly known as the Group Certificate. A significant issue which arose for vocational school students was their exclusion from the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate examinations, and that the Group Certificate was not accepted for entry into university. Consequently, the continuation education programme was an educational *cul-de-sac* as it had little or no transfer value to further education or training. In effect, the State and the Catholic Church colluded to prevent students attending vocational schools from sitting the examinations which gave access to university. From a social mobility perspective, this resulted in vocational education being regarded as second rate.

During this second period Irish education is considered to have entered a phase of developmental inertia (O'Reilly, 1989). O'Connor (2014) observes that the Church held considerable power in the framing of public ideological discourse. He argues that the view taken of the purpose of education at this time was more concerned with "the preservation of the past rather than with preparation for the future" (p.197). During the post-war period, which witnessed a surge of reconstruction and educational reforms in many European countries, there were no corresponding efforts in Ireland. Indeed, contrary to these trends there is evidence that the Department of Education was steadfast in preventing the exposure of the education system to external influences which might "be in conflict with Catholic educational principles" (Ó Buachalla, 1988, p.274). By the mid-1950's Ireland was a society in which all cultural activity was overseen by Catholic Church authorities. O'Connor (2014), in reviewing the state of educational development within the first thirty years since independence, observes that, while Irish education lacked for resources during this time, it was also "undermined by a lack of ambition" (p.198). O'Connor's observations echo

those of Fitzgerald (1957) when he describes the period since independence as one of economic inertia:

> "Action of any kind has too often been opposed, or even attacked, either on the grounds that the status quo is good enough or, alternatively, because there is no hope of achieving the desired objective" (p.271).

4.2.2 Apprenticeship

The parallel strand of developments in apprenticeships occurred within the same socio-economic circumstances as outlined above for vocational education. However, in contrast to vocational education, the Catholic Church seemed to have taken practically no interest in these developments. Although, the education dimension of apprenticeships, which was delivered by the VECs, was inevitably impacted upon to some degree by the developments as described above. While the 1931 Act established a regulated apprenticeship system in Ireland, it turned out to be largely ineffective (Garavan, Costine, and Heraty, 1995). The education element of apprenticeships was a relatively small element (6%) of technical education by the end of this period, a small increase of just 5% on mid-1930s levels (J.G. Ryan, 2000). This was particularly due to the fact that the apprenticeship committees were enabled but not obliged to make rules requiring employers to train apprentice employees in a specific manner (Coolahan, 1981). The VECs, which under the 1930 Act had a responsibility to provide the education dimension of apprenticeships, experienced great difficulties in planning for this provision. As J.G. Ryan (2000) put it:

> "…in relation to the overall demands of the apprenticeship system, the educational sector was, to a large extent, working in the dark. It was not in a position to organise apprenticeship in the workplace, it did not know the numbers of apprentices to be provided for the

particular trades, their location, nor their specific requirements as regards education and training" (p.289).

The ineffectiveness of the 1931 Apprenticeship Act was the target of criticism in the Report of the Commission on Youth Unemployment (Department of Industry and Commerce, 1951). This report called for the establishment of a National Apprenticeship Committee which would co-ordinate the different apprenticeship committees. The absence of certification was also noted when the report drew attention to the omission of any provision in the 1931 Act for a "test of competency on the completion of apprenticeship" (p.21). The standards-based approach to apprenticeship would not be implemented until some forty years later in the 1990's. Work began on new apprenticeship legislation by the Department but it did not become law until 1959.

J.G. Ryan (2000) compares the relative success of the 1930 Vocational Education Act with the difficulties experienced by the 1931 Apprenticeship Act. In his view, the 1930 Act was based on a system that had originally been set up under the 1899 Act, and had been operated for some thirty years by the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction. It was based on the proposals from a committee of Irishmen, the Recess Committee, devising a solution for Ireland. J.G. Ryan describes the 1930 Act as "home grown" (p.286). In institutional terms the 1930 Act was an institutional evolution of the system established in 1899. The Apprenticeship Act of 1931 was less successful. As with all apprenticeships, the support of trade unions and employers is a prerequisite. The trade unions felt threatened by the legislation in that they perceived it as reducing their control over access to apprenticeships, with some trade unions passing motions on non-cooperation with the new system (J.G. Ryan, 2000). Employers were unhappy with the level of bureaucracy involved in the system. As J.G. Ryan puts it, "the Apprenticeship Act was largely an imported measure and was grafted on to a poorly developed existing base with little modification" (p.286). From an institutional perspective, the support of the key

stakeholders was not in place, so the coalition of support required for the successful implementation of the institution did not form.

Despite the opposition of the Catholic Church, the VEC system was successful over this period. By 1957, there were 260 vocational schools providing full-time continuation education programmes to more than 22,000 students (O'Connor, 1986). However, as Girvin (2002) observes, the opposition of the Catholic Church prevented the vocational education system from "achieving its full potential" (p.69). While the 1930 Vocational Education Act would be regarded as having been a success, the 1931 Apprenticeship Act could not. The failure to establish a coalition of support for the new system among the employers and the trade unions proved to be a significant failure with what was effectively an imported solution, imposed on unwilling constituencies. The apprenticeship system was in need of significant reform.

4.3 From 1958 until 1973 – the beginnings of convergence

The period of Irish history, from 1958 until 1973, has been described as the birth of modern Ireland (Girvin, 2002). It also signalled a change in the political guard with the baton of Taoiseach [Prime Minister] being passed from Eamonn de Valera, who was seen as representing the inward looking, traditionalist view, to his successor, Sean Lemass, representing the outward looking, progressive view of the country's future. The significance of the period is also characterised by the appointment of a number of younger, ambitious politicians to key government ministries such as Jack Lynch to Industry and Commerce, and Dr Patrick Hillery to Education. Their ambition, policy entrepreneurship, and political skills combined to set the country on a new and ultimately prosperous path. Some initial work was done during the 1950s by government officials in terms of seeking overseas investment. The Industrial Development Authority had been established in 1949, which O'Reilly (1998) suggests was the starting point of this transition from protectionism to free-trade.

The 1950's were a very low point for Ireland. The rate of net emigration from the country reached its highest rate since independence. In a single year, 1957, nearly 60,000 people emigrated (Chambers, 2014). Internationally, countries were beginning to form free-trade alliances which made the export prospects for the Irish economy more difficult under the prevailing policy. Ó Gráda (2011) describes 1956 and the year when an "economic nadir" (p.27) had been reached. Fitzgerald (1957) agrees identifying 1956 as a particularly significant year in terms of the public realisation in Ireland of the extent of the economic difficulties facing the country. However, it was the publication of the 1958 Economic Development paper (Department of Finance, 1958) by the then Secretary of the Department of Finance, T.K. Whitaker, and its support by government, that marked the turning point for Ireland. Rather than seeking to preserve the past, the country was now looking to prepare for the future. This change in public perception was one of key conditions for a change in the approach to economic policy and constituted a normative ideational change. The traditional Irish approach of inward looking protectionism was reversed to one of free trade almost overnight – a landmark policy shift (Jacobsen, 1978).

Attitudinal change in Ireland in the late 1950s and 1960s was also being influenced by Ireland's increasing involvement with international organisations such as the United Nations, the Council of Europe, and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (Coolahan, 1981). The Irish Government was also hopeful of joining the EEC (Government of Ireland, 1963) and made an application in 1961 along with Britain. Foreign investment, in the form of multi-national companies establishing facilities in Ireland, began to increase. This brought increased demand for an educated workforce as well as in-company training. Walsh (2016) argues that, "far-reaching policy changes were driven by changing attitudes among domestic elites, linked to the influence of international ideas mediated through the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)" (pp. 235-236). This view would be in line with Weishaupt (2011) when he identifies the changing beliefs of policy makers

as a cause of institutional change. This period of ideational change would also meet the criteria for a critical juncture (Capoccia and Kelemen, 2007) in the developmental trajectory of the country.

In the context of international developments, including the increasing international popularity of human capital theory, economists were now emphasising education as an economic investment (Coolahan, 1981). However, there was considerable criticism of the state of vocational education, including from the vocational education sector itself. In addition, social attitudes towards practical-type education continued to be disparaging (Coolahan, 1981). Walsh (2011) describes the underdeveloped state of vocational and technical education in Ireland as a "defining feature of the Irish educational system up to the late 1950" (p.366). This underdeveloped state was significant in terms of the vocational education system's capacity to respond to the changing skill formation needs as economic policy changed from protectionism to free-trade. As Clarke (2014) states, "what matters most to macro policy outcomes is local capacity" (p.200). She further observes "by continental standards vocational schools in Ireland were very limited. While they had classrooms, they did not typically have specialised rooms to cater for a variety of skills" (p. 202).

The 1960s witnessed a dramatic increase in the government's involvement in education policy. While opposed by the Catholic Church, this interventionist approach by the government represented a shift in the centre of gravity of education policy and administration back towards the Department of Education. The Minister for Education in 1963, Dr. Hillery, as part of the educational equality agenda, announced a number of new initiatives in post-primary education including comprehensive schools, and the opening up of the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate to both secondary and vocational school students (Hillery, 1963). These initiatives were regarded as a significant demonstration of this new state activism. Logan (1999) argues that through making the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate examinations available in vocational schools this would fully

integrate the vocational schools into the second-level system (p.288). This "reconstituted vocational school" (p.290), as Logan refers to it, would facilitate progression for all second-level students, in either secondary or vocational schools, to higher education. However, this initiative met with some opposition. The trade union for vocational teachers, the Vocational Teachers Association, proposed that, rather than through absorption into the academic curriculum, access to higher education should be provided through a restructured vocational sector with a distinct vocational curriculum (Logan, 1999). With this proposal "the principle of separate and distinct curricular spheres was thereby directly challenged" (Logan, 2000, p. 248).

Logan (1999) argues that availability of the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate exams in vocational schools "paved the way for a high degree of convergence in the second-level curriculum" (p.290). While the rationale for this policy is clear from an equality perspective, the failure to develop the technical senior cycle within the existing vocational schools signalled the beginning of the end of vocational education in post-primary schools. The introduction of vocational subjects to the Leaving Certificate curriculum was in keeping with the Minister's policy of a comprehensive curriculum. However, the consequence of this policy was the effective curricular colonisation of the second-level curriculum by the academic intermediate and leaving certificate syllabus, as vocational subjects were displaced overtime by the stronger academic disciplines. As Logan (2000) concludes, "when technical education was removed to the regional technical colleges [see below] in the late 1960s, the vocational school was left to develop exclusively as a second-level school" (p.258). It is worth noting that, despite its more comprehensive curriculum, the Leaving Certificate continued to be criticised for being overly academic (Culliton, 1992).

The most significant development in terms of educational policy in Ireland was the publication of the report of the OECD funded survey of Irish education *Investment in Education* (OECD, 1966). This report, described by Coolahan (1981) as one of the "foundation documents of modern Irish

education" (p.165), was the first time that the link between education and economic development was officially acknowledged in Irish government policy. O'Connor (2014) states that the "very conceptualisation of expenditure on education as an investment was revolutionary in the 1960s" (p.199). T.K. Whitaker said *Investment in Education* did for education what *Economic Development* did for the economy (Chambers, 2014). While not a specific recommendation in the report, the establishment of free post-primary education from 1967 emerged from this process. However, despite government policy of increasing vocational and technical education and comprehensive post-primary education, when free post-primary education was introduced in 1967, it was the voluntary secondary schools controlled by the Catholic Church that experienced the greatest increase in enrolments (Clarke, 2010). For parents, looking after the best interest of their children, the human capital paradigm, which justified the expansion of post-primary education, was seen as merely an extension of their predominant preference for the 'careerist' interpretation of general education (O'Sullivan, 2005). The social mobility opportunities provided by the Church-run schools were seen as a far more powerful motivator than the supposedly rational human capital theory view being proposed by government. However, Danaher, Frain and Sexton (1985) in their review of Manpower Policy in Ireland, disagree somewhat with this view, in that a significant proportion of the employment opportunities of the time were those best suited to graduates of general rather than technical education:

> "A great deal of the employment creation over the period from 1960 to 1980 was in administrative and clerical employment (much of it in the public sector) and therefore the general thrust of second level education was consistent with meeting this demand" (p.80).

4.3.1 Developing a Manpower Policy

Developments in both the education and training arenas in the first half of the 1960s, including both industrial and sectoral training, were taking place in the context of government efforts to develop an overall manpower policy.

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As O'Reilly (1998) states, "the language of manpower policy was employed throughout the sixties in the discourse on economic development" (p.212). The Taoiseach (Prime Minister), Mr Sean Lemass, commented in 1964 that education was "both a cause of economic growth and a product of such growth" (cited in Walsh, 2009, p.97). While the developments in education and training in Ireland had been on separate trajectories until the late 1950s, though tentatively connected in some areas, the approach to manpower policy taken by the government was to look at the total provision from both the education and training sectors under what today might be referred to as 'skills provision'. In other words, education and training were increasingly referred to as a single entity. However, other than with apprenticeships, there was little recognition in Ireland at this time of the need for training (Garavan et al, 1995). The arrival of multi-national companies, many of which were very proactive in training and development for employees, represented a landmark influence on education and training (Garavan et al, 1995). At this time the approach to training in Ireland, as in Britain at the time, was one of voluntarism. The prevailing view was that training, outside of apprenticeships, was a matter for individual employers.

A number of reports were prepared for the government in 1964 on manpower policy (National Industrial Economic Council, 1964; Department of Social Welfare, 1964; Irish National Productivity Committee, 1964). An Inter-Departmental Committee was established in the Department of Finance to look into the administrative arrangement for implementing manpower policy. Recommendations from the OECD (OECD 1964a), and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) (ILO, 1964), as well as a visit to British Ministry of Labour to study the implementation of their Industrial Training Act of 1964, contributed to the Committee's report which was issued in 1965 (Department of Finance, 1965). This report formed the basis of the country's first White Paper on Manpower Policy (Department of Industry and Commerce, 1965). In line with international developments, the White Paper embraced an active approach to manpower (Weishaupt, 2011) with the main elements of the policy consisting of:

- Manpower forecasting;
- Training for workers as well as the retraining of those who lost their jobs or who are in need of upskilling;
- A redundancy payments scheme;
- An unemployment financial assistance scheme;
- Development of the Employment Service (Department of Industry and Commerce, 1965, p.4).

Overall responsibility for manpower policy was assigned to the Minister for Labour, a cabinet position established in 1966.

4.3.2 *Apprenticeship, Industrial Training and the establishment of AnCO*

The apprenticeship system, established under the 1931 Act, did not undergo further statutory reform until the Apprenticeship Act of 1959. In 1960, under this Act, the National Apprenticeship Board, An Chéard Chomhairle (Irish for 'The Council of Trades'), was established with the power to set the minimum entry age and educational requirements necessary for apprentices. The Board also had the authority to require all employers to send their apprentices on training courses. This new approach to apprenticeship was based on a recommendation of a joint committee of representing employers and trade unions, and thus had the strong support of both groups after it was enacted (Walsh, 2009). However, in contrast to the 1931 Act, which was seen as an imposition by both employers and trade unions, this Act arose out of the cooperation of employers and trade unions. In other words, the coalition necessary to establish a strong institution had been established in this case.

In 1961 the Board laid down the new minimum education qualifications for entry to an apprenticeship in terms of passes in specific subjects in the Day Vocational (or Group) Certificate for vocational schools or the Intermediate Certificate for secondary schools. The Board's initiative was ground breaking in several ways (Walsh, 2009). For the first time, not only had a

minimum education standard for entry to an apprenticeship been specified, but an educational qualification from both strands of post-primary education, vocational and secondary, had been deemed acceptable. Students in vocational schools had a progression pathway from the Group Certificate, thus ending its status as an educational *cul-de-sac*. However, despite the improvements that had taken place, apprenticeships continued to be based on a time-served system inherited from Britain without any requirement to evaluate competence upon completion (McCarthy, 1977; O'Connor, 2006). The reforms focused of the structure and form of the apprenticeship rather than the content of it. J.G. Ryan (2000) describes the new Act as not necessarily a new approach to apprenticeship but "rather it was an attempt to correct the difficulties that had arisen in efforts to apply the 1931 Act" (p.299). However, a review of the apprenticeship scheme in the late 1960s highlighted a number of concerns, including inadequate training for apprentices, both on and off-the-job, poor facilities in many technical schools and workshops, as well as difficulties in collaborating with employers (Ryan, J.G. 2000). The issue of certification at the end of the apprenticeship remained a concern. Further reforms of the apprenticeship scheme took place in the 1970s and 1990s and will be discussed in Chapter Six.

The White Paper on Manpower Policy also led to the Industrial Training Act of 1967, which established a new Industrial Training Agency, An Chomhairle Oiliúna (AnCO). This new agency would take over responsibility for all training for industry including apprenticeship. The establishment of AnCO also signalled the transfer of the manpower function from the VECs, which they had had since 1930, to the new agency. It also sees the consequential transfer of the policy responsibility from the Department of Education to the newly established Department of Labour. The 1967 Act was a significant shift in the government's approach to training – from voluntarism to interventionism. In many ways, this shift mirrored the changes happening within education. The influence of the OECD, in particular, was significant on the changes in policy direction, in

both education and training (OECD, 1964a, 1964b, 1966), from a human capital and manpower perspective.

The mid-1960s also witnessed the development of a new approach to industrial training provision other than apprenticeship. Agnew (1967) points out that while the apprenticeship system would remain the primary method of training skilled workers, the main difficulty with the system is its inflexibility. It takes too long to respond to rapidly changing circumstances, such as a skills shortage in particular trade. A new form of training was proposed involving accelerated vocational training (AVT) methods. This approach was primarily aimed at workers in employment as a means of updating skills. In the sectoral training area, there were developments in particular in agriculture and tourism. The Farm Apprenticeship Board was established in 1963, under the Department of Agriculture, to operate an apprenticeship scheme (Government of Ireland, 1964). In the tourism sector a specialist agency for training and development in tourism, the Council for Education, Recruitment and Training (CERT), was established in 1963 and operated under the aegis of the Department of Industry and Commerce.

4.3.3 Higher Technical Education

1964 saw the publication of an OECD review of technicians' training in Ireland (OECD, 1964b) which highlighted the neglect of higher technical education in Ireland (Walsh, 2011). In 1963 the Minister for Education, Dr Patrick Hillery announced, amongst a number of new initiatives, the establishment of Regional Technical Colleges (RTC) to provide advanced technical education. It was also proposed that these colleges would offer a range of courses including a version of the Leaving Certificate with a bias towards technical and scientific subjects. O'Connor (1986) describes the establishment of the RTCs and "one of the outstanding successes of the period" (p.200). Walsh (2011) says that:

"The foundation of the RTCs…transformed the educational opportunities available to vocational pupils, who had previously been denied any real avenue to higher education, especially in rural areas. The establishment of institutions providing higher technical education in most regions of the country was one of the most significant and lasting educational advances delivered by the Irish state since its foundation" (p.379).

He concludes:

"International pressures dovetailed with changing domestic priorities, and effective political leadership to chart a new direction for higher technical education, which marked a dramatic reversal from the policies of the past" (p.380).

Hillery's successor as Minister, Donogh O'Malley, established a Steering Committee on Technical Education to advise on technical education and, in particular, to provide the Department's building consortium with a detailed brief for the establishment of the Regional Technical Colleges (RTC) (Steering Committee on Technical Education, 1969, p.5). The Steering Committee's report, in addition to ten recommendations relating to the proposed RTCs, contained two recommendations which continue to resonate to the present day. These involved establishing a network of ten Regional Education Councils as well as a National Certification body for technical education. The proposed Regional Education Councils would each be responsible, as much as possible, for all education in their region. The Report recommends that the Minister and the Department should review how education in general is organised and proposes that the new Regional Technical College should be seen as "an integral part of the total educational structure" (p.29). With reference to the administrative areas of the VECs, the Report observes, "we are strongly in favour of having the existing Vocational Education Committees absorbed into a new structure" (p.30). This proposal, which was ignored by the Department (O'Connor, 1986), finds echoes in the proposals of the 1990s regarding regional

structures and is evident in the establishment of the Education and Training Boards (Education and Training Boards Act, 2013) of the present day.

In the area of certification, the Steering Committee Report also recommended the establishment of a National Council for Educational Awards along the lines of the British Council for National Academic Awards. This recommendation was accepted and the National Council for Educational Awards (NCEA) was established shortly thereafter in 1972. Certification in vocational and technical education has been a recurring theme since independence especially in relation to the standard upon completion of an apprenticeship. As discussed in the Chapter Three, the issue of certification of apprenticeships was central to the development of the apprenticeship system in Germany. This theme becomes an increasingly important issue on the education and training policy agenda from the late 1980s until the present.

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter the literature pertaining to the emergence of state involvement in the skill formation in Ireland prior to 1973 was reviewed. This review built upon the literature review in Chapter Three which focused on the international context of skill formation in industrialised countries. The emergence of skill formation in Ireland was presented in three phases. The first phase, from the late nineteenth century until 1931, reviewed the beginnings of the state's involvement in skill formation with the 1899 Agriculture and Technical Instruction Act and following independence in 1922, the establishment of the VEC system in 1930, and the 1931 Apprenticeship Act. The 1930 Act established the framework for the development of vocational and technical education in Ireland until the 1960s. This first period was characterised by a somewhat fragmented approach, and despite an initial rationalisation of policy responsibility for all education in a single Department of Education in 1924, the 1930 and the 1931 Acts resulted in the divergence of responsibility as apprenticeship was assigned to the Department of Industry and Commerce.

The second phase covers the period from 1931 until 1957 which was characterised by economic stagnation and the opposition of the Catholic Church to the VEC system. Three economic recessions, high levels of emigration, and a protectionist approach to economic policy resulted in minimal industrial development. In the absence of a demand for industrial skills, the predominant activity in the vocational schools was continuation education. The collusion of the state with Catholic Church interests to exclude vocational school students from the intermediate and leaving certificate examinations led to continuation education being an educational *cul de sac* with no progression pathway to further education or training.

The third phase covers the period from 1958 until 1973 and marks the birth of modern Ireland. The most fundamental change in this period was the change in government policy from one of protectionism to that of seeking free trade. Coinciding with the emergence of human capital theory and an active approach to manpower policy, this period also witnessed a reversal of the government's hitherto passive approach to policy in both the education and training arenas. The emergence of free post primary education and the establishment of the RTCs would be milestones in this period.

However, the significant opposition of the Catholic Church, with the collusion of the Department of Education, to the VEC system resulted in it not reaching its potential. Consequently, when economic policy changed from protectionism to free-trade, the capacity of the vocational education system was such that it was unable to respond to the new demands being placed upon it. However, in the final period of this overview, the importance of policy entrepreneurs among government ministers and senior department officials is shown as crucial to the successful implementation of all of the new changes which took place.

4.4.1 Emergent Themes

From the review of the literature pertaining to the skill formation, four main interconnected themes can be identified as emerging from the literature.

1. Certification of vocational education and training;
2. Convergence of education and training;
3. Active manpower policy
4. Rationalisation and regionalisation of the administration of vocational education and training.

These four themes will provide the framework for the discussion of the evolution of skill formation in Ireland from 1973 until 2014 in Chapter Six. Firstly, the theme of certification in vocational and technical education, which was identified as a significant issue for skill formation system in Germany, has been a recurring issue in vocational and technical education since the 1930s. This theme will increase in prominence, in relation to the vocational preparation courses in the mid-1980s, and takes on a significant position on the policy agenda from the early 1990s.

The 1990s also sees the re-emergence of the second theme, the convergence of education and training, in which the divide between education and training becomes increasingly blurred. This is particularly the case within the context of the policy discourse from the European Union following the passing of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. The 1993 White Paper on *Growth, Competitiveness and Employment* (European Commission, 1993) places education and training, within in the overall lifelong learning strategy, centre stage in economic competitiveness and employment growth. This convergence culminates in Ireland in the 1999 Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, which defines education and training as a single entity in both the further and higher education space. This Act also signifies a convergence between higher and further education.

The third theme that can be identified as emerging from this period is the active approach to manpower policy. In particular, the dimensions of manpower forecasting, training for those in employment, and, in particular, the increasing use of training as a means of addressing unemployment, have become increasing features of the skill formation policy domain. This is particularly evident following the recession of the 1970s and 1980s when structural unemployment began to increase. This coincided with the change in the British government's approach to economic policy from a Keynesian to a monetarist perspective.

The fourth theme to emerge from this period is the rationalisation and regionalisation of the administration of vocational education and training. While, during this period, regionalisation was confined to the VEC sector, the recommendation from the Steering Committee on Technical Education for Regional Education Councils, which was not implemented at the time, find echoes in the proposals emerging in Ireland in the 1980s and beyond. The developments in 1990s Ireland coincided with the emergence of New Public Management (NPM) approaches to public administration, and the establishment of state agencies.

The next chapter outlines the research design and methodology for this study. The four themes which have emerged from the literature review provide the thematic framework for the analysis of the data sources in the study.

5 METHODOLOGY

5.1 Introduction

This research is a study of the evolution of further education and training in Ireland. It takes the form of a case study in which the developments in FET are critically analysed from a skill formation perspective. The case study structure outlined by Thomas (2011) consists of the following five elements which will provide the scaffold for the discussion in this chapter:

- Identifying the subject, and the object of the case study. The object is the analytical frame through which the subject is viewed;
- Identifying the boundary and the shape of the research. This is critical task given the absence of a definition for FET in Ireland;
- The purpose of the case study;
- The approach, or research methodology, including the particular methods to be employed; and,
- The process for conducting the research including validating the evidence, namely, the triangulation of the results achieved from the methods employed.

As with all research in the social sciences, the maintenance of objectivity and impartiality on the part of the researcher is a key concern. Each person has their own lived experience within which will develop preferences, opinions and, indeed, biases. In the next section I set out my positionality statement in which I describe my lived experience in relation to conducting research within further education and training in Ireland. I will also identify the areas of this field that are not part of my experience. Finally, I will outline the manner in which I will eliminate, or at least minimise to the greatest extent possible, any of my own biases from this piece of research.

5.2 Positionality Statement

I have worked in the Further Education and Training Sector in Ireland for over thirty years in four Colleges of Further Education (CFE) within the City of Dublin ETB (formerly City of Dublin VEC), and have been Principal of a CFE since 2001. I have had the opportunity to serve on three state boards of the Department of Education – the Further Education and Training Awards Council, the National Council for Special Education, and the Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Appeals Panel. I am also involved in representing the interests of CFEs at a national level through the national FET committee of the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals, and in particular, as a member of the QQI National Consultative Forum. Most recently I have been representing the City of Dublin ETB on the Dublin Regional Skills Forum, established by the Department of Education and Skills under the government's Action Plan for Jobs. While this experience has given me a broad view of FET, and the issues involved at both a local and national level, I acknowledge that the bulk of my experience has been in the further education side of FET. This study, therefore, presents me with an opportunity to learn about the other dimensions of the FET provision. In so doing, I seek to appropriately place my study within an overall context of a national policy for skill formation.

Given the breadth of education and training covered by FET, the extent of my experience in one of the areas of FET raises legitimate questions regarding the impact such a bounded experience would have on an analysis of the whole FET sector. However, as mentioned above, I also have a breadth of experience addressing issues in the entire FET sector at a national level. In particular, the six years I spent as a member of the FETAC Council (2007-2012), which was, at the time, the national awarding body for all FET provision in Ireland, required of me an unbiased national perspective. Discussions of issues relating to industrial training, sectoral training, and adult education, as well as issues relating to FET provision in the CFEs were routine at meetings of the Council. More recently, as a member of the QQI Appeals Panel, and the QQI National Consultative

Forum, I have gained considerable experience of dealing with issues relating to provider registration, programme validation and quality assurance evaluations in both FET, and higher education, as well as the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). In total I have been addressing issues relating to FET policy at a national level for the last ten years. Accordingly, this broad exposure to FET at a national level over the last decade serves as a balance to my overall experience.

5.3 Case Study – the Subject and Object

A case study is not a research method but rather a design frame in which to incorporate a number of research methods (Simons, 2009). Simons provides the following definition of a case study:

> "Case study in an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, program or system in a 'real life' context" (p.21).

Schramm (as cited in Yin, 2014) expresses the view that a case study "tries to illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result" (p. 15). Yin (2014) offers a twofold definition of a case study, based on its scope and features (pp. 16-17). In terms of scope, Yin describes a case study as an in depth inquiry of a particular phenomenon or case within a real world context in which the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context may not be clear. With regard to the features of a case study, Yin sees a case study as involving "multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion" (p.17). Thomas (2011) sees a case study as consisting of two elements – a subject and an object:

> "1. A 'practical, historical unity', which I shall call the *subject* of the case study, and
> 2. An analytical or theoretical frame, which I shall call the *object* of the study" (p. 513, emphasis in the original).

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In other words, to be regarded as a case study, the case (subject) must be a 'case' of something (object). In this regard, this research constitutes a case study in that it is a case study of FET policy (case or 'subject') as a 'case' of skill formation policy (analytical frame or 'object').

5.4 Boundary and Shape of the Case Study

One of the most difficult parts of this study will be maintaining a bounded piece of work in the absence of a clear definition of further education and training. The Qualifications (Education and Training) Act of 1999 provided a legal definition of further education and training for the first time. However, this definition defined further education and training in terms of what it was not rather than what it is:

> "Further education and training" means education and training, other than primary or post-primary education or higher education and training…" (Section 2(1)).

This definition is not entirely satisfactory given that a great deal of FET provision is administratively located within the post-primary system, and FET courses, particularly the Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses, are taught, to a large extent, by post-primary teachers registered with the Teaching Council in Ireland. Colleges of Further Education are, in fact, post-primary vocational schools differing from ordinary post-primary schools only in terms of the courses being delivered and the age of the students. The term 'further education and training' continues to be an umbrella term to cover a range of provision (see figure 5.1), funded under different funding schemes and policy initiatives, which operate effectively in isolation from each other all within post-primary schools predominantly within the vocational sector.

Figure 5.1   Main types of FET Provision

Source: SOLAS, 2014, p.51.

FET also includes all industrial training delivered by the former National Training Authority, FÁS, and sectoral training provision by a number of bodies including the National Tourism Development Authority, Fáilte Ireland, the Agriculture and Food Development Authority, Teagasc, the state forestry company, Coillte, and the Irish Sea Fisheries Board, Bord Iascaigh Mhara. Until 2010, industrial training was not seen as part of the education system as it operated under the policy direction of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. Since 2013, following the disbandment of FÁS, the amalgamation of the VECs, and the establishment of the Education and Training Boards (ETBs), further education and training now refers to all such provision within the ETBs. There is a small amount of provision, primarily PLC courses, taking place outside of the ETB sector in Voluntary Secondary Schools and Community/Comprehensive Schools. In total this amounts to approximately 5% of all PLC course provision (www.education.ie).

The most recent legislation in the FET arena which established SOLAS, the Further Education and Training Act, 2013, does not contain a definition for FET. However, while the FET Strategy (SOLAS, 2014), offers a definition,

it was derived during the writing of the strategy statement rather than beforehand. In other words, work commenced on the strategy to develop a sector of education and training that had yet to be satisfactorily defined.

> "FET provides education and training and related supports to assist individuals to gain qualifications at Levels 1-6 on the NFQ or equivalent, to attain and refresh economically-valuable skills to access and sustain all types of employment, tackling skills shortages and boosting the future growth and competitiveness of the Irish economy. It provides a range of skills for labour market returners, for those interested in a new career direction, for those wishing to access 'second chance' education, and to prepare school-leavers and others for higher education. FET also plays an important role in helping people to lead fulfilling lives, supporting some of the hard-to-reach individuals and groups to achieve their potential and reducing the costs to society of exclusion" (p. 51).

This definition is very broad and demonstrates the breadth of activity within the further education and training space. By including all provision from levels one to six on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), this definition included provision not directly interfacing with the labour market, such as, adult literacy and community education. As the study focuses of the development of FET policy within the overall skill formation policy, it will be FET provision that interfaces directly with the labour market that will be of relevance to this study, namely, provision at levels five and six on the NFQ. The skill formation landscape in Ireland consists of an array of organisations, operating under the policy direction of a number of government departments. As will be shown in Chapter Six on-going processes of institutional and organisational convergence have resulted in the boundaries between the various players becoming more blurred.

Over 95% of what currently constitutes FET evolved from provision of the VECs, under the Department of Education, and apprenticeship, AnCO, and FÁS, under the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. Sectoral

training, which constitutes a small element of overall FET activity (approximately 5%) in areas such as tourism, agriculture, fisheries, and forestry, was subject to the policy direction of a number of other government departments. However, sectoral training has also been provided by non-sectoral training organisations within the FET realm such as the VECs and ETBs. For example, hotel, catering and tourism programmes have been a feature of PLC programmes in the VECs since the 1980s, including more recently, as new apprenticeships. Since the establishment of SOLAS in 2013, and the implementation of the new apprenticeships scheme, the boundary between sectoral training provision and the other areas of FET has become increasingly blurred. Therefore, while the boundary of this case study is drawn around FET provision now provided within the ETB sector, key developments in the sectoral training sector, will be highlighted as appropriate.

The literature review in Chapters Three and Four highlighted the broadening of the skill formation space to include connections with the social protection system, labour market policy, and industrial relations policy. Busemeyer (2009) describes this array of interconnected domains as a skill regime. Ireland is no different in this regard. Based on the concept of a skill regime (Busemeyer, 2009), Figure 5.2 presents an illustration of the skill regime in Ireland.

The concept of a skill regime presents a holistic picture of the interconnectedness of the array of policy domains with an involvement in skill formation such as social protection, labour market, and industrial relations. While the discussion in Chapter Six will elaborate on the FET dimension of the skill regime in Ireland, this diagram serves to graphically identify the boundary and shape of this study, namely the shaded areas of further education (from the former VEC sector), and industrial training (from the former FÁS training provision). From an institutional theory perspective, this diagram also serves to identify the breadth of the skill formation institution of the Irish state and its constituent sub-institutions.

The final element of the boundary of the case study is the time period for the study. The FET sector, as it is known today, is an evolution of vocational and technical education in Ireland as discussed in Chapter Four. Indeed, the further education dimension of FET "owes much of its origins to the VEC sector" (Clarke, 2016, p. 315). However, it is Ireland's membership of the EEC in 1973, and the subsequent availability of European Social Fund (ESF) grants which facilitated the development of the modern iteration of FET. Therefore, 1973 will mark the beginning of the time period for this case study.

Figure 5.2   Ireland's Skill Regime
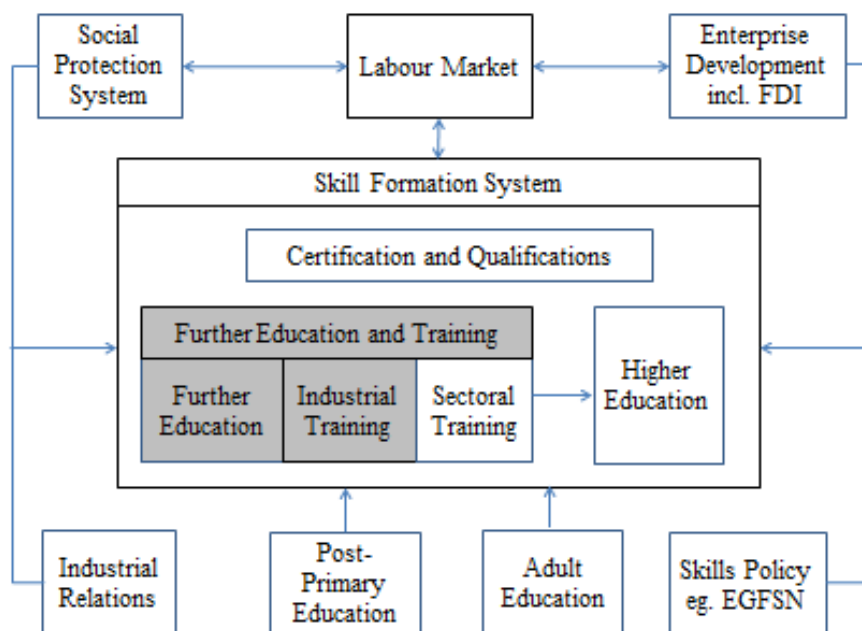
Key: EGFSN: Expert Group on Future Skills Needs

     FDI: Foreign Direct Investment.

Since 2010, there has been considerable institutional and organisational convergence within the FET domain. The catalyst for this change was the onset of the financial crisis and the Great Recession in 2008. As part of public sector reform, the Government decided to transfer responsibility for training to the renamed Department of Education and Skills. This decision laid the foundations for a series of changes that culminated in the

amalgamation of the VECs, the disbandment of FÁS, the establishment of the ETBs, and the establishment, for the first time in the history of the State, of the National Further Education and Training Authority, SOLAS, in 2013. This was followed in May 2014 with the launch of the first ever National FET Strategy (SOLAS, 2014) which aims to set out the direction for the future development of the FET sector in Ireland. The launch of this strategy marks the end of the time period for this study. Therefore, the time period for this case study is from 1973 to 2014.

5.5 Purpose of the Case Study

The purpose of this study is to gain a clear understanding and explanation as to how the FET institution and organisations reached the current point in their development in Ireland, and why this particular institutional and organisational configuration was arrived at. In particular, the study will seek to answer the following research question:

> What were the key drivers, barriers and/or facilitators, both national and international, which influenced the developmental trajectories of further education and training institutions in Ireland from 1973 to 2014?

5.5.1 Drivers, Barriers and/or Facilitators

The public policy process is 'complex, messy and often appears unpredictable' (Cairney, 2012, p.4). There are multiple actors – individuals, such as, civil servants or politicians, or interest groups, such as the trade unions or employer representative bodies. Given the huge range of areas of responsibility for any government, getting an issue on to the agenda in the first place is a major achievement. Therefore, progressing an issue often requires some sort of proactivity on the part of one or more actors. These actors can be within the country or from an international body such as the OECD or the EU. These 'policy entrepreneurs' are often the drivers behind particular initiatives or, indeed, policy trajectories.

The drivers could also be of a less tangible nature but no less influential. For example, the development of microprocessor technology in the late 1970s and early 1980s had a significant impact on advanced economies. This was felt in the labour markets with the decline of older traditional industries and their replacement with newer technology-based industries. The skills base of the work force did not keep pace with the changes leading to significant world-wide structural unemployment. The continued advance of technology has led to terms such as 'knowledge society' and 'knowledge economy' in particular within the EU's Lisbon Strategy in 2000 (European Council, 2000). In this case an economic trend was encapsulated in a formal policy of the European Union.

Barriers, as the name suggests, are obstacles to developments. These could be, as was the case for many years in relation to vocational education in Ireland, a 'legacy of neglect' (Walsh, 2011). This neglect was a consequence of the powerful political opposition to its development by the Catholic Church. Therefore, just as a driver can be a proactive actor, a barrier could be a proactive actor but whose intention is to prevent a development from taking place. Equally, the barrier could be some aspect of the political environment or economic circumstances. Strong conservativism, for example, within the social-political environment can also result in a strong defence of the status quo. This has been very much the case within education policy in Ireland, particularly prior to the 1960s.

Finally, the facilitators can equally be an actor, or the prevailing circumstance. A recent example in Ireland would be the 2011-2013 period when the country was receiving financial assistance from the Troika. As will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six, a number of the interviewees for this study observe how the presence of the Troika facilitated the increasing of the normal pace of change, and the implementation for policy initiatives. The nation's finances were in such a poor state that the normal 'politics of defence' of one's territory by interest groups, some of which are very powerful, could not prevent this

implementation. The presence of the Troika within the public administration in Ireland was a strong facilitating factor. They also proved to be a potent driver behind a number of initiatives within the FET arena, with particular reference to active labour market policies.

This study, in seeking to understand the 'what', the 'how' and the 'why' of the various institutional trajectories, aims to identify the drivers, barriers and/or facilitators, both national and international, and identify any commonalities which may exist in the various developments over time.

5.6 Research Design – the Approach and Methodology

5.6.1 Epistemology and Ontology

This study is based on an epistemology that is primarily interpretivist but with a blend of positivism. The ontology or 'character of the world' (Hall, 2003) for this study is historical-institutionalist. The combination of a primarily interpretivist epistemology with positivism is a result of this study focusing on identifying, understanding, and subsequently explaining, the trajectories of institutional change within the further education and training arena in Ireland. Following Lin (1998) the positivist element will seek to identify the 'causal relationships', i.e. the 'what' questions, while the interpretivist approach will seek to identify the 'causal mechanism', namely, the 'how' and 'why' questions. Consequently, "positivism and interpretivism are complementary rather than competitive" (Weishaupt, 2011, p.28).

5.6.2 Methodology

5.6.2.1   Historical Institutionalism

In aligning the methodology to the ontology this study will follow the methodology of primarily historical institutionalism with the appropriate blend of concepts being borrowed from rational choice, and sociological

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institutionalisms as discussed in Chapter Two. It will follow Hall (2010) when he states:

> "With respect to the issues of institutional change, fruitful synthesis is surely the most promising way forward and, positioned as it is between rationalist and sociological views, historical institutionalism is ideally placed to take those steps forward" (p.220).

For the purpose of this study the focus will be primarily on formal or 'parchment' (Carey, 2000) institutions.

5.6.2.2   Literature Review

The FET Strategy (SOLAS, 2014), launched in May 2014, states that it "presents a roadmap and implementation plan to realise the vision of a world-class integrated system of further education and training in Ireland" (p. 3). The 'world-class' dimension of this vision implies that this study must be placed in an international context. Therefore, a review of the literature pertaining to this international context of developments of VET within skill formation policy is required. This review, which is discussed in Chapter Three, consists of three main sections. The first section consists of a comparative view of political economics in advanced democracies, using the Varieties of Capitalism model. Section two consists of an examination of the variety of skill formation systems which have developed in response to different types of political economy and involves a number of typologies of skill formation systems. While a comparative perspective is informative it is a cross-sectional view and does not contribute to enhancing our understanding of how skill formation systems evolve over time. A longitudinal perspective is taken by presenting an overview of the evolution of skill formation in Germany and Britain. While both were industrialised countries in the nineteenth century, the skill formation system in each country developed differently. The developments in Britain, in particular, were highly influential in the early days of skill formation in Ireland. This

review continues with a discussion the developments within the EU which impacted on skill formation policy generally, and VET, in particular. Given the strong facilitating effect of Ireland's membership of the EEC in 1973, a review of these developments is pertinent to this research. The final section of the review of the international context discusses skill formation in relation to employment, and in particular, the impact of technological change on the demand for skills. A discussion of the related area of labour market activation, with the increasing emphasis on the use of education and training programmes as a response to unemployment, concludes this chapter.

This review of the international context provides the foundation for the review of the development of skill formation in Ireland until 1973, discussed in Chapter Four.

5.6.2.3   Emergent Themes from the Literature

From the literature review of the national and international contexts, four themes emerged based on key interconnected and interdependent institutional and organisational convergence trajectories:

1. Convergence of education and training;
2. Certification of further education and training;
3. Active manpower policy; and,
4. Rationalisation and regionalisation of the administration of further education and training.

These four themes will form the thematic structure within which the analysis of the developments in the 1973 to 2014 period will take place.

5.6.2.4   Data Sources

The development of FET in Ireland is characterised by policy fragmentation and neglect. This fragmentation can be found in the inconsistency of

available data relating to FET. Indeed, the lack of a consistent data structure in FET has been the subject of much criticism in recent publications (McGuinness et al, 2014; SOLAS, 2014). Consequently, there is a dearth of reliable data sources for this study. The official statistical reports of the Department of Education, for example, included enrolments on FET programmes within second-level enrolments in some years but reported on them separately in others. The data was also recorded on the basis of the funding programme and was reported within an academic year. On the other hand, data within the AnCO and FÁS training was reported using an outturns model across the calendar year. Consequently, the enrolment data is not comparable.

However, the collection of policy documents and strategy statements published by the government is available and represents a consistent, reliable, and contemporaneous source of data which would provide data on governments' approach to skill formation in general, and FET in particular, and how it changed over time. A second source of data, to complement the policy documents, is the group of senior officials in government departments and state agencies within the FET and wider skill formation arenas. As discussed in Chapter Two, the establishment and continuity of institutions are based on the collective support of a coalition of key stakeholders. While the documents provide data on the outcome of discussions and negotiations in the policy development process, the senior officials, as policy actors, can provide an insight into the dynamic between the various parties involved in key developments. Therefore, there are two primary data sources for this study – published government policy and strategy documents, and interviews with senior policy actors within the FET and skill formation domains.

5.6.3 Research Methods

5.6.3.1   Qualitative Document Analysis – Using Documents in Research

As with all scientific research it is vital that the quality of the evidence being used is assured. In using documents in social research Scott (1990) states four criteria to be adhered to regarding the quality of the evidence: authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning. Given that the focus of this study is public policy within the FET arena, official policy documents published by the Irish government, and by its departments, are a key source of data for this study. As published official policy documents they are clearly authentic and credible as a source of evidence. With regard to satisfying the representativeness criterion, all published policy documents and legislation published by the Irish government, the Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, the Department of Social Protection and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform that relate to the further education and training field are included in the study. Therefore, the completeness of the list of 32 primary, and 75 secondary source documents (see Appendix 1) meets the standard for representativeness. The final quality criterion for documents as data sources is 'meaning'. Scott describes this as "the extent to which the evidence is clear and comprehensible to the reader" (p.8). As these documents are produced in the English language, and are within the field of expertise of the researcher, the standard for 'meaning' is satisfied.

The study focuses on formal or 'parchment' institutions. Therefore, legislation enacted by parliament constitutes an important documentary source. The list of relevant legislation consists of 86 Acts of parliament, or primary legislation, and 218 Statutory Instruments (SI), or secondary legislation (see Appendix 1). Both primary, and the corresponding secondary legislative instruments, stipulate the actual rules and regulations of the institutions of the state ('rules of the game', North, 1990), as well as

the statutory responsibilities of the organisations that operate within the remit of the institution ('players of the game', North, 1990). They will also provide a reference point for the degree of institutional strength involved.

In many cases, the enactment of legislation represents the completion of a significant stage in a particular policy development process. Indeed, it is but one outcome of policy development processes. Policy documents are another. For the purpose of this study a policy document is regarded as a statement of intent by either a single government department, such as a white paper, or of the whole government, such as the seven Social Partnership Agreements published between 1987 and 2008. Green papers, and other review documents, are categorised as policy advice documents. The NESC strategy documents, published as part of the preparatory phase of each social partnership agreement, would also be examples of policy advice documents.

A third type of policy document, a parametric policy document, has also been identified within this study. These are existing, non-legislative, documents which set the parameters for subsequent policy development. The National FET Strategy, for example, was developed "within the context of Government Reform…and also reflects the priorities articulated in the 'Action Plan for Jobs', 'Pathways to Work' and wider policy reform in education" (SOLAS, 2014, p.3). Consequently, the following are parametric policy documents for the National FET Strategy:

- Public Service Reform (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, 2011)
- Action Plan for Jobs (Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, 2012, 2013, 2014)
- Pathways to Work (Department of Social Protection, 2012, 2013)

The Social Partnership Agreements could also be regarded as being parametric policy documents since they set out, not only an action plan for the period of the agreement, but also the parameters for any policy

initiatives commenced during its time frame. For the period of this study 32 policy documents have been identified of which 24 can be classed as parametric policy documents from this perspective. There are also 75 policy advice documents for the same period and are categorised as secondary source documents (see Appendix 1). The degree of influence of the advice contained in these documents is often dependent on the authority of the authors, as well as the political circumstances at a point in time. During the 2011-2013 period, for example, when Ireland was receiving financial support from the Troika of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), EU Commission and the European Central Bank (ECB), the advice contained in the 20 published documents could be regarded as being of a high degree of influence on policy development and implementation.

Scott (1990) sees official documents as "shaped by the structure and activities of the departments and organisations responsible for them and by the overarching structure of State policy" (p.96). However, Codd (1988) states that the production of the text of a policy document is a compromise between competing interests. Ball (1993) describes texts as "typically cannibalised products of multiple…influences and agendas" (p.45). Gale (1999) states that "policy texts are the central points of interaction between the politics of policy production and the politics of policy implementation" (p.394). The language used in policy documents can often be very different to the language people would use in normal daily life. To understand the relationship between the contents of these documents and this life often requires other sources of data. As Prior (2011) states:

> "To understand how the words in the documents connect to the world beyond the text – to actions of the politicians and policy makers who produced the document as well as to the audience for whom the documents were intended – we would need to use other sources of data (such as interview data) and other sources of text (such as political speeches)" (p.98)

Consequently, the following documents will be included as appropriate

- ministerial speeches

- records of parliamentary debates

- ministerial answers to parliamentary questions

- ministerial and departmental press releases

5.6.3.2   Interviews with Senior Policy Actors

In Chapter Two, in setting out the theoretical framework of historical institutionalism for this study, an institution was defined as a set of rules which impacted on the behaviour of people or organisations. Thelen (1999, 2004) emphasises the coalitional approach to institutional genesis and change, in which an institution is developed through the collective action of a number of actors to reach an agreement on the 'rules'. In other words, an institution is established, and/or changed by people reaching an agreement, albeit a compromise among competing political forces. Consequently, the institution and the actors are inseparable, and a discussion of institutional change must consider both. Conran and Thelen (2016) argue that the actor or agent must be placed with the context of an explanation for the institutional change:

> "… [that would] situate agents within a context that shapes the plausible strategies available to them – but which may also be able to change. Institutions constrain action but do not eliminate agency – indeed they enable it. In political life, unstructured agency is as unthinkable as are structures with no agents" (pp. 65-66)

The second data source for the research involves a series of 13 semi-structured interviews with currently serving or recently retired senior officials of the Department of Education and Skills (DES), the Department of Jobs Enterprise and Innovation (DJEI), the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER), and a number of executive of agencies operating within the further education and training sector. Yin (2014) regards interviews as "one of the most important sources of case study evidence" (p.111).

Table 5.1   Experience of Interviewees

Note: The number of ticks in the table refers to the number of different agencies in which a person worked.

Interviewee Number	Dept. of Education and Skills		Dept. of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation		Other Dept.	Other Executive Agency	Sectoral Training Agency
	Dept.	Agency	Dept.	Agency			
1	√				√		
2		√√					√
3	√				√		
4		√		√√			
5	√	√					
6		√		√			√
7	√		√				
8	√						
9		√√		√			
10						√	
11		√√√					
12			√			√	
13					√		

The selection of the interviewees was based on the key roles they have played, and in many cases, continue to play in the development of the FET sector in Ireland. They include people who were the principal authors of key pieces of legislation, members of committees that produced many key policy documents, which are included in the list of primary source documents, and were central to the decisions which altered the trajectory of further education and training at crucial times during the last four decades. All 13 of the interviewees have had different roles in various aspects of what now constitutes a coherent policy domain throughout their careers (see Table 5.1). In the course of their work, many of the interviewees have worked together on various projects over the period, and many still do. Collectively, these are thirteen of the key policy entrepreneurs in FET

policy in Ireland. For the purposes of anonymity they will be referred to as Interviewees 1 to 13, in particular, INT1 to INT13.

5.6.3.3   Purpose of FET

In the absence of a clear definition of further education and training (FET) in Ireland, and given the focus of this study is focused on the evolution of FET in Ireland, an examination of the purpose of FET as it has evolved over time is pertinent. This will provide a firm foundation for the analysis of the data based on the four themes identified at the end of Chapter Four. Therefore, for both data sources, an analysis of the purpose of FET, and how it changed over time, will take place prior to the analysis based on the four themes. This will provide an important contextual foundation for the subsequent analysis. Taking a historical institutionalist perspective, this will be examined within the prevailing contemporary circumstances in the political, social, economic and ideational spheres. In addition to the parliamentary situation, the political sphere will consist of the competing interests groups at a point in time and their associated degree of influence given that all public policy is a compromise between the various competing interests. Within the socio-economic sphere, cognisance will be taken of the key social and economic pressures at a point in time. The official statistical reports from the Central Statistics Office and the Department of Education and Skills will be important sources of contemporaneous data over the course of the study.

5.7 Process - the Procedure, the Instrument and the Evidence

The two primary sources of data for this case study, namely the published government policy documents, and the interviews of senior policy actors, were identified earlier. This section describes the research methods to be employed with these data sources, namely, qualitative document analysis, and the analysis of the transcripts of the interviews with the senior policy actors.

5.7.1 Qualitative Document Analysis

The first research method for this case study will consist of a qualitative document analysis comprising of a thematic analysis of the primary source documents listed in Appendix 1. Boyatzis (1998) describes thematic analysis as

> "… a translator of those speaking the language of qualitative analysis and those speaking the language of quantitative methods; it also enables those who use different qualitative methods to communicate with each other" (p. vii).

He discusses the process by which themes are identified and the associated codes are generated. He identifies three approaches to the systematic development of themes and codes. Firstly, they can be theory driven in which the "…elements of the code are derived from the hypothesis or elements of the theory" (p.33). The second approach is the inductive method in which the themes and codes are generated from the raw data. The third approach to developing themes and codes is prior data or prior research driven. In this approach, it is the review of the literature which provides insights into the development of the themes. As Boyatzis (1998) states:

> "The approach to developing a code on the basis of prior research places the researcher approximately in the middle of the continuum" (p.30).

It is this third approach, of developing themes and codes from prior research, which is used in this study. At the conclusion of Chapter Four, four emergent themes were identified. While it is legitimate to question why these four, it is important to bear in mind that the ultimate purpose of this study is to seek an explanation for an institutional and organisational configuration that has already occurred. In other words, the end point of the narrative of the study is predetermined. Therefore, given the known end

point of the study and the key elements of the configuration for which an explanation is being sought, the process of identifying the key themes has been greatly refined. The final configuration of the FET institution and corresponding organisations in 2014 involved the transfer of departmental responsibility for education and training to one department, namely, the Department of Education and Skills. The changes coincided with the themes emerging from the examination of the national and international context in the literature review.

Having identified the four themes the generation of the corresponding codes is based primarily on the identification of key words, thereby taking a summative approach to the content analysis of the primary source documents. As mentioned earlier, in the absence of a clear definition of FET in Ireland, placing FET within these four themes is problematic. In addition, the terms used to describe the types of education and training provision which are currently understood to constitute FET have changed since 1973. As will be shown in Chapter Six, the education and training profile of Ireland has changed significantly over time. Changes in the higher education landscape have had an impact on FET provision in Ireland. The range of provision originally envisaged for the Regional Technical Colleges (RTCs), for example, has changed from one of focussing primarily on sub-degree provision, with the provision of degrees being the exception, to the present day, in the renamed Institutes of Technology, when undergraduate and post-graduate provision and research to doctoral level is the norm. To this end, it is necessary to identify a set of key words relating to FET provision such VEC, FÁS, education, training, social inclusion, and reform. Through an inductive and iterative process the list of terms has been refined.

Just as the skill formation landscape at further and higher education has changed over time so too has the public administration dimension of this public policy arena. In some cases there has been a convergence and, indeed, overlapping of terminology. The term 'quality', for example, is found both in references to the provision of education and training

programmes, and in relation to the quality of the public administration of the system. References to 'performance' can refer to both student performance and system performance. Therefore, the identification of key words as part of a suite of thematic codes will result in the legitimate placement of the same or similar key words within different themes. Consequently, this will have issues for the conducting of the data collection. A simple key word search will be insufficient. It will require an evaluation of the meaning of the key word with the context of section of text concerned, for example, a paragraph or chapter section. Therefore, the content analysis element of the procedure will be conducted at the semantic level (Titscher, Meyer, Wodak & Vetter, 2000).

The coding manual containing the complete set of themes, coding categories, and key words to be used in the semantic content analysis procedure is shown in Appendix 2. Before implementing the procedure, the final element of the preparation is to devise a data capture instrument. As this is a semantic content analysis, each data capture event will involve taking a copy of the section of text concerned followed by the application of the appropriate codes. By way of illustration the completed data capture sheet used for the analysis of the FET Strategy (SOLAS, 2014) can be seen in Appendix 3.

5.7.2 Interviews with Senior Policy Actors

The second research method to be employed in this case study is the analysis of the interviews of senior policy actors which took place between October and December 2015. Due to the seniority and particular expertise of the interviewees a bespoke set of questions was prepared for each based on the purpose of FET, and the four themes that emerged from the literature. Each interviewee was advised that the questions were to provide a structure and guide to the interview but that they were not bound to adhere to them. In the end virtually all interviewees followed the questions provided. On a number of occasions additional areas were explored which were relevant to the study.

The bespoke list of questions was sent to each interviewee in advance of the interview. All consented to the interview being recorded and were offered the opportunity to check the transcript with eight of the thirteen accepting. One interviewee returned amendments to the interview transcript. All interviewees also agreed to answer any follow up questions which might arise. Follow up questions were asked of four of the interviewees. The interviews generated a total of almost 17 hours of recordings.

A framework based on the purpose of FET and the four themes, will be used to analysis the interview transcripts. As referred to above, these interviews provide a perspective of the policy development process as it relates to the dynamic between the various actors involved. Within the international policy context in any domain, the development of policy primarily engages three main groups of actors namely government, agencies and interest groups, often referred to as the "iron triangle of government" (Adshead, 2003, p.109). Within this 'triangle' the nature of the relationships between the actors has an impact on the policy development process. These relationships take place at three different levels within the 'triangle' corresponding to the three groups making up the 'triangle':

1. Government Level – within and between government departments. This would also include relationships with international bodies, such as, the OECD, the EU, and more recently, the Troika;
2. Agency Level – between government departments and their agencies, and between agencies; and
3. Interest Group Level – between interest groups, such as employers and trade unions, and government departments and their agencies.

The thematic approach to the analysis of the interviews will be filtered through the 'iron triangle' of relationships in the policy development process. The results of this analysis, as well as the analysis of the policy documents referred to in the previous section, are presented in Chapter Six.

5.8 Validation of Results - Triangulation

Validating the evidence obtained from data sources in any social science research is a normal part of good practice. Each of the methods used in research has strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, no one method can tell the whole story. Denzin (1988) states:

> "The social world is socially constructed, and its meanings...are constantly changing…As a consequence, no single research method will ever capture all of the changing features of the social world under study" (p. 512).

Cresswell and Miller (2000) concur with this view and argue that qualitative researchers may use "a second lens" as part of their validation procedures to establish the credibility of the study (p. 125). Altheide and Johnson (2011) highlight the importance of transparency in the research process:

> "Any audience member will discern his or her own criteria for being 'convinced' or 'sceptical' of the connection between what is being reported and its avowed source. But the main concern is that the connection be apparent, and to the extent possible, transparent" (p. 590).

In relation to a case study, Yin (2014) sees a case study as involving "multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion" (p.17). Mathison (1988) sees triangulation as "enhancing the validity of research findings" (p.13). Cresswell and Miller (2000) elaborate in describing triangulation as:

> "…a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study" (p.126).

Jick (1979) observes that the term 'triangulation' derived for its use in military navigation where sailors would use multiple reference points to determine a ships location. Denzin (1978) identifies four types of triangulation:

1. Data triangulation – this refers to using data from multiple sources;
2. Investigator triangulation – this involves more than one researcher in the research process;
3. Theory triangulation – this involves more than one theoretical perspective in interpreting the phenomenon; and
4. Methodological triangulation – this involves using more than one research method.

Denzin proposes that "multiple triangulation" (p. 512) would exist if a research study was to use a combination of more than one of these types of triangulation. Jick (1979) argues that a combining multiple data sources and methods further increases the validity of the research. Indeed, he further suggests that not only does the use of multiple triangulation increase validity, it enhances the understanding of the phenomenon:

> "…triangulation may be used not only to examine the same phenomenon from multiple perspectives but also to enrich our understanding by allowing for new or deeper dimensions to emerge" (pp. 603-604).

Flick (2004), Seale (1999) and Stake (1995) agree with Jick in this augmented view of triangulation. In this case study, the validation process involves multiple triangulation in that it combines data triangulation (two data sources - documents and senior policy actors), and methodological triangulation (two research methods - qualitative document analysis and interviews). In addition, the triangulation process has an additional layer of both validation and greater understanding in that the senior policy actors that are interviewed as part of this study were closely involved in the authorship of many of the policy documents listed as primary source

documents. This provides an additional dimension of validation between the two sets of results.

As discussed above, the analysis of each of the two data sources takes a thematic approach and is based on the purpose of FET and the four themes identified from the literature. Each theme is addressed individually and chronologically over the time period of the study. In the triangulation process, the results from the analysis of the two data sources under each theme are merged under the same chronological approach. In so doing, linkages can be made between developments within each theme during the same time period. This process will greatly assist the development of a fuller understanding of the processes involved in the evolution of FET policy over the period.

The triangulation process is followed by a presentation of the findings from the case study and the identification of the emergent themes to be discussed in Chapter Seven.

5.9 Conclusion

This chapter presented the research design and methodology for this dissertation which is a case study of the evolution of FET policy in Ireland from a skill formation perspective. The discussion began with identifying the boundary and the shape of this study. While the time period of 1973 until 2014 was relatively easy to identify, the absence of a definition for FET provision in Ireland, as well as the blurring of the delineation between the different elements of FET provision, made the drawing of a precise boundary somewhat problematic. However, using the concept of a skill regime, the boundary was identified as including all FET provision which historically emanated from the development trajectories under the Department of Education, and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. Therefore, this includes all provision currently provided by the ETBs which accounts for some 95% of total FET provision. References

to relevant developments in the sectoral training arena will also be included as appropriate.

The next section of the chapter described the purpose of the case study and went on to discuss the research design and methodology. The four themes that emerged from the literature review of the national and international contexts provide the scaffolding for the thematic analysis strategy of this research. Given the fragmented nature of the development of FET, there is a dearth of data sources for any research project in this policy domain. However, two sources were identified as appropriate for this case study – published government policy documents and the interviews with senior policy actors in the FET domain. As part of this study, an analysis of how the purpose of FET has changed over time provides a valuable perspective on the context within which the analysis of the four themes within the FET space can take place. The discussion moved on to the research methods to be used in this study, namely qualitative document analysis and semi-structured interviews of the senior policy actors. This was followed by the validation process for this study, i.e. multiple triangulation.

The next chapter presents the results of this study. It will begin with an overview of the economic and social, as well as the educational context of the time period of the case study. The results from the analysis of each data source are presented, followed by the outcome of the validation process of triangulation. The chapter will conclude with a presentation of the findings from the research and the emergent themes which will then be discussed in Chapter Seven.

6   SKILL FORMATION IN IRELAND 1973 – 2014

- **The Emergence of Further Education and Training**
- **The Results, the Findings, and the Emergent Themes**

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will examine the evolution of FET from 1973, when Ireland joined the EEC, until 2014 when the first ever National FET Strategy was launched. The chapter is presented in four main parts. The first part provides an overview of the economic and labour market situation in Ireland from 1973 until 2014. Part Two provides an overview of the broader educational developments of this period. This initial discussion will set the context for the presentation of the results from this research. The third part of the chapter presents the results from both the semantic content analysis of the primary source documents and the interviews with the 13 key policy actors and will conclude with a triangulation of these results. The final part of the chapter presents the findings of this case study and concludes with identifying three themes that emerge from these findings. These themes will be the focus of critical analysis in Chapter Seven.

Since the end of the Second World War, Ireland has not only changed from an agrarian to industrial economy, but also from a predominantly rural country to become more urbanised (Punch & Finneran, 2000). The shift from protectionism to free-trade, which commenced in the late 1950's, began a process of economic development which led to membership of the EEC in 1973. The 1960's also witnessed a more interventionist approach on the part of the government compared to its previous voluntarist stance, particularly in the fields of education and training policy. Chapter Four examined developments until the early 1970s with four key themes emerging from this discussion:

1. Certification of further education and training
2. Convergence of education and training
3. Active labour market policy
4. Rationalisation and regionalisation of the administration of further education and training.

These four themes will provide the framework for the discussion in this chapter. As discussed in Chapter Five, an analysis of the purpose of FET, and how it has changed over time will lay a foundation for the analysis of these four themes. Over the course of this chapter the trajectories of institutional convergence will be identified, and in particular, the drivers, barriers and facilitators along these trajectories. The discussion begins with an overview of the economic, social, and educational context for the period of this case study.

6.2 Part 1 - The Economic and Social Context

One area which contributed considerably to changes in both the profile of economic activity and the labour market in Ireland was foreign direct investment (FDI). Barry (2007), who describes Ireland as the "most FDI-intensive economy in Europe" (p. 262) identifies four phases of FDI in Ireland. The first phase was covered in Chapter Four and is from the late 1950s to Ireland's membership of the EEC in 1973. The second phase begins in 1973 and features a "shift into higher-technology sectors" (p. 263). This phase continues until the late 1980's with the pending Single European Market. The third phase Barry identifies is through the 1990's and the "global high-tech boom" (p. 264) of this period. The fourth phase, beginning in the 2000s, he identifies as being "characterised by the substantial offshoring of R&D [Research and Development] functions by multinational corporations" (p.264). These last two phases can be seen as coinciding with the emergence of the knowledge economy. Barry observes that, over this period, the post-secondary education and training system has been "driven by the country's FDI focussed strategy" (p. 283).

As the pattern of economic activity changed so too did the pattern of employment in the Irish labour market. As Figure 6.1 illustrates, employment in agriculture fell from 26% in 1971 to less than 6% in 2014. The percentage employed in industry fell from 31% in 1971 to 18% in 2014. Conversely, employment in the services sector rose from 43% to 76% over the same period.

Figure 6.1   Percentage Employment by Broad Industry Sector 1971-2014

Source: NESC (1978) Comments on Development for Full Employment

NESC (1987) A Strategy for Development 1986-1990

CSO Labour Force Survey

CSO Quarterly National Household Survey
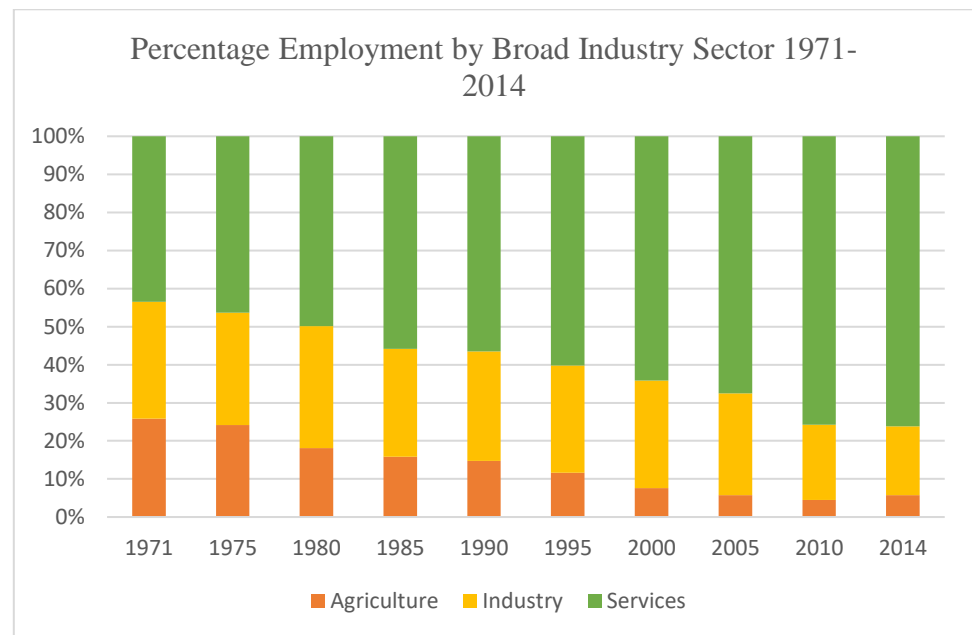
This period also coincided with the removal of the marriage ban from women in the public service and participation by women in the labour force increased (Treacy & O'Connell, 2000). Women represented 26% of those employment in 1971 and 47% by 2011.

1973 saw Ireland join the European Economic Community (EEC) along with Britain and Denmark to bring the number of EEC Member States to nine. Bielenberg and Ryan (2013) describe Ireland's entry into the EEC as "one of the most decisive breaks in Irish economic history" (p.26). O'Hagan, Murphy and Redmond (2000) describe Ireland's membership of the EEC as the "single most dominant influence" (p.85) on the economic development of the country since the end of the Second World War. In 1979 European Monetary System (EMS) was established. Ireland's decision to join the EMS, while the United Kingdom did not, resulted in the decoupling of the Irish pound from Sterling bringing an end to a monetary union which had been in place since 1826.

This period also witnessed significant industrial unrest, high unemployment and high inflation not to mention the significant economic recessions following the oil crises of 1973 and 1979. The persistent levels of unemployment during this period were regarded by the Irish government as the "most urgent Irish economic problem" (Government of Ireland, 1976, p.8), with the unemployment level reaching 17.1% by 1986, its highest level in since independence (Ó Gráda, 2011). The government approach to dealing with unemployment during this period was to aim for full employment. It also maintained a reliance on public sector employment to address persistent unemployment (Government of Ireland, 1976). The traditional Irish 'safety valve' for high unemployment, namely emigration, increased significantly.

6.2.1.1   The Beginning of Social Partnership

From an ideological perspective, the period is predominantly Keynesian until the mid-1980s when neo-liberalism, in the form of a monetarism approach to economic policy, begins to emerge. Added to the economic difficulties, and in keeping with the Keynesian approach, the deficit spending approach of the six successive governments during this period

resulted in an enormous national debt by the 1980s. The fiscal crisis of the mid-1980s created the context for discussions between the trade unions and the employers within the tripartite forum of the National Economic and Social Council (NESC). Established in 1973 as a successor to the National Industrial and Economic Council (NIEC), the NESC consisted of nominees from the employers, trade unions, and civil society, with the state represented by senior civil servants. It was within this forum that the consensus was reached upon which the first social partnership agreement was based. Crucially the employers and trade unions developed a shared understanding of the difficulties involved and of the solution needed (Hardiman, 2002). Culpepper (2008) refers to this as the process of common knowledge creation.

The support of either the employers or the trade unions was far from certain. Both parties had negative experiences of national wage agreements since the 1970s and had no desire to return to that approach of addressing issues. However, the experience for the trade unions in Ireland in the 1980s had to be placed within the context of the experience of the trade union movement in the near neighbour, Britain, which conditioned their thinking at the time (Hardiman, 2002).

> "The trade unions … were also acutely aware of their own vulnerability at this time, given the battering which the unions in Britain had been taking since the election of the Thatcher Government in 1979" (Hastings, Sheehan, and Yeates, 2007, p.35).

The timing of the first social partnership agreement *Programme for National Recovery* (Government of Ireland, 1987) proved fortunate as the international economy began to experience an upturn and inflation began to fall. The social partnership process was extended over time into an increasing number of public policy areas. For example, Paul Ryan (2000) and Vossiek (2015) observe that the institutions of social partnership facilitated the reform of the apprenticeship system in the early 1990s.

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6.2.2 1987 to 2008 - Social Partnership to the Celtic Tiger

The government strategy of aiming for full employment, which characterised the 1970s and 1980s, begins to change during the social partnership period to one of employability. In other words, responsibility for employment shifts from the government to the individual. Emerging out of significant economic difficulties and unsustainable government debt, the social partnership approach, which had many of the characteristics of the European social partnership model, involving the government, employers and trade unions, formed the basis for recovery and ultimately economic and social growth. Unemployment dropped, net immigration occurred, and Ireland's economy began to move in the direction of innovative industries of the knowledge economy, the so-called Celtic Tiger of the mid-1990s and early 2000's.

6.2.3 2008 to 2014 – The Great Recession, the Troika and SOLAS

Having experienced the boom of the Celtic Tiger, Ireland felt the impact of the global financial crisis which resulted in what commentators have called the 'Great Recession' (Barrett & McGuinness, 2012). As a result, in late 2010, the Irish government had to seek financial support from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Commission, and the European Central Bank (ECB) – a triumvirate of organisations that became known as 'The Troika'. The outcome was a three-year financial support programme lasted from 2011 until 2013 – the 'Troika Years'. While these years witnessed many difficulties across many areas of the Irish economy and society, these three years also saw a significant increase in the both the pace and volume of change within the public service, and within further education and training in particular. In October 2013, the final months of the Troika Years, the first ever national further education and training authority in Ireland, SOLAS, was established. This was followed in May 2014 with the launch of the first ever national strategy for further education and training (SOLAS, 2014). The publication of this strategy marks the concluding boundary for this study.

In the next section the focus turns to presenting an overview of the education and training profile of the period. It will highlight the increasing numbers staying in post-primary school until the end of senior cycle, the corresponding increase in third level participation, and developments in the FET space.

6.3 Part 2 - Education and Training

6.3.1 Post-Primary Education

Following the introduction of free second-level education in 1967 and the raising of the school leaving age to 15 in 1972, second-level enrolments continued to rise (Redmond & Heanue, 2000) placing an increasing burden on the national exchequer to fund this increase in school accommodation and teacher numbers. There was also a consequential increase in demand for places at third level.

Figure 6.2   Post-Primary Enrolments 1973-2014

Source: Department of Education Annual Statistical Reports
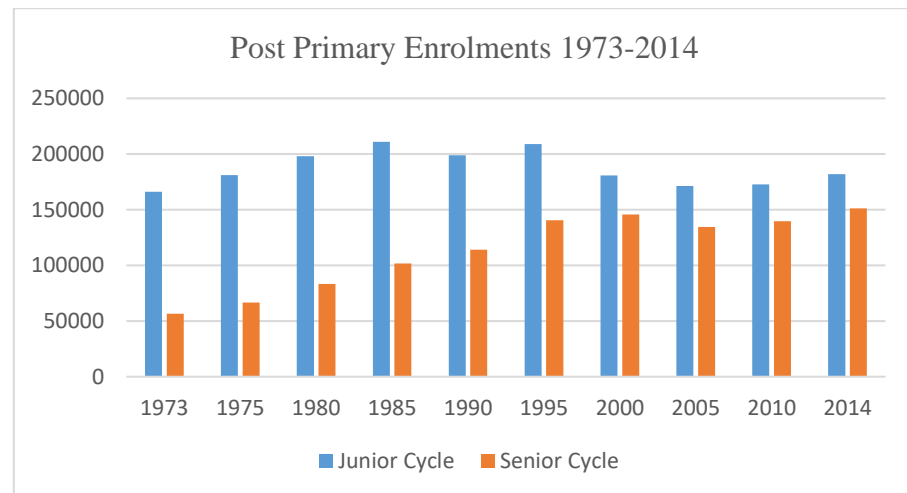

Figure 6.2 shows how total post-primary enrolments in general education, both junior and senior cycle increased from just over 222,000 in 1973 to over 333,000 in 2014, representing an almost 50% increase in post primary enrolments over the period. This Figure also illustrates how senior cycle

enrolments have increased over this time, from over 56,500 in 1973 to almost 151,200 in 2014, an increase of over 167%.

6.3.2 Post-Secondary Education and Training

One of the consequences of the enrolment patterns in post-primary education, over and above an increased level of general education among young people, is an increase in post-compulsory and post-secondary enrolments. However, the changing enrolment patterns were not uniform across the various types of schools. During the period from the mid-1960s to the late 1980s and early 1990's enrolments were reported by the Department of Education across a range of post-compulsory programmes as part of the overall second-level provision. From 1973 enrolments in senior cycle technical and senior cycle secretarial programmes were reported for vocational schools, Regional Technical Colleges (RTC), and Technical Colleges. In 1978, under both of these programme types, enrolments are recorded in the other two post-primary sectors, i.e. secondary, and community and comprehensive (C&C) schools. In 1978 a new programme, funded by through the European Social Fund (ESF), known as the Pre-Employment Course (PEC) was introduced. PEC enrolments were recorded in vocational and C&C schools only. In its *Information Note* on the PEC (Department of Education, 1978), the Department of Education described these courses as coming within the definition of 'continuation courses' as defined in section 3 of the Vocational Education Act of 1930. There were now three programme types within the senior cycle being provided to varying degrees across the post-primary schools, RTCs and Technical Colleges.

PECs emerged out of a policy initiative at European level in response to the significant levels of youth unemployment, not only in Ireland, but across the EEC (European Commission, 1977; European Council 1976a, 1976b). In vocational schools, the 1970s and 1980s were the decades of curriculum development with European funding directed towards developing programmes to assist students with the school-to-work transition. This

curriculum development did not impact the secondary schools sector to any great degree. According to Crooks and McKernan (1984) the senior cycle in secondary schools was about progression to third-level education. While this sector might engage in syllabus change, curriculum development was for others. As O'Sullivan (2005) observes:

> "It was lower-stream pupils, typically outside of the secondary school sector, who were first perceived to be in need of intervention in their transition from school to working life. Substantially, they appear to have been the 1970s manifestation of the 1960s' primary school terminal leavers, repositioned within the educational system by policy changes…" (p. 277).

Crucially, O'Sullivan goes on to observe:

> "It was around these 'distant others' that employability was initially constructed as a paradigm. The problematising of these newly-identified 'distant others' in terms of their integration into the non-school world of labour market and adult relationships, as distinct from their potential for class and school disruptiveness, was a significant step in the construction of employability paradigm." (p. 277).

He identifies the discourse relating to the European Social Fund, which provided significant funding for these curriculum development experiments, as being influential in the identification of specific groups of school leavers as being vulnerable. He observes:

> "The European Community involvement was never that of a neutral provider of financial support. It was rather a dynamic force in the shaping of Irish understandings on the link between young people, schooling and the world of work" (p.278).

The late 1970s and 1980s, in particular, witnessed a number of major 'transition' projects where curricular experimentation was taking place. What were previously described as 'continuation' courses were now, within the broader European context, re-labelled as 'transition' courses, i.e. school-to-work transition. Following a review of these transition projects (Department of Education, 1984a), and in response to evolving policy developments in relation to the issue of youth unemployment at EEC level, in particular reform of the eligibility criteria for European Social Fund (ESF) support, the Department of Education sought to extend the availability of these programmes to all post-primary schools. The PEC had proven popular with the vocational and C&C schools with over 45% of eligible schools offering such programmes. Given this level of support for PECs, as well as the "relative haste with which the new programme was drawn up" (McNamara, 1991, p.349), the PEC evolved into the Vocational Preparation and Training (VPT) programme in 1984, with little modification (Department of Education, 1984b) and was extended to secondary schools.

In the mid-1980s, a process of rationalisation occurred in which the three types of transition programmes were amalgamated. By 1989, enrolments in secretarial courses were included in the VPT data, and by 1991, senior cycle technical courses had ceased in all post-primary schools. Enrolments in all such programmes were now regarded as VPT. Interestingly, enrolments classed as senior cycle technical courses continued to be recorded for RTCs and Technical Colleges in the Annual Statistical Reports of the Department of Education until 2007. By the late 1980s and early 1990s , in combination with the continuing increase in students remaining in school to complete the Leaving Certificate, VPT courses were no longer only post-junior cycle, but also post-senior cycle, and have been popularly known ever since as the Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses. In 1991 the OECD identified the PLC course as the principal transition course in Irish education (OECD, 1991).

Figure 6.3 shows the enrolments for the combined secretarial courses, PEC, VPT and subsequently the PLC courses. The data shows that the PLC programme is a substantial element of the post-secondary education and training provision in Ireland with enrolments reaching a peak of 38,680 in 2011.

Figure 6.3   Enrolments on Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses 1973-2014

Source: Department of Education Annual Statistical Reports

Note: While a single total was available in the Statistical Reports from 1990, for the purpose of presentation the 1973-1989 figures for the various programmes will be combined.
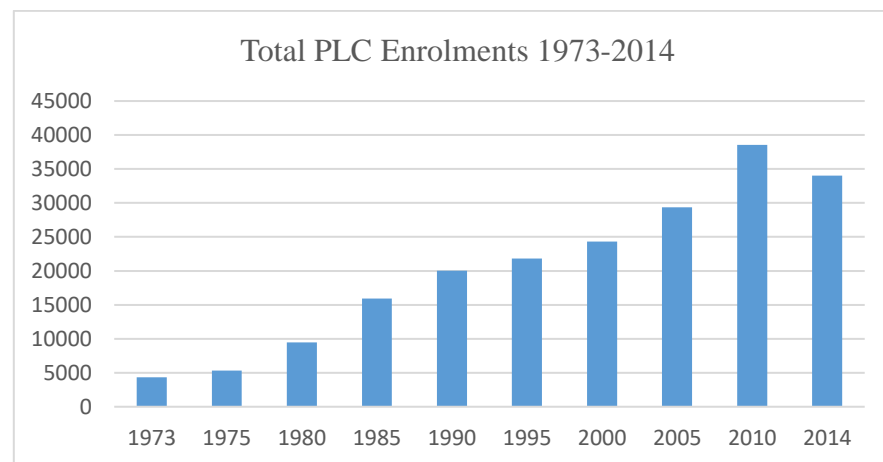

Total PLC Enrolments 1973-2014

Figure 6.4 shows the level of industrial training activity. As with the level of enrolments on PLC courses, this chart illustrates an increasing amount of training activity over the time period. While it would be interesting to combine the historical levels of activity to assess the overall level of provision and participation across both the education and training arenas, the methods of recording data in both fields are such as to militate against such a task. In the education domain enrolment data, as published in the Department of Education Annual Statistical Reports, is based on an academic year model and records full-time provision based on a census date of September 30th. On the other hand, in the Annual Report of AnCo, FÁS and now SOLAS, training activity is reported on a calendar year basis using an 'outturn' approach. This approach records the number of persons

already on courses on the 1st of January of a given calendar year, as well as the number of persons who commenced a new course during the calendar year. Therefore, while the data available may allow for a comparison of changes in broad patterns in the overall levels of activity, no equivalence is possible. Clearly, this is an area for further consideration by the Department of Education and Skills and SOLAS, but is outside the parameters of this study.

Figure 6.4   AnCO and FÁS Training Programmes 1980-2013.
Source: AnCO Annual Reports and FÁS Annual Reports
Note: There was no comparable data available in prior to 1980 in the AnCo Annual reports. The final FÁS Annual Report was published in 2013 prior to it being disbanded in 2014.
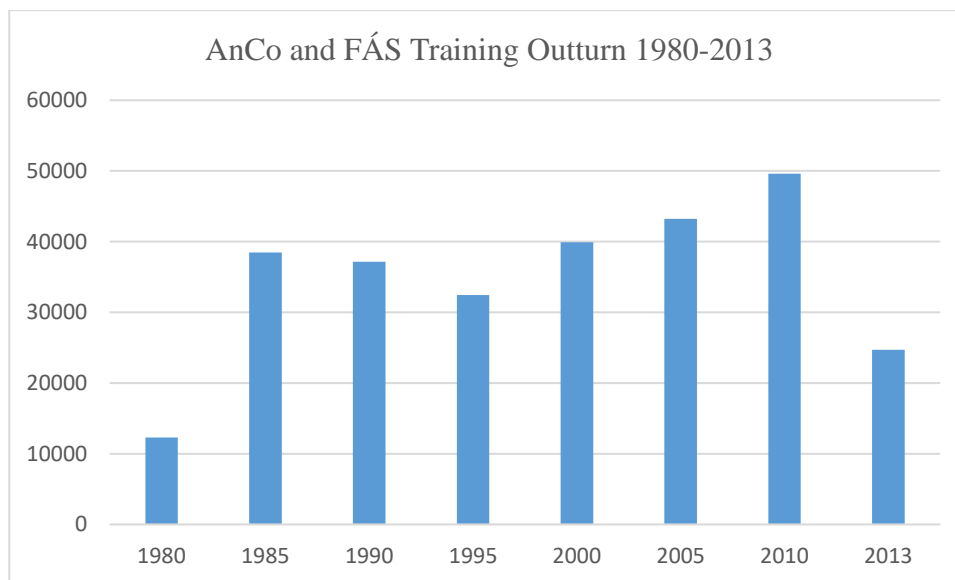
6.3.3 Apprenticeship

The 1970s and early 1980s witnessed the emergence of an increasingly negative public perception of the apprenticeship. Despite the introduction of off-the-job training for the first year of the apprenticeship in 1975 (AnCO, 1975), it was seen as out of date and inflexible (Field and Ó Dubhchair, 2001). A report on manpower policy in Ireland (NESC, 1985) questioned whether the apprenticeship system in Ireland had a future. This report also described the responses to labour market difficulties as "tending

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to be of an *ad hoc* piecemeal nature … [consisting] of individual and largely unrelated programmes grafted onto a system which has not undergone any basic change" (NESC, 1985, p.35). This report also proposed a rationalisation of all post-compulsory vocational education and training programmes including the first year of apprenticeship.

Developments in the United Kingdom (UK) in the mid-1980s saw proposals emerging for a qualifications-based approach to apprenticeship that would be based on competency upon completion rather than on time-served (Field and Ó Dubhchair, 2001). In Ireland, a White Paper on Manpower Policy (Department of Labour, 1986) called for a broader approach to the concept of training (Garavan et al, 1995). It proposed that the three bodies currently operating in the manpower arena – AnCo, the National Manpower Service, the Youth Employment Agency- should be amalgamated into one. The Labour Service Act, 1987 which followed, established an Foras Áiseanna Saothair (FÁS) in 1988 from the amalgamation of these three bodies. FÁS initiated a review of the apprenticeship system based on recommendations in the White Paper and published a discussion paper (FÁS, 1989). While the proposals to move towards a standard-based system of apprenticeship was on the agenda it was unclear as to how this could be achieved given the position taken by the key interest groups, namely, the employers and the trade unions. As Vossiek (2015) observes:

> "… this entailed the question of how to break the traditional
> impasses between craft unions and employers reluctant to release
> their apprentices under the old system" (p.120).

Boyle (2005) highlights difficulties in relation to the implementation of the new standards-based apprenticeship. He identifies two crucial actors, namely the employers and the Department of Education, as the sources of the main difficulties. His criticism of employers is based on employers' track record of underinvestment in training and a preference for poaching skilled workers. The second target of his criticism is the RTCs led by the Department of Education. He describes the system as being "perceived as

inert and unresponsive to the changing needs of both employers and apprentices" (p.47). However, these two actors were crucial for the implementation of the new apprenticeship and had an effective veto over developments. Ultimately, as Boyle states, "social partnership provided the answer" (p.50). Vossiek (2015) and Paul Ryan (2000) concur with this view and see the inclusion of the reform of the apprenticeship system within the social partnership framework as crucial to the new system being introduced in 1993/1994. A broad outline for the new standards-based system was agreed by the social partners as part of the second social partnership agreement, *Programme for Economic and Social Progress* (Government of Ireland, 1991). This new system was in effect a hybrid of the time-served and standards-based system in that it consistent of seven phases, each with a specific time duration.

Figure 6.5   Number of Register Apprentices in Ireland 1973-2014
Source: AnCO Annual Reports, FÁS Annual Reports
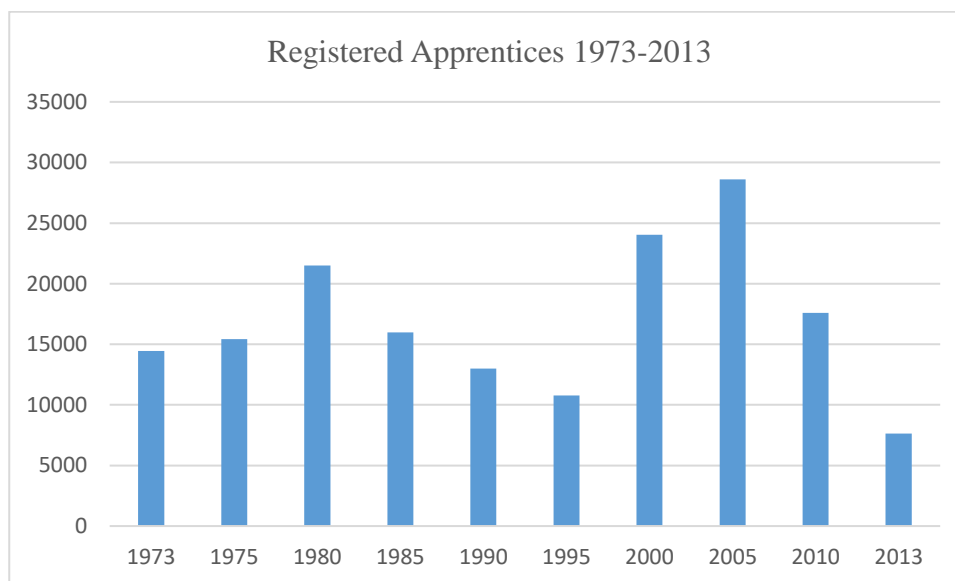

Registered Apprentices 1973-2013

Figure 6.5 shows the number of total number of registered apprentices from 1973 to 2013. The trough in 1995 shows the low point of the apprenticeship system in Ireland before the impact of the newly reformed system can been seen. The data for 2000 and 2005 coincide with the construction boom in Ireland just prior to the property 'bubble' bursting in tandem with the financial crisis in 2008. During the Great Recession, a

major issue for the apprenticeship system was the number of redundant apprentices as construction firms went out of business. By 2010, for example, of the 17,578 registered apprentices 7,407 were redundant (FÁS, 2010). By 2013 when the number of registered apprentices had dropped by almost 58% from 2010 to 7,407, the number of redundant apprentices dropped to 1,736 (FÁS, 2013).

In the midst of the Great Recession, the OECD *Review of Vocational Education and Training in Ireland* (Kis, 2010) recommended a further review of the apprenticeship system in Ireland. This was echoed in the Sweeney Report (Sweeney, 2013). In May 2013, the Minister for Education and Skills, Mr Ruairi Quinn, T.D., announced the review of apprenticeship training in Ireland. The background issues paper (Department of Education and Skills, 2013a) published with this announcement states that the objective of the review was:

> "To determine whether the current model of apprenticeship should be retained, adapted or replaced by an alternative model of vocational education and training for apprentices – taking into account the needs of learners, the needs of employers, the needs of the economy and the need for cost effectiveness into the future" (p.7).

The final report of the Review Group was published in December 2013 (Department of Education and Skills, 2013b). Its recommendations included some significant breaks from the existing system. The review proposed the extension of the apprenticeship model into both FET and higher education leading to a qualification "at any level from Level 5 upwards" (p.94). It also recommended that, to be regarded as an apprenticeship, the duration of the programme should be "no less than two years" (pp.94-95). The apprenticeship system would be administered by the new further education and training authority, SOLAS, and a new Apprenticeship Council would be established with a range of functions including advising on "the introduction of apprenticeships in additional

occupations" (p.99). In this regard, the Review states that during the consultation process of the review:

> "The submissions received referred to the potential for apprenticeships in ICT, retail, hospitality, business administration, medical devices, sports and leisure programmes, childcare and social care, financial services, accounting, hairdressing, and beauty care sectors" (p.110).

However, the report goes on the highlight the importance of the commitment required from employers:

> "Such programmes will not be successful unless there is a strong commitment from employers to identifying occupational needs, recruitment and payment of apprentices, and joint collaboration with education and training providers in programme delivery" (p.110).

The development of new apprenticeships is ongoing, and the first set of proposals was published in June 2015 (www.apprenticeship.ie) further discussion of which is beyond the time period of this study. In the next section the focus turns to third-level education. This will give an overview of the pattern of increasing participation within the broader context of skill formation. As the focus of this study is primarily on further education and training, an in-depth discussion of higher education policy in Ireland is outside the parameters of this study. For a more thorough discussion in this area please see Loxley, Seery, and Walsh (2014), and Clancy (2015).

6.3.4 Third-Level Education

The story of third level education in Ireland is one of continuous expansion. Figure 6.6 shows the total third level enrolments for all institutions in Ireland as reported by the Department of Education and Skills. An interesting feature of this data is the level of increase over the period. From over 28,600 in 1973, third-level enrolments have increased by more than

140,000 over the period to almost 170,000, representing a 490% increase for the period. A second interesting feature of third-level enrolment, namely, the percentage share of the enrolments between the technology and non-technology sectors of the third-level institutions is shown in Figure 6.7.

Figure 6.6   Third Level Enrolments 1973-2014

Source: Department of Education Annual Statistical Reports
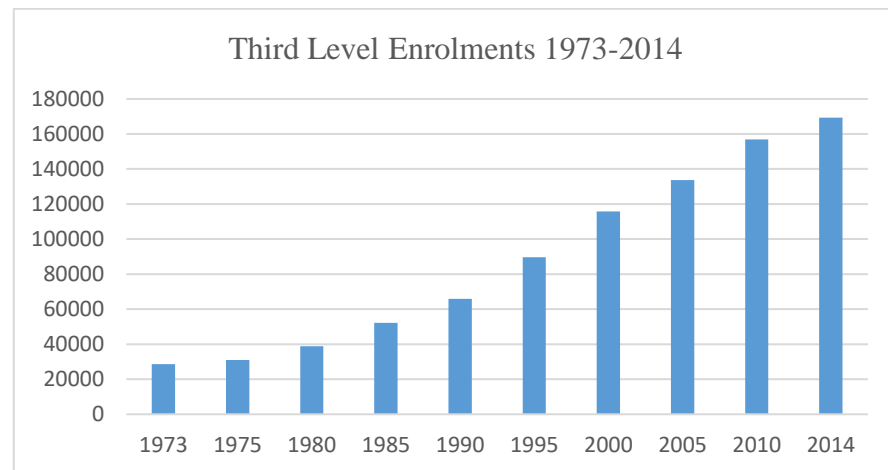
In the period until the 1990s the percentage share in the technology sector continues to increase steadily, after which time it remained relatively even at around 40% until the present day. The increase in the early period is due both an increasing level of enrolments overall as well as the opening of new Institutes of Technology, for example, in Tallaght in Dublin in 1992, Limerick in 1993, and Blanchardstown in Dublin in 1999.

A third interesting feature of this enrolment pattern, and this could equally apply to the PLC enrolment pattern shown in Figure 6.3, is that the peaks and troughs of annual economic growth appear to have had little discernible impact on this pattern of continually increasing post-secondary education and training participation. While on one level a high number of third-level graduates has advantages for both the economy and society in general, a number of commentators have begun to express some reservations on the what they see as some of the less positive aspects of this pattern for the labour market as a whole, in what Sweeney (2013) describes as a "third level society" (p.12).

Figure 6.7   Percentage of Third Level Enrolments in Technology and
Non-Technology Sector 1973-2014

Source: Department of Education Annual Statistical Reports

Note: The Technology Sector consists of the Regional Technical
Colleges and the Dublin Institute of Technology. The Non-
Technology Sector consists of all other third level colleges.

Percentage of Third Level Enrolment in Technology
Sector and Non-Technology Sector 1973-2014
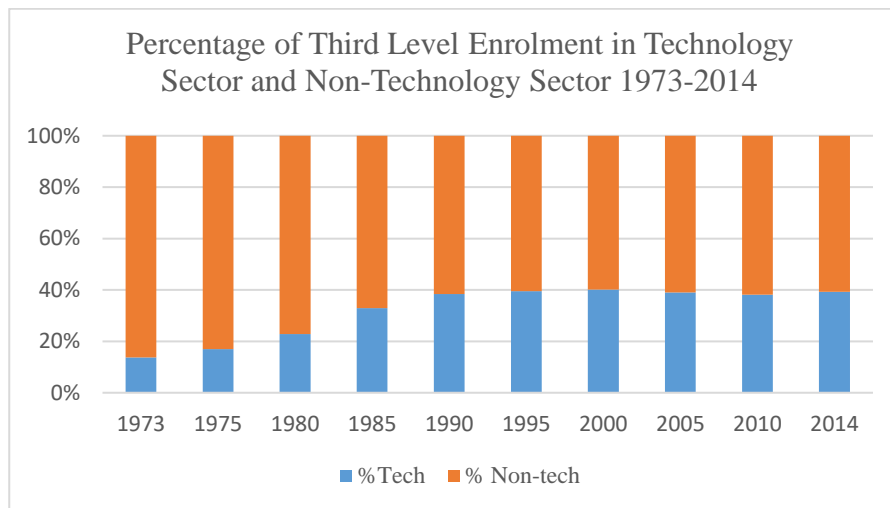
McGuinness, et al. (2012) raise a cautionary note in relation to a policy
aimed at increasing higher education participation.

> "It is important…that any policy initiative aimed at increasing HE
> [higher education] participation does not come at the cost of creating
> skills shortages for intermediately qualified labour, i.e., that the
> growth of the HE sector does not crowd out necessary FE [further
> education] provision" (p.73).

Sweeney (2014a) echoes this view by cautioning against "a human skills
strategy that puts too many eggs in the higher education basket" (p.2).
Sweeney (2014b) expresses concern about the impact such an imbalance
could have on school leavers not entering higher education. He says that
"the dominance of higher education has created unintended but significant
'collateral damage' for the one third of school completers not taking the
highway from school to higher education" (p.8). McCoy, Smyth, Watson
and Darmody (2014) had similar concerns and state that "the dominance of

higher education in the Irish context has had important implications for young people in Ireland, particularly those from more disadvantaged backgrounds" (p.195).

Sweeney (2014a) questions whether the labour market can absorb an ever increasing number of higher education graduates. He points to Ireland's EU 2020 target which aims to have 60% of 30-34 years in Ireland with a tertiary education. He compared the current figure for Ireland of 53% with the EU average of 37%. Ireland's 2020 target of 60% compares to the EU target of 40%. Sweeney observes:

> "…we are so convinced of our economy's need for, and ability to absorb, graduates that we want to go still higher…Could we overdo it? There are certainly some 'straws in the wind' that the economy's ability and need to absorb graduates is not infinite" (p.2).

Sweeney points out that there are a significant number of graduates employed in jobs that require a lower level of skill than the qualifications they possess. In other words, they are over qualified for the jobs they are doing. SOLAS had similar findings (Behan, 2014). They found that, while there was a shortage of highly skilled workers in some areas of the economy, there was also a higher share of higher education graduates in occupations where the entry qualification would be more typically for FET graduates. From 2013 they found that 42% of general administrative workers and 44% of customer service workers had third level qualifications. One senior policy actor states

> "What we don't hear in this country is that a significant number who have third level education…don't get the rewards. There is a large number of quite ordinary jobs in Ireland being held by people with a third level education, in other words for which they didn't need a third level education" (INT10).

McGuinness, Bergin and Whelan (2015) find that the estimated rate of over education in Ireland is 30%, amongst the highest in Europe. In addition, from 2009 until 2014, almost 200,000 graduates emigrated at an average rate of almost 33,000 per year (www.cso.ie). The migration data, together with the over-education figures, would suggest that the volume of higher education graduates may not be in line with the needs of the labour market. Taking FET and higher education as a whole, the data from the Department of Education and Skills show that in 2011 over 45% of school leavers progressed to higher education with a further 22% progressing to FET (Department of Education and Skills, 2016b). With over two-thirds of the school leaving population progressing to post-secondary education and training, perhaps a more holistic approach to skill formation policy might be more appropriate? As Sweeney (2014b) states:

> "Now is the time to realise that HE and FET should be not be conceptualised and planned for separately but as a continuum or whole because, more than ever in Ireland, they are serving the same people but at different stages and at different moments of need in their lives" (p.8).

This completes Part Two of this chapter which provided an overview of the key developments in the education and training field. Part Three of this chapter presents the results of the research. This consists of the results of the qualitative document analysis and the analysis of the interviews with the key policy actors as described in Chapter Five. These two sets of results are validated using triangulation in the concluding section of Part Three of this chapter.

6.4 Part 3 - Data Analyses, Results and Interpretation

The first section of this part of the chapter will present the results of the qualitative document analysis of the primary source documents for this study. The second section will present an analysis of the semi-structured

interviews with the 13 key policy actors, followed by final section which will discuss the validation process using triangulation.

6.4.1 Qualitative Document Analysis

This section presents the results of the qualitative document analysis conducted on 32 primary source documents as listed in Appendix 1. The charts in this section have been generated from this data and the full set of collated data is available in Appendix 4. To facilitate presentation, the results are collated into four groups based on time periods:

1. 1978-1986 – these dates correspond to the period from 1973 until just before the beginning of social partnership. While this study begins in 1973, the first document to meet the criteria for inclusion in the list of primary documents was dated 1978;
2. 1987-1995 – this period encompasses the documents from the beginning of the social partnership period until the beginning of the Celtic Tiger Years;
3. 1996-2007 – the documents included here cover the Celtic Tiger Years and the end of the social partnership period; and
4. 2008-2014 – this final section covers the period of the Great Recession, the Troika Years and the formation of SOLAS.

As this study concerns the evolution of FET policy within the broader skill formation space as a macro-institution of the state, the first section will present an analysis of the data as it pertains to skill formation policy as a whole. This data is presented under the following headings:

1. Skills for the Economy has been subdivided into:
    a. Skills for Economic Competitiveness;
    b. Skills for Economic Development;
2. Skills for the Employed (Workforce Development);
3. Skills for the Unemployed; and
4. Social Inclusion.

The full set of codes and keywords used in this study can be found in Appendix 2.

6.4.1.1   Skill Formation and the Skills Agenda

Before presenting the data from the qualitative document analysis it is important to provide a context for the distribution of departmental responsibilities, in particular, between the two primary departments within the skill formation space, namely, the Department of Education and Skills (DES), and the Department of Jobs Enterprise and Innovation (DJEI). DJEI is the current name for a government department whose name has changed nine times over the time period of this study.   DJEI is the current name for the Department which consists of what were originally two separate departments – Department of Labour, and the Department of Industry and Commerce. The functions of the Department of Labour were transferred to what became the Department of Enterprise and Employment in 1993 (see Appendix 5). For the purpose of this study, the combined set of documents from either or both of these departments have been regarded as emanating from DJEI. Other government departments have responsibility for sectoral training provision. For example, Teagasc, the Agriculture and Food Development Authority, provides training for the agriculture sector and comes under the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. Since 2010 Department of Social Protection (DSP) has become involved in the skill formation space following the transfer of responsibility from FÁS for the employment services and the referral of clients to education and training as part of labour market activation.

Prior to the reorganisation that took place in 2010, the distribution of responsibilities for skill formation policy in particular areas had become quite a complex web of interconnectedness. DJEI had responsibility for the enterprise agencies - the Industrial Development Authority (IDA), which is responsible for promoting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), and Enterprise Ireland (EI), which supports Irish companies involved in exporting goods

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and services. The availability of sufficiently qualified employees is a key requirement in these areas of the economy. In the area of FDI, high skills, in particular, are in demand. However, higher education policy comes under the Department of Education and Skills.

In the intermediate skills area, namely FET, this web of interconnectedness between the two primary policy departments is even more complex. Prior to 2010, industrial training, including apprenticeships, as well as training for activating the unemployed, was the responsibility of the National Training and Employment Authority, FÁS (and previously AnCO from 1967 to 1987), an executive agency of DJEI. In the area of apprenticeship, DES was involved with the provision of the off-site training in the Institutes of Technology and the Technical Colleges. Both Departments received European funding to support training provision. From 1973 DJEI was the national authority for the receipt of funding from the European Social Fund (ESF) in Ireland. The relevant section of DJEI would disperse this funding to its own executive agencies, in particular FÁS, and to DES for training provision in the third level technological colleges, as well as for further education provision in the post-primary schools, particularly those managed by the Vocational Education Committees (VECs).

While the line of demarcation between DES and DJEI was a regular source of comment in policy documents it was generally understood that DES was responsible for preparing students for life after school, namely, the school-to-work transition, while DJEI, in particular, through FÁS, was responsible for the provision of training for persons after they left school. However, a notable example of a programme involving both departments was Youthreach, a programme aimed at early school leavers, which was established jointly in 1989 between DES and FÁS. Equally there were others areas which remained the preserve of each department, e.g. for DES it was the area of adult literacy and community, while for DJEI it was workforce development.

In 2010 the government decided to transfer policy responsibility for the training functions of FÁS from the DJEI to the renamed Department of Education and Skills (S.I. No. 187/2010). Policy responsibility for the employment services element of FÁS was transferred to the renamed Department of Social Protection (Social Welfare and Pensions Act, 2010). This transfer of functions had the effect of providing more clarity in the areas of policy responsibilities and brought policy responsibility for education and training under a single department for the first time in some 80 years. Notably, sectoral training remained outside of this new arrangement. However, one consequence of this decision was that the activation function of the training courses, previously provided by FÁS, was bestowed on all FET provision under the responsibility of DES. Courses originally provided by VEC schools and colleges, such as the PLC courses, were now bestowed with the additional policy objective for the first time without any corresponding adjustment to the programme. For the purpose of convenience, DES-FET will refer to FET courses provided under the policy direction of DES prior to 2010, and DJEI-FET will similarly apply for FET courses under DJEI prior to 2010.

The data source of 32 primary source documents consists of 18 documents produced at government level, such as the social partnership documents, five from DES, seven from DJEI, and two from DSP. Two of the 18 government documents were published by the Department of Finance (DoF) and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER). As they constitute parametric policy documents, as described in Chapter Five, they are included as government level documents.

Figure 6.8 shows the distribution of references to skills within the documents across a range of policy areas. Clearly, the specific areas of workforce development and social inclusion show the highest frequency. In Figure 6.9 the data is presented over time across the four time periods described above with the 1996-2007 period showing the highest frequency for each of these policy areas.

Figure 6.8   Total References to Skills by Policy Area
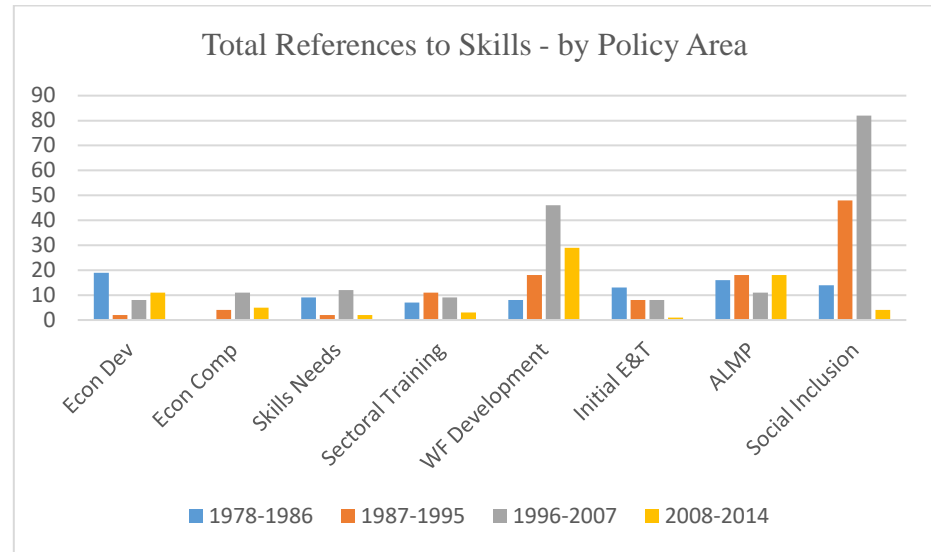
Taking a closer look at two policy areas with the highest frequency, Figure
6.10 shows the distribution across the various areas of skills need in
workforce development, with Figure 6.11 shown the distribution over time.
In terms of references to lifelong learning, the 1996-2007 period is
particularly prominent. This would be consistent with the prominence of
the issue at EU level in the latter half of the 1990s and in Ireland, for
example, the report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning in 2003 led by
DJEI. The highest volume of references to skills for workforce
development is in the 2008-2014 period with the emphasis on retraining and
upskilling.

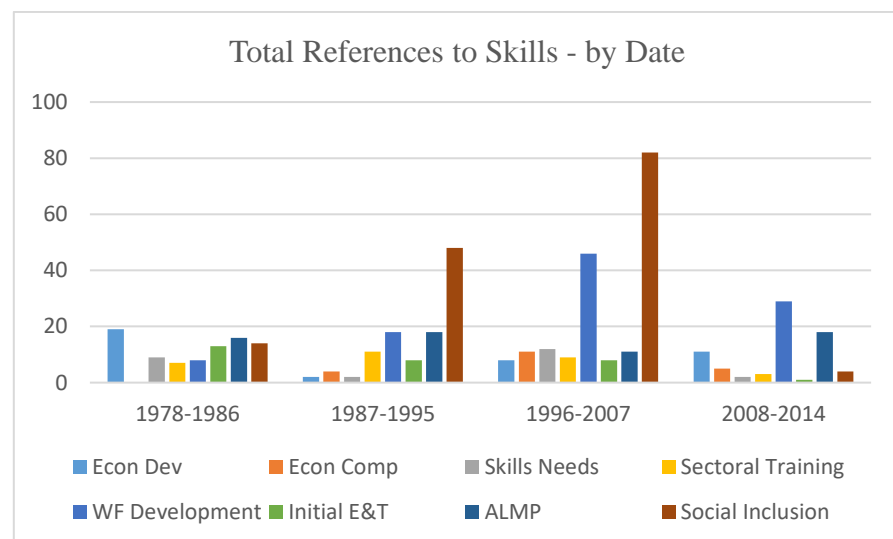Figure 6.9   Total References to Skills by Date

Figure 6.10   Workforce Development by Skill Need
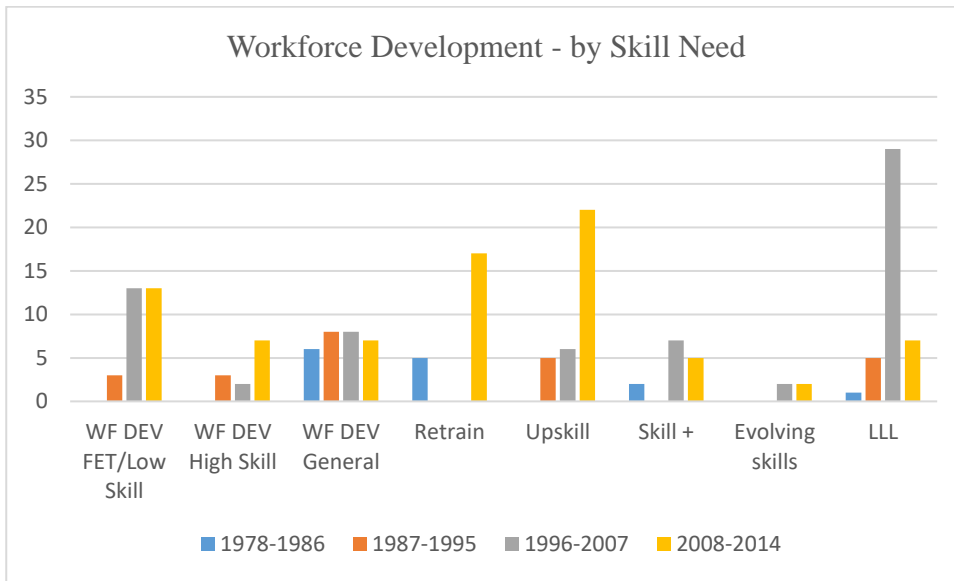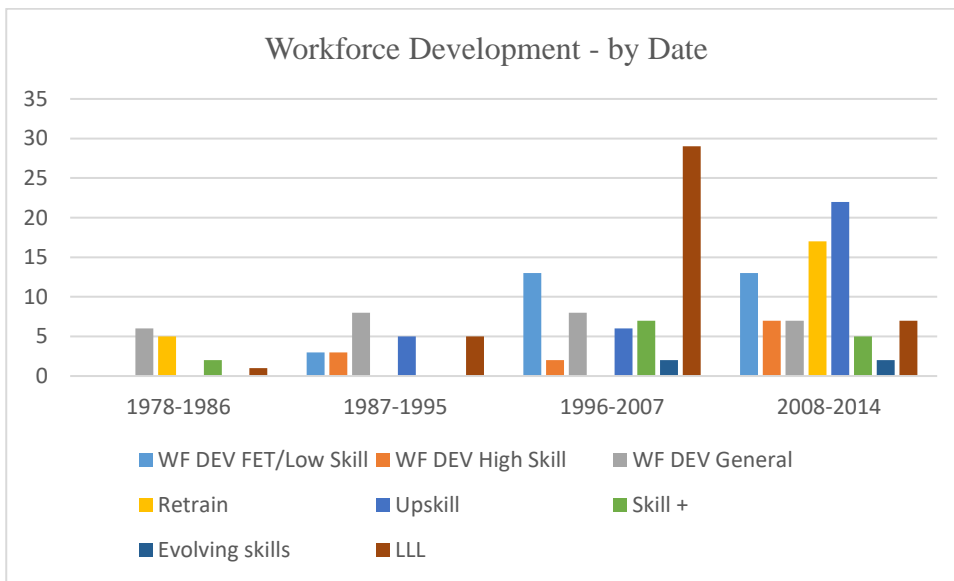

Figure 6.11   Workforce Development by Date

The distribution of references to skills across the social inclusion policy area is shown in Figures 6.12 and 6.13. The 1996-2007 period shows the highest frequency in references to Skills for Social Inclusion. This period also coincides with the OECD *International Adult Literacy Survey* on Ireland (OECD, 1997) and the publication by DES of the White Paper on Adult Education in 2000.

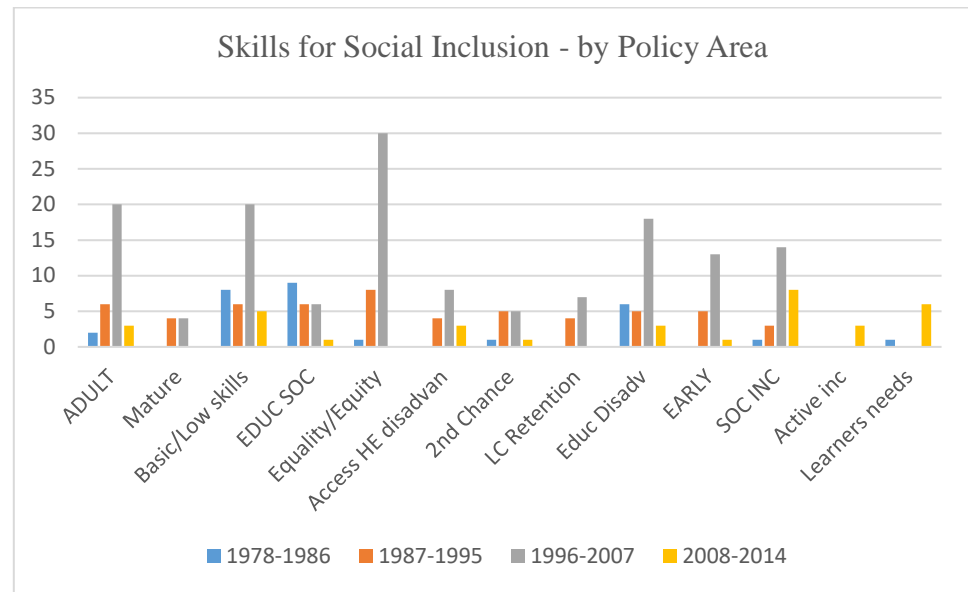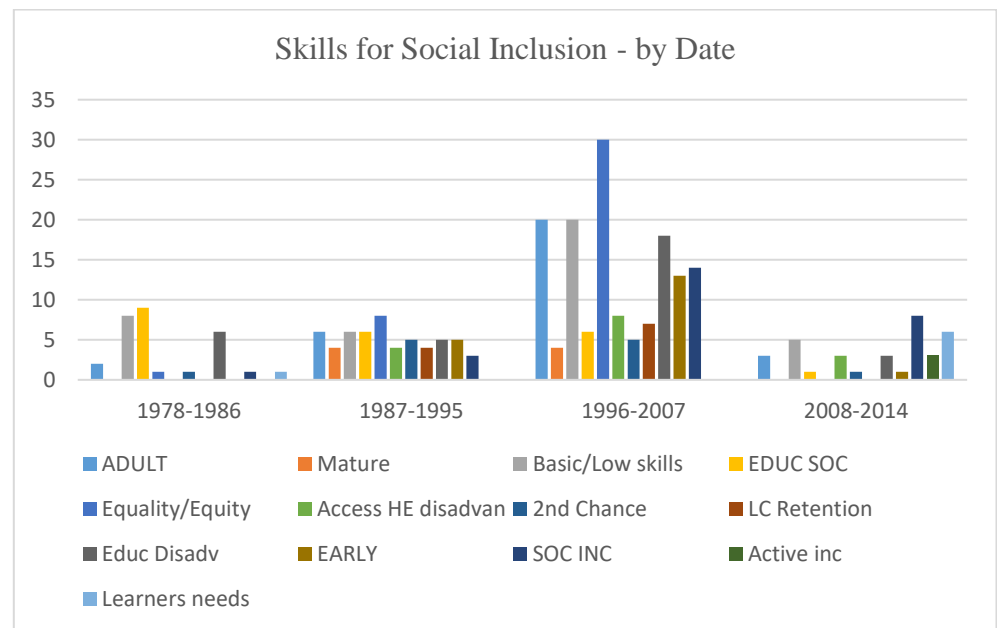Figure 6.12   Skills for Social Inclusion by Policy Area

Figure 6.13   Skills for Social Inclusion by Date

When these documents are viewed between DES and DJEI a difference in emphasis can be identified. Figure 6.14 shows the distribution of references to skills within DES documents across the various policy areas while 6.15 shows this distribution over time. Figures 6.16 and 6.17 show the respective distributions of references to skills in documents published by DJEI.

Figure 6.14   DES References to Skills by Policy Area

DES Reference to Skills - by Policy Area

Legend: 1980, 1984, 1995, 2000, 2014
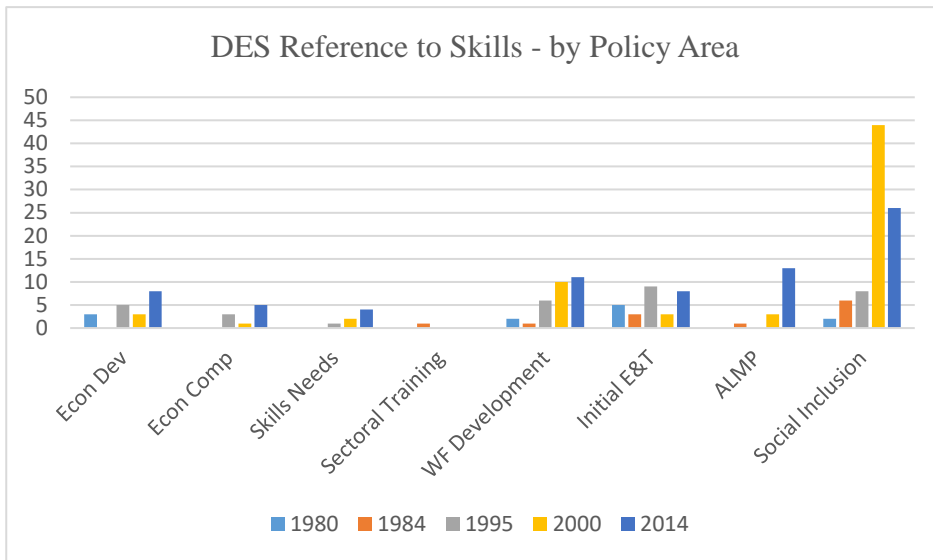
Figure 6.15   DES References to Skills by Date

DES References to Skills - by Date

Legend: Econ Dev, Econ Comp, Skills Needs, Sectoral Training, WF Development, Initial E&T, ALMP, Social Inclusion
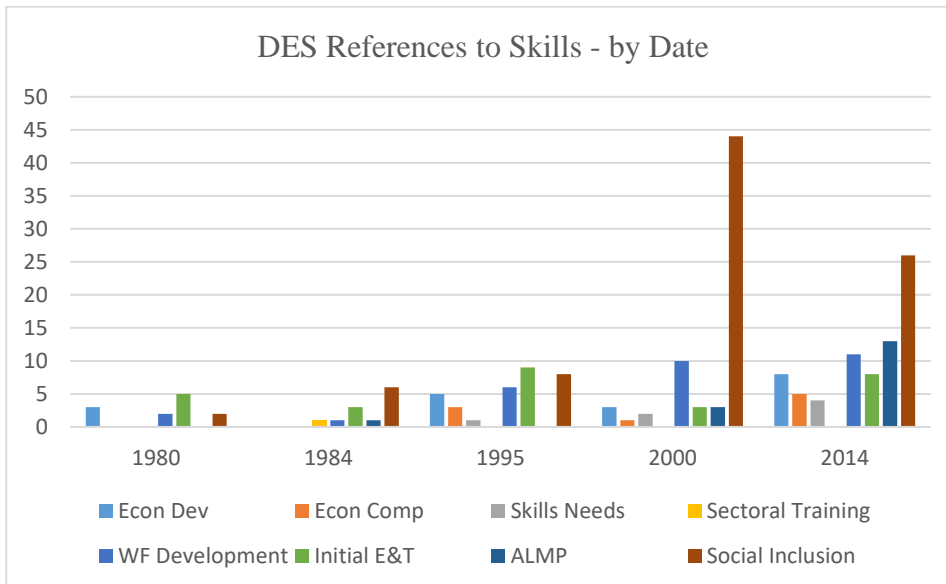
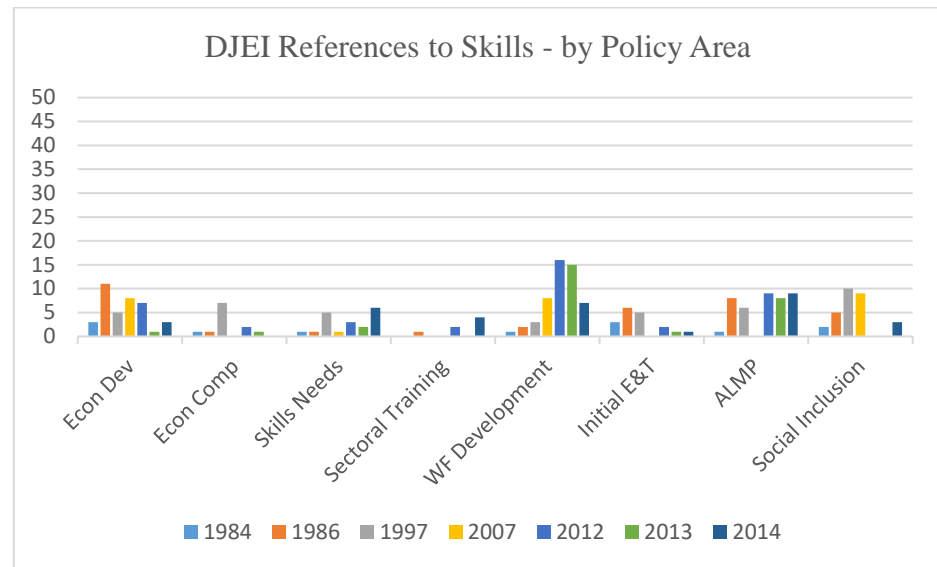Figure 6.16   DJEI References to Skills by Policy Area

Figure 6.17   DJEI References to Skills by Date
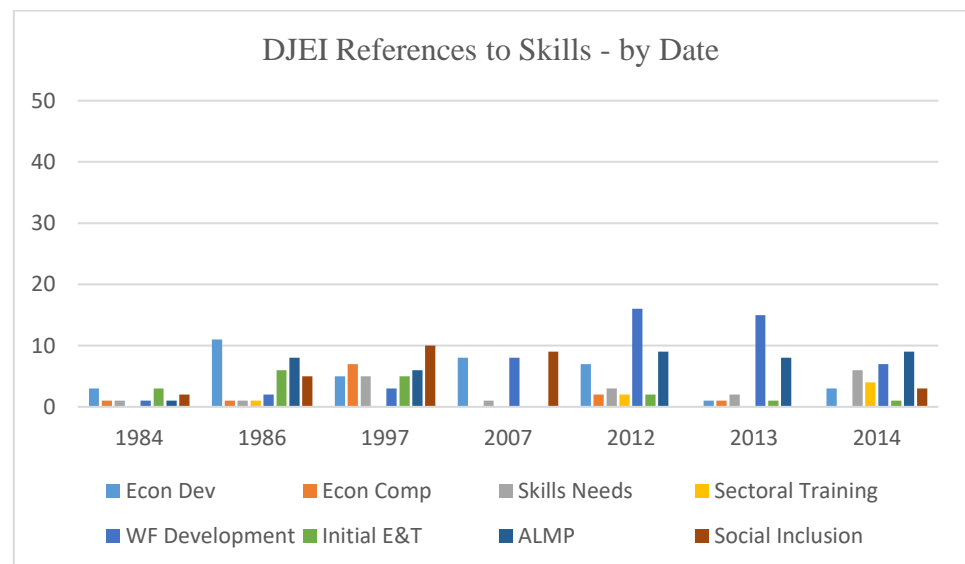
While Figure 6.8 highlighted the high frequency for workforce development and social inclusion across the full dataset, Figures 6.14 and 6.16 identify the differentiation between DES and DJEI in these two policy areas. The reference to skills within DES publications is towards social inclusion and less on the economic end of the spectrum, while the emphasis for DJEI is on skills for workforce development and towards the economic end of the spectrum.

The results presented above point to a complex web of interconnectedness, both in terms of higher education and FET, but also across the two primary government departments in the skill formation space. Within this space the economic and social imperatives of skills policy are evident. In particular, skills for workforce development and social inclusion were shown to have the highest frequency within the policy documents. Within DES the emphasis has been shown to be towards social inclusion while DJEI placed an emphasis on workforce development. The discussion in the next section will focus on the purpose of FET within the overall skill formation context as evidenced in the published government policy documents, and how this purpose has changed over time.

6.4.1.2   Purpose of Further Education and Training

FET has both an economic and a social imperative. In this section the results are presented under the same five headings as above. The first category to be examined is the area of skills as a contributor to economic competitiveness. The line graph in Figure 6.18 shows the pattern of change in how the stated purposes of both FET and higher education (HE) are evidenced in the policy documents up to both not including the FET Strategy.

While the data shows that the both FET and HE are both regarded as contributing to economic competitiveness until the mid-1990s, from the beginning of the Celtic Tiger period, which coincides with the emergence of the knowledge economy, there is a clear divergence between the two with HE regarded as the prime contributor to economic competitiveness. The last recorded reference to FET contributing to economic competitiveness is in the final social partnership agreement, *Towards 2016* (Government of Ireland, 2006). However Figure 6.19 shows how the FET Strategy has re-engaged FET with the economic discourse. A similar re-engagement is also evident in relation to economic development as will be discussed below.

Figure 6.18   FET and Higher Education as a Contributor to Economic
               Competitiveness <u>not</u> including the FET Strategy
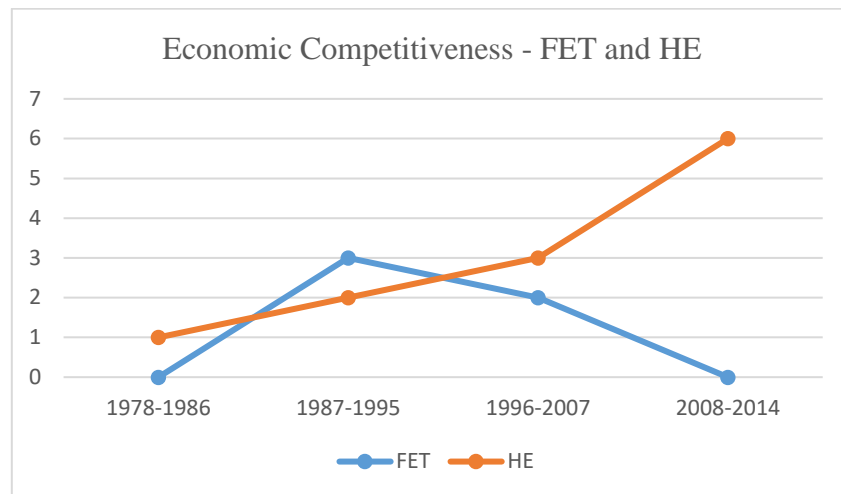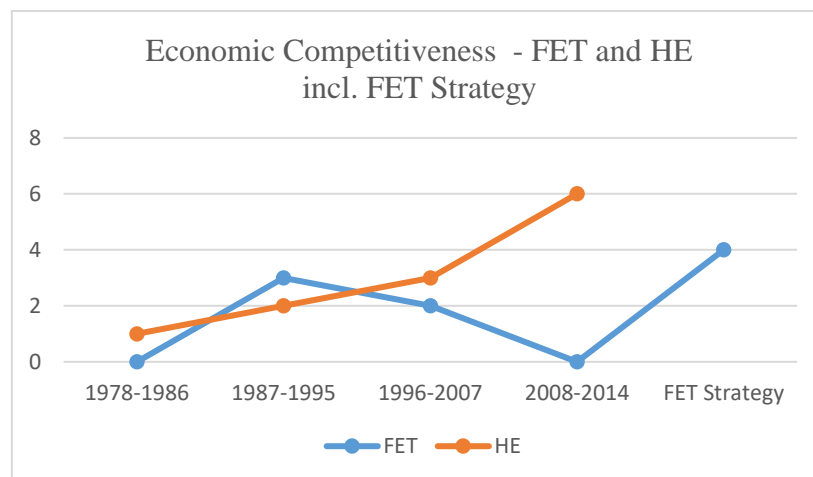

Figure 6.19   FET and Higher Education as a Contributor to Economic
               Competitiveness <u>including</u> the FET Strategy

References to FET's contribution to economic development are not evident
after the White Paper on Manpower Policy in 1986 (Department of Labour,
1986) as can be seen in Figure 6.20. However, as was the case with
economic competiveness, Figure 6.21 shows that the FET Strategy includes
economic development among the stated purposes of FET. In studying the
evidence in relation to the area of skills for people in employment, the
overall improvements in levels of education, including increased
participation at third level, as discussed earlier in the chapter, can be seen in
the results which emerged. As can be seen from the data in Appendix 4, no
reference is made in government policy documents relating to either FET or

HE in relation to the area of skills for the employed until the first social partnership document, *Programme for National Recovery,* in 1987 (Government of Ireland, 1987). Prior to this point, any such references were in terms of general education and not specific enough to categorise.

Figure 6.20   FET and HE as a Contributor to Economic Development <u>not</u> including FET Strategy
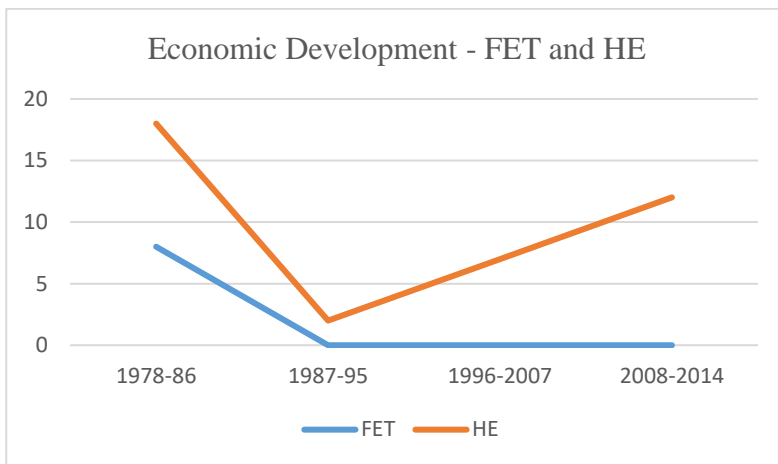
Figure 6.21   FET and Higher Education as a Contributor to Economic Development <u>including</u> FET Strategy
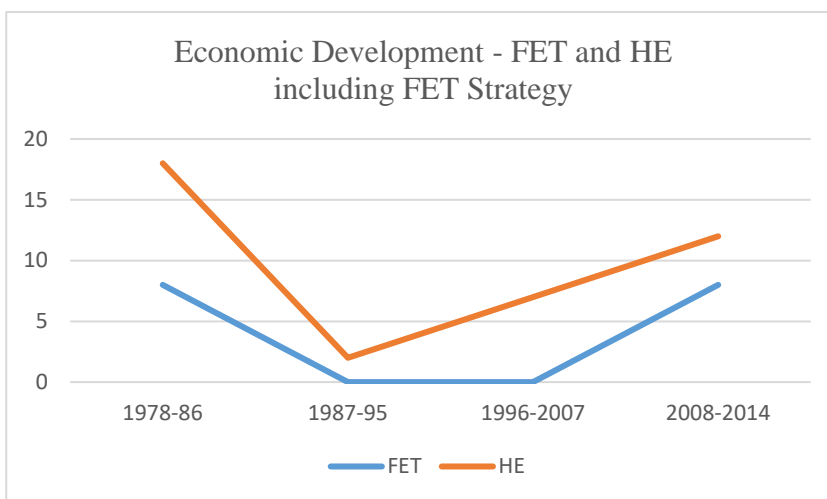
As the results in Figure 6.22 show, FET has the lion's share of skills for those in employment. Predominantly, the references in the documents refer to low skill and/or educational attainment levels among some sectors of the existing workforce, particularly in manufacturing. However, the significant increase in references to HE in the 2008-2014 group is a manifestation of

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the high unemployment levels amongst sectors of the economy with high skilled workers. There are echoes of this pattern in the next purpose of FET to be considered, skills for the unemployed.

Figure 6.22   Skills for the Employed

Note: Further Education and Training data includes references to low skills in the workplace, while the Higher Education data includes references to high skills.

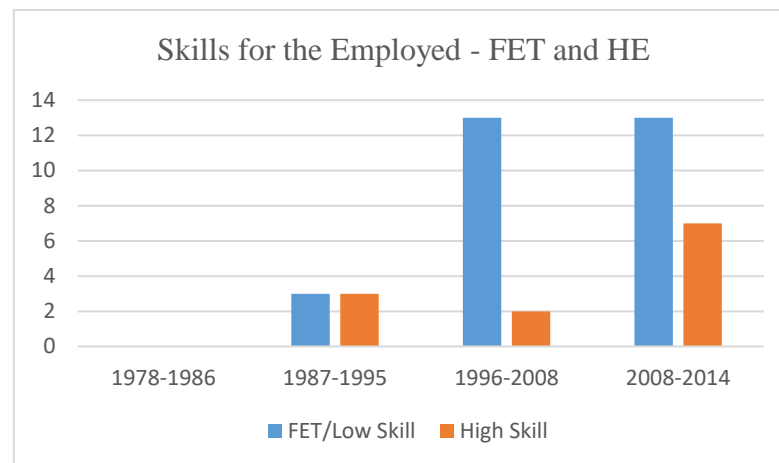The provision of training courses for people who have lost their job has been a traditional part of the former FÁS training provision. This pattern is clear from the results in Figure 6.23. However, the interesting element of these results is the emergence of skills for the unemployed as a stated purpose of HE in the 2008-2014. These results are almost entirely references to the Springboard labour market activation programme initiated in response to the high numbers of graduates among the unemployed. Courses aimed at providing conversion skills to other occupational areas is a strong theme in this programme. The existence of this programme in the first place is an indication of the prevalence of high levels of skills in the Irish labour market.

The final area to be discussed in this section is that of skills for social inclusion. At shown in Figure 6.24 below, this category consists of references to educational disadvantage, second chance education, basic/low skills, issues relating to equality and equity, as well as general references to

social inclusion. The term 'active inclusion' was first referred to in 2014 in the FET Strategy, even though the term had been published by the European Commission in 2008 (European Commission, 2008a).

Figure 6.23   Skills for the Unemployed – Comparison of FET and HE

Note: the FET Figures include references to youth unemployment
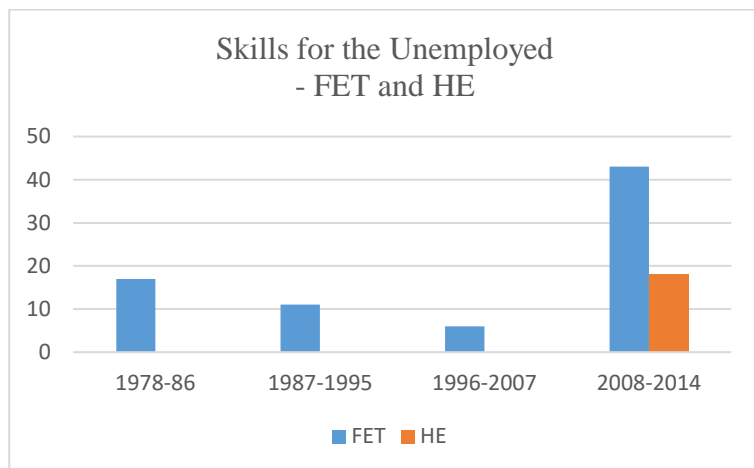
As can been seen in Figure 6.24, the 1996-2007 period contains a considerable quantity of the references to social inclusion as the state purpose for FET. Figure 6.25 shows the distribution of these references broken down by the specific source documents within this time period. It is clear that the White Paper on Adult Education (Department of Education and Science, 2000) had the highest number of such references along with the two social partnership agreements, one published before, *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* (Government of Ireland, 2000), and one after, *Sustaining* Progress (Government of Ireland, 2003), the White Paper. This period began with the inclusion, in 1996, of the 'Community Pillar' in the social partnership negotiations *Partnership 2000* (Government of Ireland, 1998).

The Community Pillar comprised eight bodies from civil society, one of which, the Community Platform, was an overarching term for a group of 15 different organisations. The publication of the government's first ever National Anti-Poverty Strategy (Government of Ireland, 1997) took place a year later. The period also coincided with the height of the Celtic Tiger

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years in which more public money was available to fund social inclusion measures. In addition, the 1998/1999 period saw preparations for a new round of structural funds for the 2000 to 2006 ESF programme which converged with the development of the green and white papers in adult education. Consequently, the increase in references to social inclusion as a stated purpose of FET coincided with confluence of these various events.

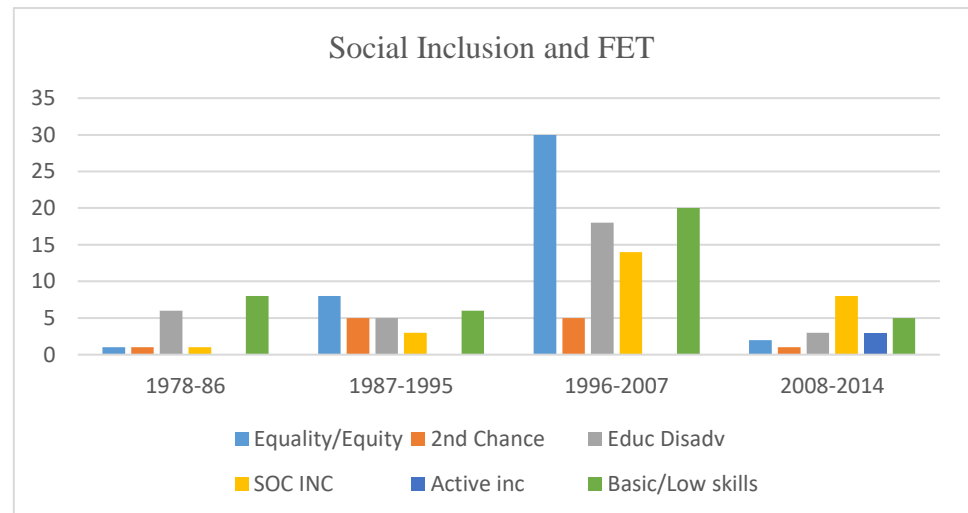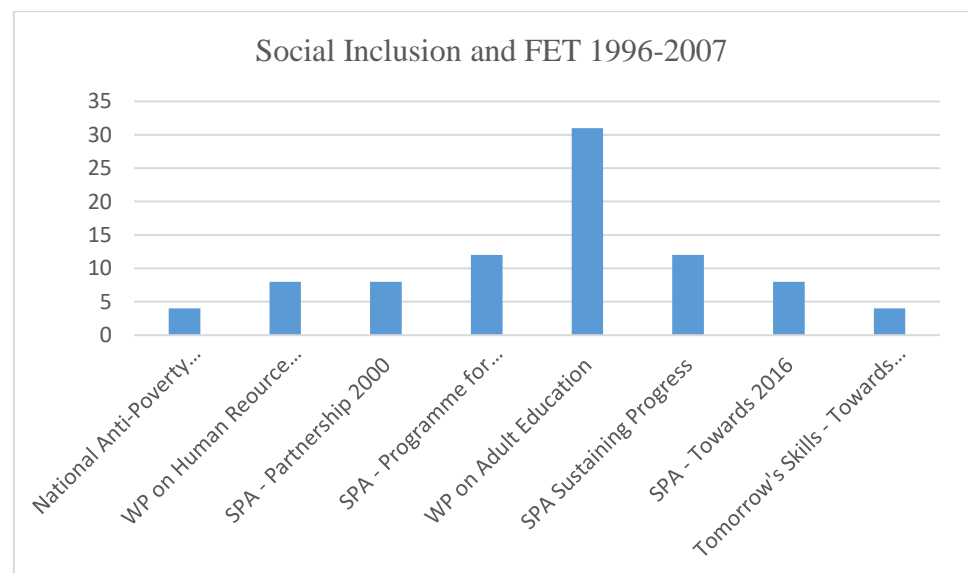Figure 6.24   Social Inclusion and FET

Figure 6.25   Distribution of references to Social Inclusion as a stated purpose of FET.

The White Paper on Adult Education emerged from the process initiated by the OECD International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) (OECD, 1997). The

results for Ireland showed that one in four of Irish adults were at or below level one of five literacy levels. The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) launched a campaign based on the idea that one in four Irish adults could not read the simple instructions on a medicine label. This caught the imagination and shortly afterwards the budget for literacy was significantly increased.

Within higher education increasing participation for under-represented groups in society was an issue that gained increasing prominence from the beginning of the social partnership period. In the area of social inclusion this was the most prominent issue within tertiary education. Figure 6.26 shows a comparison between social inclusion and FET, as well as access to higher education as evidence in the policy documents. This chart strongly suggests that social inclusion is more prominent as a stated purpose of FET.

Figure 6.26   Social Inclusion and FET with Access to Higher Education
              for Under Represented Groups
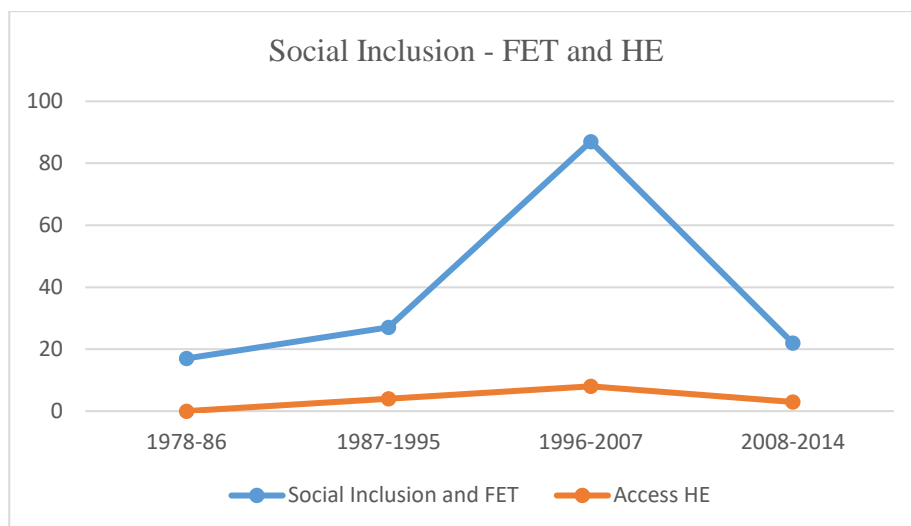
Finally, in order to gain an overall perspective of the purposes of FET as stated in the policy documents, the individual elements discussed above are combined in Figure 6.27. By way of comparison the stated purposes of higher education are combined in Figure 6.28.

Figure 6.27   Purposes of FET
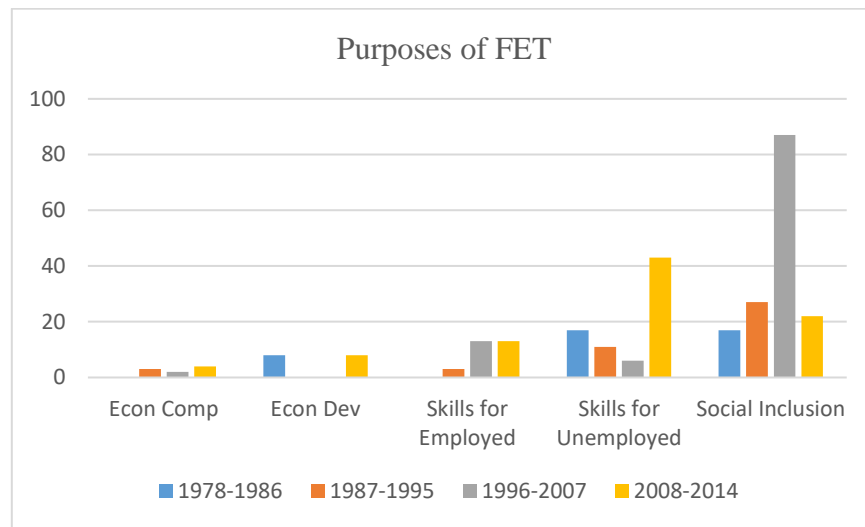
It is clear that for FET the stated purposes are skewed in favour of social inclusion and skills for the unemployed, i.e. activation measures, while in the case of higher education the emphasis is towards the economic imperative.

Figure 6.28   Purposes of Higher Education
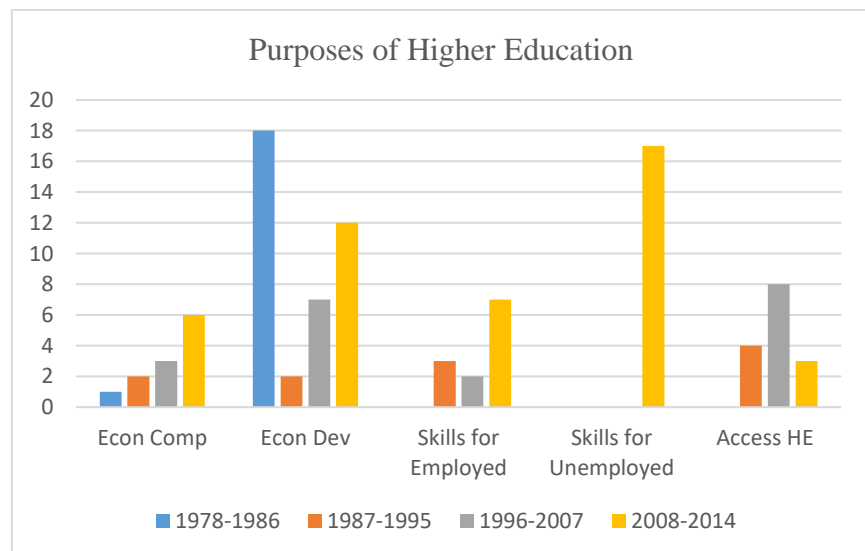
In the next section the analysis focuses on the first of the four themes to emerge from the literature reviews of Chapters Three and Four, namely, active labour market policy. By way of introduction, this section will begin with an overview of the key developments in active labour market policy in

Ireland and, in particular, the connection with further education and training policy. This will be followed by the presentation of the results of the qualitative document analysis. This section will also discuss the issue of forecasting future skills needs as a key element of labour market policy with particular reference to the establishment of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) in 1997.

6.4.1.3   Active Labour Market Policy

Chapter Three discussed the evolution of manpower policy towards an active labour market policy in the international context. Developments in Ireland from the 1960s to the early 1970s were examined in Chapter Four. The establishment of the Department of Labour in Ireland in 1966, the Industrial Training Authority, AnCo, in 1967, and the National Manpower Service (NMS) in 1971 were all important steps towards both policy and institutional coherence. The NMS was given the mandate to oversee training for the unemployed. Institutionally, during the 1960s and 1970s, the welfare provisions in Ireland and the UK converged. The economic recessions of the 1970s, resulting from the oil crises of 1973 and 1979, and the resultant high levels of unemployment, saw the Keynesian policies of the time coming under scrutiny. The mid-1980s was a time of economic crisis in Ireland. The period prior to the establishment of social partnership witnessed a review of manpower policy by the NESC (1985) followed by a White Paper on Manpower Policy in 1986 (Department of Labour, 1986). One of the main outcomes from this process was the Labour Services Act of 1987 resulting in the amalgamation of AnCo, the NMS, and the Youth Employment Agency into a single National Training and Employment Authority, an Foras Áiseanna Saothair, FÁS. Into the 1990s, FÁS was the subject of criticism from the Culliton Report (1992) for what it regarded as an over emphasis in its training activities for the unemployed rather than for industry. Indeed, the Culliton Report recommended splitting up FÁS with one option being the transfer of its employment services to the Department of Social Welfare. This was somewhat prophetic give the changes that have occurred since 2010.

FÁS continued to be the target of criticism throughout the 1990s primarily in two main areas: - an inability to carry out its many functions, and the inability of its parent Department to control its activities (Boyle, 2005). The Culliton Report recommendation for the disbandment of FÁS, resurfaced on a number of occasions throughout the 1990s, most especially in the 1997 White Paper on Human Resource Development (Department of Enterprise and Employment, 1997). The publication of the White Paper coincided with the recent OECD Jobs Study in 1994 and the European Employment Strategy (EES) in 1997, which raised the concept of employability to prominence. Indeed, this White Paper contained the first reference in Irish government policy documents to employability which became an increasingly frequent feature of subsequent Irish government policy documents. Under the stewardship of Minister Richard Bruton, a distinctly neo-liberal flavour was evident in this White Paper. As Boyle (2005) states:

> "The *Human Resource Development* paradigm fuses a Blairite neo-liberalism originating within the DEE [Department of Enterprise and Employment], which drew heavily on expert analysis of policy, together with an employer call for employer-centred and employer-led active labour market policy…The paradigm represented a modified and heavily coded form of Irish neo-liberalism" (p.82).

In a significant gesture of disregard, FÁS were excluded from the development of this White Paper. Indeed, as Boyle points out a number of the proposals in the document reduced FÁS's areas of activities and effectively "dismembered" (p.85) the organisation. In-company training, for example, was transferred to Enterprise Ireland, and Skillnets was established in 1999 which focused on providing employer-led training within industry sectors. The establishment of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) also emerged from this White Paper.

The EES was integrated into the Lisbon Agenda and required Member States to produce National Employment Action Plans (NEAP). The first

NEAP was produced in Ireland in 1998 and these plans were replaced by the National Reform Programme (NRP) documents after the relaunch of the Lisbon agenda in the mid-2000s. However, while this coordinated approach to employment strategy across all EU Member States preceded apace, an evaluation of the NEAP as part of activation in Ireland (McGuinness, O'Connell. Kelly & Walsh, 2011) found that people who participated in the NEAP process were less well off in terms of finding employment:

> "…it was found that the NEAP had a negative impact, reducing their chances of entering employment by about 17 per cent" (p. x).

In 2009, a review of activation policies in Ireland (Grubb, Singh & Tergeist. 2009) highlighted how placement and counselling functions were divided across three government departments and four funding streams. The review recommended a streamlining on both organisational and funding levels. The introduction of a mutual obligation strategy was also recommended in which the benefit recipient would be deemed to have an obligation to engage with the activation activities and that penalties could apply is the absence of such engagement. Also referred to as workfare, this policy had been resisted by the Community Pillar in the social partnership process (Larragy, 2006) and was not implemented at the time. However, following a government decision of 2010 to realign departmental functions, the workfare-type approach was subsequently implemented (Section 7, Social Welfare Act, 2010).

Regarding the education and training dimension of activation policies, the 2009 review observed that active labour market programmes in Ireland had a strong focus on vocational training. With the exception of the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) introduced primarily in the VECs in 1989 for long-term unemployed adults the vast bulk of this training had been provided by FÁS. Following the transfer of policy responsibility for the training functions of FÁS to DES, the activation objective of their training programmes was, in effect, extended to all further education programmes provided primarily by the VEC Colleges. This was confirmed

when, during the Troika Years, a review was conducted of the impact of FET programmes on long-term unemployment (Sweeney, 2013). Despite the fact that since their establishment the PLC course, for example, were courses designed to prepare school leavers for the work force and had no mandate regarding activation of the unemployed, this review was still critical of FET provision within the VEC sector.

Following a change of government in 2011, and as part of the response to the economic recession during the 'Troika Years', the government published the *Action Plan for Jobs* (Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, 2012) and an activation policy *Pathways to Work* (Department of Social Protection, 2012). Following the restructuring of the Department of Social Protection and the transfer of responsibility for employment services from FÁS, the new activation policy stated that

> "The Government is determined that those who are unemployed will be provided with appropriate advice, support, education and training to take advantage of new job opportunities as the economy recovers" (p.7).

A new 'one-stop-shop' service was established, called the National Employment and Entitlement Service and which was subsequently renamed 'INTREO'. The 'mutual obligation' principle, recommended in the 2009 review, was also implemented.

Under the theme of active labour market policy, the results of the qualitative document analysis on skills for activation are shown in Figures 6.29 and 6.30. Figure 6.29 shows the distribution of the data over time. The activation measures assigned to FET can be seen across all four time periods while those assigned to HE are evident only in the 2008-2014 period. The references to HE are almost entirely in the three *Action Plan for Jobs* documents (DJEI, 2012, 2013, 2014) and the DSP Publications *Pathways to Work* (DSP, 2012, 2013). A single reference prior to 2012 is

identified in the 2008 publication *Building Ireland's Smart Economy* (Government of Ireland, 2008b).

The frequency of references to skills for activation is highest in the first and last time periods correspond to two recessionary periods. Equally, references to activation measures targeted at young people also have high frequencies in these two periods. On the other hand references to long-term unemployment (LTU) can be seen to increase across the total time period. Such a consistent pattern of references to LTU in government policy documents across the period of the study would seem to indicate the persistence of LTU as an issue on the agenda of successive governments. A more in-depth analysis of this issue is outside the parameters of this study but is one that deserves closer scrutiny.

Figure 6.29   Skills for Activation – by Date
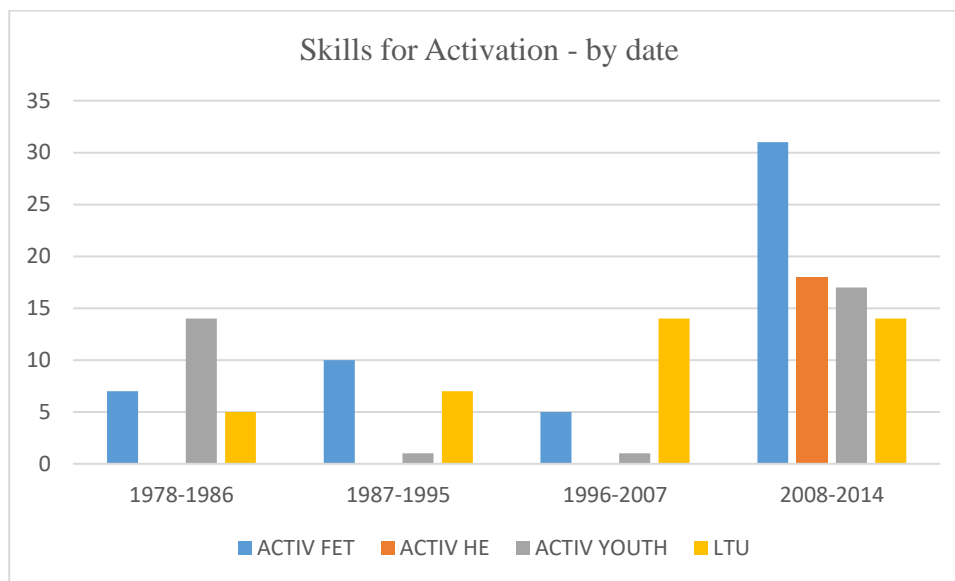
As discussed earlier, DJEI had primary policy responsibility for skills for activation prior to 2010 when this responsibility was transferred to DES. The next results presented are the references to skills for activation broken down across the two government departments - DES and DJEI. Figure 6.31 shows the results for DES. Other than references to addressing youth unemployment in the 1984 Programme for Action in Education (Department of Education, 1984b) and in relation to adults in the White

Paper on Adult Education (Department of Education and Science, 2000), the bulk of the references to activation within DES documents were in the 2014 FET Strategy (SOLAS, 2014).

Figure 6.30   Skills for Activation – by Category
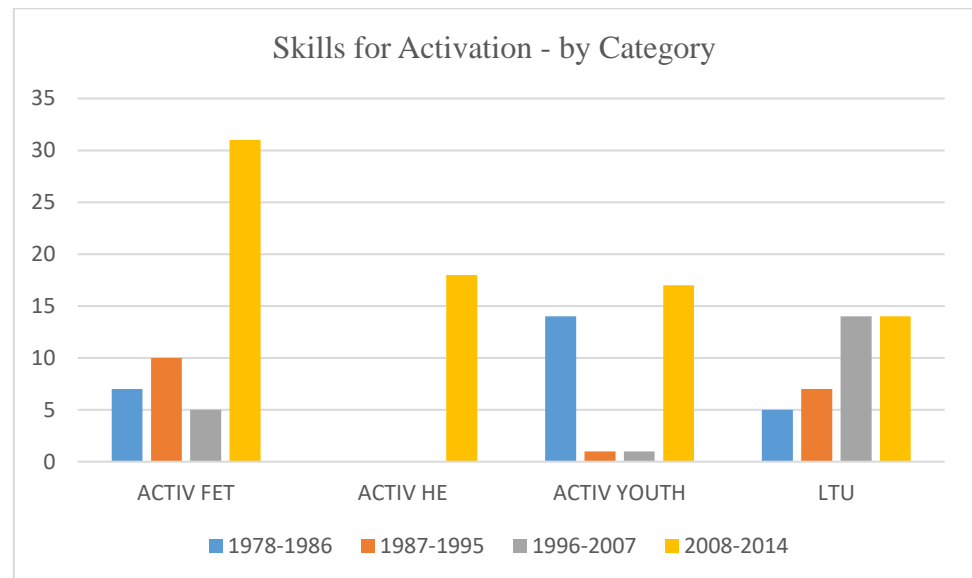
Figure 6.31   References to Activation with DES Documents
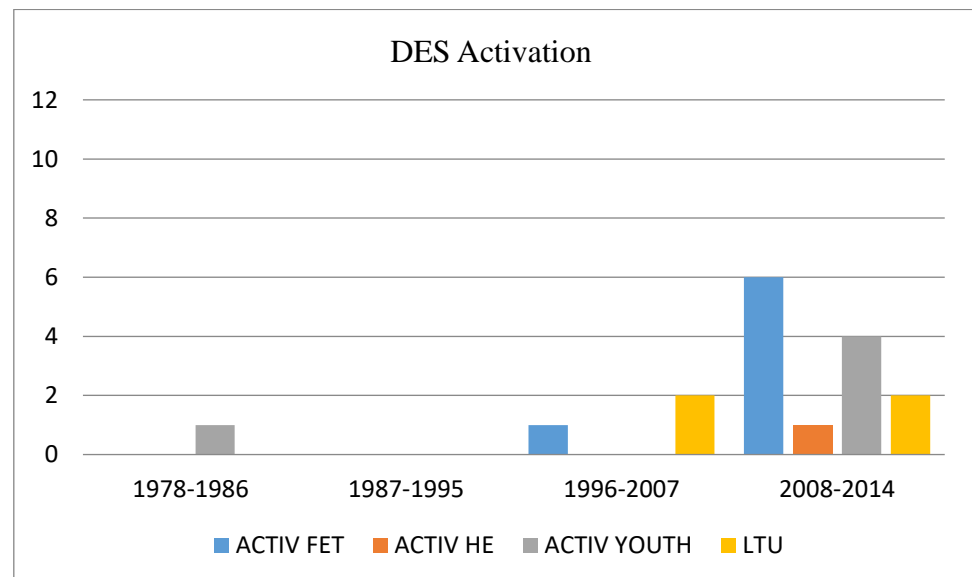
All references to activation in the 2008-2014 are solely in the FET Strategy (SOLAS, 2014). However, there are references to the activation objective for FET in the *Action Plan for Jobs* and *Pathways to Work* in the 2008-2014 period. Because of the whole-of-government nature these action plans, references to activation may have been attributed to another government

department, but assigned to the publishing government department, namely, DJEI or DSP. This contributed to the higher volume of FET activation references and, indeed, HE activation references within the DJEI and DSP publications. Figure 6.32 presents the distribution of references for DJEI. It is clear that for the first three time periods, when FET activation was the responsibility of DJEI, there was a higher frequency of references for DJEI.

Figure 6.32   References to Activation in DJEI Documents
Note: All references to activation in the 2008-2014 period are the cumulative totals from the three Action Plans for Jobs (DJEI, 2012, 2013, 2014)
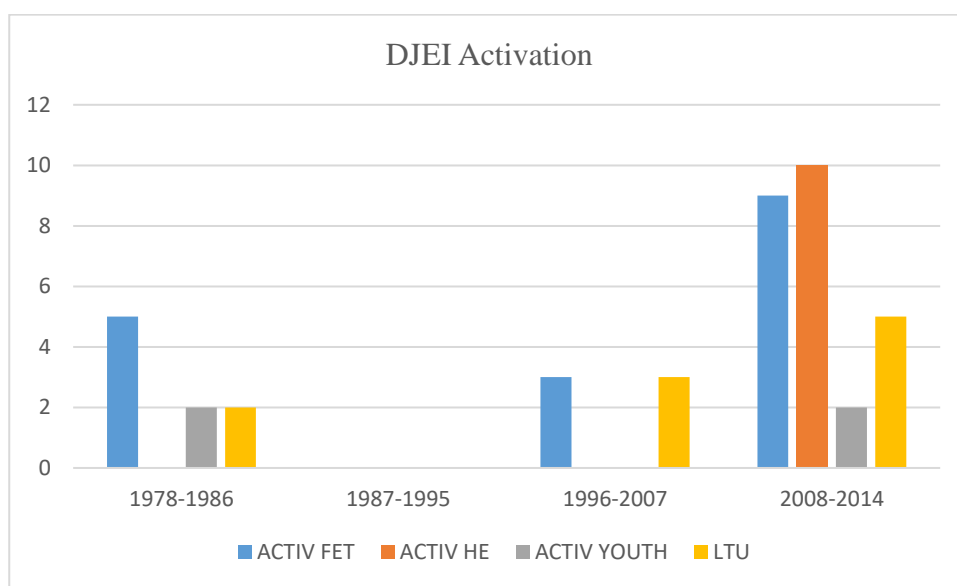
The government decision in 2010 to transfer responsibility to DES for the training functions of FÁS led to a convergence of both policy and institutional function. This convergence at the national level, however, has not as yet been matched with any corresponding changes at the regional or local level to the structure of programmes now provided within the ETBs. This raises the question about the local capacity to deliver on this national policy. This issue will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Expert Group on Future Skills Needs

Within the field of active labour market policy, the area of skills forecasting has been a significant issue since the 1960s in Ireland. Predicting the future skills needs of the economy is a complex task and not an exact science. Figure 6.33 shows the distribution of references to skills needs in the policy documents in 1973-2014 period, namely, skills shortages (SHORT), skills miss match (MISSMAT), future skills needs (FUTURE), and skills needed as a result of on-going scientific and technological advances (Scitech Change). The particular form of skills need varies between periods of economic growth and decline. However, over the entire period of the study there are continuous references to the issue of skills forecasting or future skills needs. Needless to say, the forecasting of future skills needs is closely linked to the changing profile of Ireland's economic activity. As discussed earlier in this chapter, Ireland's economy has changed considerably over the period of this study with the shift away from agriculture and towards services (Figure 6.1). The impact of FDI on Ireland's economy over the period has been significant. Combined with the emergence of the knowledge economy from the late 1990s until the present day, all have contributed to make the task of forecasting future skills needs highly complex.

In 1997 the White Paper on Human Resource Development (Department of Enterprise and Employment, 1997) referred to this issue. It states:

> "One of the key roles of the State in the training area is to identify and monitor strategic trends and developments with regard to skills needs" (p. 120).

At the time, as the Irish economy was growing rapidly, during what became known as the Celtic Tiger years, skills shortages began to emerge, particularly in the technology sector of the FDI sector of the economy. As a response to this issue, the Expert Group for Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) was established in 1997. However, while there is a noticeable increase in

the 1996-2007 period, it is in the 2008-2014 period that a significant increase takes place. The references in this period are predominantly in the *Action Plan for Jobs* documents.

In the next section attention will turn to the convergence of education and training from being two separate areas of government policy to being a single entity under one government department.

Figure 6.33   Skills Needs
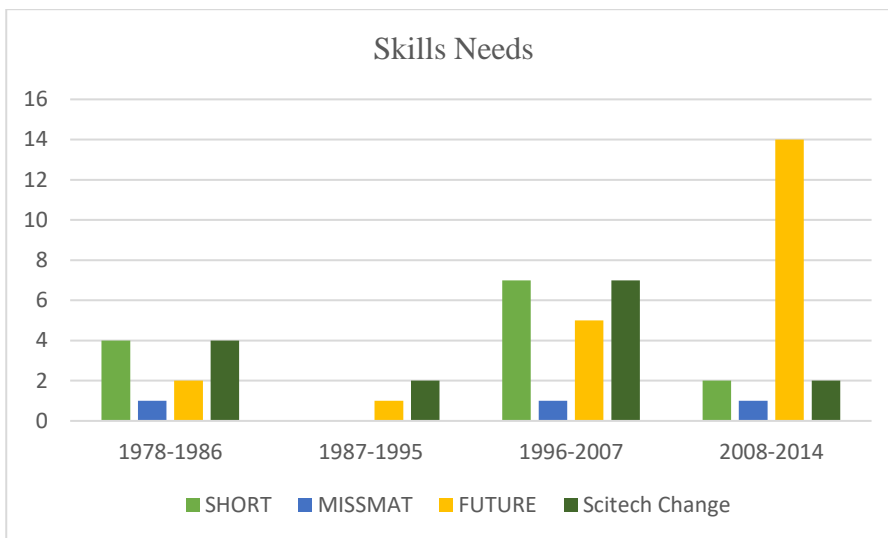
6.4.1.4   Convergence of Education and Training

The original division between education and training has its origins in the societal value attributed to each. This is also the case with the division between academic or liberal education, and vocational education and training. Dewey (1916) argues that the dichotomy between the two is a fallacy and ultimately damaging:

> "No one is just an artist and nothing else, and in so far as one approximates that condition, he is so much the less developed human being; he is a monstrosity" (p.168).

Whitehead (1932) expresses a similar view and argues that there is no technical education that is not liberal and no liberal education that is not

technical. Deane (2005) describes the distinction between education and training as "artificial" (p.289). Trant (2003) is of the view that a move towards a combination of the 'liberal' and the 'vocational' is the most appropriate course. In Ireland the convergence of education and training was strongly influenced by the supranational bodies such as the OECD and the EU within the overall active approach to labour market policy. Article 126 of the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 brought education within the competence of the EU, while Article 127 referred to training. The White Paper on *Growth, Competitiveness, Employment* (European Commission, 1993) is replete with references to the education and training system. This is also the case in the 1995 White Paper on *Education and Training* (European Commission, 1995). The OECD Jobs Study (OECD, 1994) also made abundant references to education and training. Clearly, the use of the phrase 'education and training' as a single entity in these documents is very much placed within the manpower, labour market, and, indeed, skill formation arenas. This is in keeping with the human capital theorists' perspective of the connection between education and training and the labour market. The same phraseology is clearly evident in both the Green Paper in Education (Department of Education, 1992) and the White Paper on Education (Department of Education, 1995). However, it is in the area of certification and qualifications where this convergence is given a specific relief. The certification and qualifications system in Ireland witnessed the convergence of education and training both horizontally within the FET sector, and vertically, through the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), between FET and higher education.

This horizontal and vertical convergence of education and training was also given impetus within the European context, specifically, the European Court of Justice ruling in the Gravier case (Case 293/83 – Françoise Gravier v the City of Liège). This judgement was delivered in February 1985, prior to the Maastricht Treaty, when European competence was limited to vocational training and not education. This case involved Mme Gravier, a French citizen, going to the Académie Royale des Beux-Arts in Liège, in Belgium, to study strip cartoon art, a four-year course of higher art

education. As she was not a Belgian citizen the institute wanted to charge Mme Gravier the international student fee. In its judgement the Court cited the common vocational policy in Article 128 of the Treaty of Rome as well as subsequent decisions of the European Council. The judgement states:

> "The general guidelines laid down by the Council in 1971…state that 'in view of the constantly changing needs of the economy the aim' of vocational training 'should be to offer everyone the opportunity of basic and advanced training and a continuity of in-service training designed, from a general and vocational point of view, to enable the individual to develop his personality and to take up a career" (paragraph 29).

The Court concluded:

> "… any form of education which prepares for a qualification for a particular profession, trade or employment or which provides the necessary training and skills for such a profession, trade or employment is vocational training, whatever the age and the level of training of the pupils or students, and even if the training programme includes an element of general education" (paragraph 30).

> "…the term 'vocational training' includes courses in strip cartoon art provided by an institution of higher art education where that institution prepares students for a qualification for a particular profession, trade or employment or provides them with the skills necessary for such a profession, trade or employment" (paragraph 31).

This judgement by the Court defined vocational training as including higher education programmes leading to a specific occupation. This also included medicine, accounting, and law. This ruling also formed the basis of what became the Erasmus programme in which the EU funded higher education student work placements in another Member State. Interestingly, the

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Erasmus programme was not available to VET students until recent years through the Erasmus+ programme.

The 1990's in Ireland saw the convergence of education and training being influenced from within the social partnership process. In particular, the influence of the Community Pillar within the process, coinciding with the publication of the first National Anti-Poverty Strategy, put education at the centre of discussion on social inclusion. The process resulted in the Department of Education widening the range of stakeholder groups that it had been dealing with to include the then separate training sector.

Figure 6.34   References to 'Education and Training' and 'Education' or 'Training'
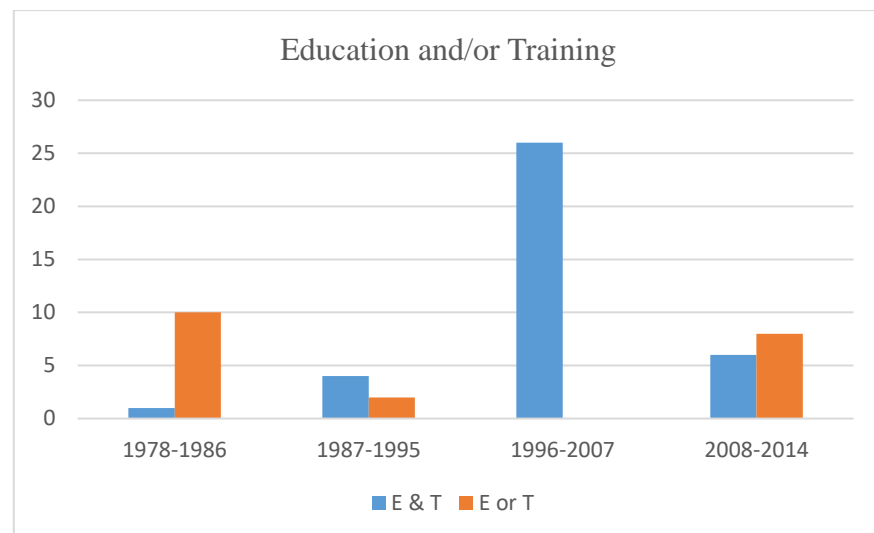
Results from the document analysis show that during the first three time periods references to education and training as a single entity increase significantly with a corresponding decline in their being referred to separately (Figure 6.34). There is also a noticeable decline in references to either combination in the fourth period. However, as the results in Figure 6.35 show the inclusion of references to 'skills' generates an interesting pattern. While references to skills are recorded across all four time periods, there is an increase of over 300% in the third and fourth periods. While the increase in references to skills began to increase in the mid-1990s in the social partnership documents, it was the publication of the White Paper on

Human Resource Development in 1997 (Department of Enterprise and Employment, 1997) that signalled the beginning of the significant increase. This period also coincided with the OECD Jobs study and the launch of the European Employment Strategy. The third time period, 1996-2007, culminated in the publication of Ireland's first National Skills Strategy (EGFSN, 2007). Internationally, the development of national skills strategies began to increase around this time (European Commission, 2008b, 2010; OECD, 2011, 2012a). Equally, given the Irish governments decision to transfer policy responsibility for training to DES, the policy convergence of education and training had been completed at a departmental level.

Figure 6.35   References to 'Education and Training', and 'Education' or
               'Training', and 'Skills'
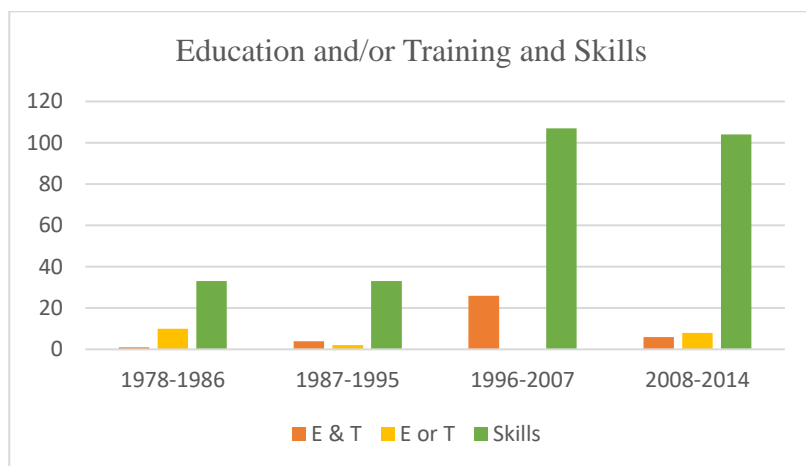
6.4.1.5   Convergence of Certification and Qualifications

The policy debate around certification and qualifications in what is now referred to as FET can be seen as going through three phases:

1. 1970s and 1980s - Absence of a National Qualifications System;
2. 1990s – Design of a National Qualifications System; and,
3. From 1999 - Implementation phase.

The discussion in this section will be broken down into these three phases and will include references in the primary source documents to the key drivers during each of these phases. Figure 6.36 shows how the references to qualifications in general as well, as specific attributes of a qualifications system, have increased in volume over time.

Figure 6.36   Certification and Qualifications by date
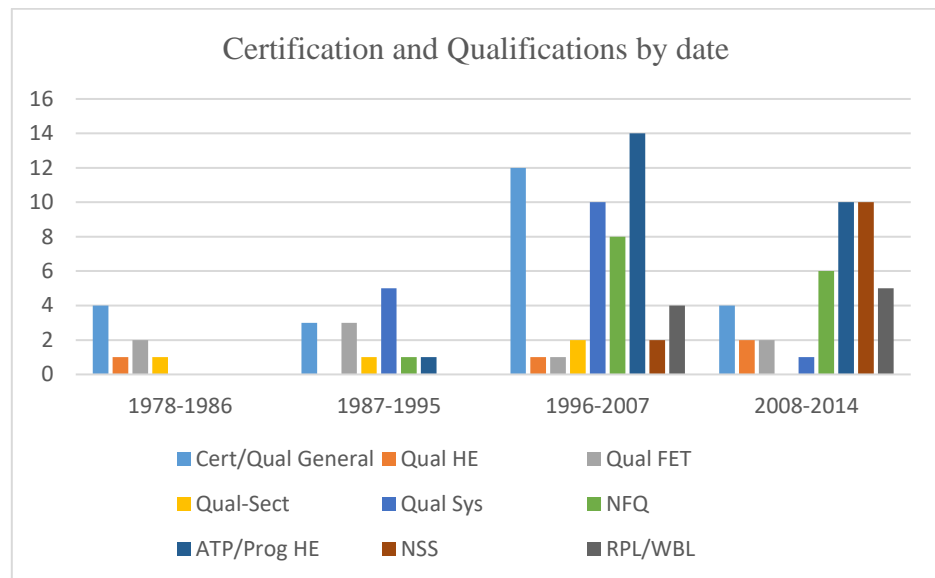
The 1996-2007 shows the highest number of references in the document analysis, which coincides with the work of TEASTAS, and the passing of the Qualifications Act in 1999. It is interesting to note that, during this period the issue of access, transfer and progression, including progression from FET to higher education, is the most prominent (Figure 6.37).

The 1970s and 1980s- Absence of a National Qualifications System

The discussion in Chapter Four outlined the circumstances which led to the passing of the Industrial Training Act in 1967 and the subsequent establishment of the first Industrial Training Authority, AnCO. As apprenticeship at that time was a time-served rather than standards-based system, the issue of certification was given little or no attention. At the same time however, the Report of the Steering Committee of Technical Education in 1969 (Steering Committee on Technical Education, 1969), in

its discussion on the establishment of the Regional Technical Colleges, was explicit about the need for a certifying body, the proposed name of which, the National Council for Educational Awards, was ultimately used in the body established in 1972.

Figure 6.37   Certification and Qualification by Issue
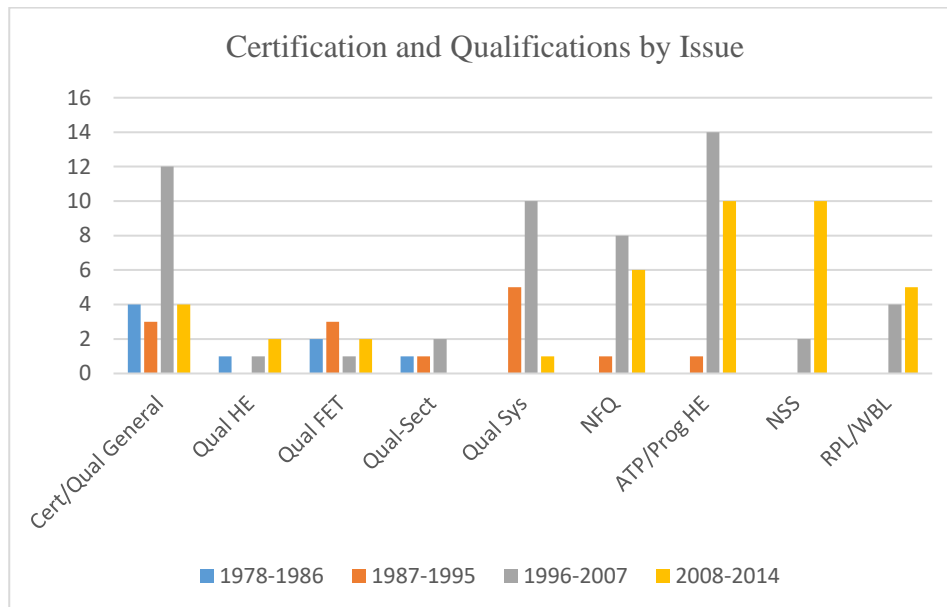
Within the post-primary sector, in 1978, the Pre-Employment Course (PEC) was introduced in response to high youth unemployment. These courses were specifically targeted at young people to prepare them for the school to work transition, many of who had little or no qualifications from school. In 1984 the successor to the PEC, the Vocational Preparation and Training (VPT) programme, had similar objectives (Department of Education, 1984c). The irony of this situation is that a new system of vocational preparation, or 'continuation education', targeting young people with little or no qualifications from school, was established without any national certification being made available. The absence of such certification led the individual providers to follow the example of AnCo and seek certification from UK certification bodies such as City and Guilds, Pitman Institute, and BTEC. While the Department of Education has described this period as one of curricular experimentation (Department of Education, 1980, 1984a), this was also a period of experimentation in school-based assessment methodologies. Cumulatively, within post-primary education, and in

particular the VEC sector, this period was characterised by creativity and development at the school level. Some of the larger VECs, such as City of Dublin VEC, developed their own certification system for these programmes. Some schools and colleges developed franchise arrangements with UK-based colleges and universities for the delivery of programmes.

By the mid-1980s, the issue of the mutual recognition and comparability of vocational training qualifications between Member States, in order to facilitate the free movement of workers, was gaining prominence (European Council, 1985). This was part of the establishment of the single market in Europe defined as comprising "an area without internal frontiers in which the free movement of goods, persons, services and capital is ensured in accordance with the provisions of this Treaty" (Article 8a of the Single European Act, 1987). The first general directive from the European Council (European Council, 1989) on the recognition of higher education diplomas of at least three years duration not already covered by Sectoral Directives, such as medicine, and architecture, was adopted in December 1988. A second general directive from the Council (European Council, 1992), adopted in 1992, covered other regulated professions requiring higher education of less than three years, or post-second-level VET qualifications (NCVA, 1992). This momentum in Europe proved to be one of the catalysts for the developments at a national level in Ireland. By the early 1990's criticism of the absence of a national certification system was also coming from employers (Culliton, 1992). While referring specifically to the certification of FÁS training programmes predominantly by City and Guilds of London, Roche and Tansey (1992) state:

> "The use of British certification/qualification standards is inappropriate. These are no longer an index of best European practice. German standards should provide the model against which Irish training is measured" (p.vi).

The Culliton Report (1992) echoes this view when its states that "the British approach has not served us well in this area" (p.54). These comments could

equally apply to the transition programmes provided in schools. At this time a working group had been established in the Department of Education to examine the issue of national certification for the transition programmes. The outcome of its work will be discussed in the next section which looks at developments in the 1990s.

The 1990's – Design of a National Qualifications System

In the context of the European Community strategy to enhance the vocational qualifications of young people under 25 years of age, a working group was established in the Department of Education. Trant (2002) quotes a senior DES official who states that it was:

> "… increasingly clear that a formalised certification system for vocational education and training outside the mainstream system was needed, and there was a strong awareness of what was happening elsewhere in Europe and the focus in Europe on systems of vocational education and training" (p. 117).

While some consideration had been given to extending the remit of the existing NCEA, it was decided in the end to proceed with a separate body (Trant, 2002). The National Council for Vocational Awards was established by the Minister for Education on an *ad hoc* basis in 1991. The following year, after the publication of the Culliton Report, the Department of Education published a Green Paper on Education (Department of Education, 1992). In the certification arena the Green Paper proposed the establishment of a new national body with responsibility for certification in the vocational and technical education space. The new Council for Educational and Vocational Awards (CEVA) would incorporate the two existing bodies, NCEA and NVCA. In many ways, this proposal, while not implemented in this form, has similarities with the state agency now on place in this area, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI).

While the NCVA set about its work and commenced certifying programmes in 1993, it made initial proposals for a national framework of vocational qualifications (NCVA, 1992). This framework consisted of five levels, the first three of which were to be awarded by the NCVA while the upper two were to be awarded by NCEA. This framework was developed in line with the European Framework proposed by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) and the practice in other Member States (NCVA, 1992). Two further European Directives in this areas No. 94/38/EC (European Commission, 1994), and No. 95/43/EC (European Commission, 1995), along with the first and second general directives, were given legal effect in Ireland in 1996 (S.I. No. 135/1996). In 1995, when the White Paper on Education (Department of Education, 1995) was published, the national debate in relation to certification and qualifications had progressed apace. This period also coincided with significant developments in Europe since the Maastricht Treaty of 1992, as discussed earlier in the Chapter. The White Paper contained a proposal for the establishment of a national certification authority, TEASTAS (which means 'certificate' in Irish). TEASTAS was established on an *ad hoc* basis and operated from 1995 until 1998. It was the first attempt to establish some form of overall coordination for all the certifying bodies. Attempting to coordinate the activities of existing bodies proved very difficult and, indeed, some of the proposals made by TEASTAS were regarded as controversial (Trant, 2002). The level of opposition from the stakeholder bodies was such that the then Minister for Education, Mr Mícheál Martin, suspended TEASTAS' operations and decided to pursue the legislative route (Trant, 2002).

1999 – Implementation Phase

Following the suspension of TEASTAS operations, preparation began on the legislation to establish a national qualifications system. The two certifying bodies, NCEA and NCVA continued to operate during this period. The Qualifications Act was passed in 1999 and was a seminal event in Irish education. For the first time Ireland had a national qualifications

system. Under the Act, the organisational structure mirrored that of TEASTAS, namely, a coordinating body, the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI), and two certifying bodies, the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC), and the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC).

While DJEI and DES were the two primary departments in the skill formation space, there were other government departments with an interest in these developments. The Qualifications Act resulted in the horizontal convergence of FET certification across the further education, industrial training, and sectoral training arenas. This was evident in the representative membership of the FETAC Council. Membership of the Council also included representatives of the employers and trade unions. The membership of the 18 member FETAC Council, as set out in section 13(2) of the 1999 Act, is shown in Appendix 6.

The three bodies established under the Act commenced operations in June 2001. This coincided with a number of significant developments at European level as discussed in Chapter Three, namely, the Lisbon Strategy, the Bologna process in higher education, and the Copenhagen process in VET. The effect of the establishment of the three bodies was most dramatic in the FET sector. The NCEA became HETAC, which primarily involved a change of name for the organisation. However, in the FET sector, the establishment of FETAC was the first time there was a single national certifying body for all FET provision under the responsibility of four government departments as described above.

FETAC continued to operate the four separate certification processes inherited from the different bodies under the FETAC banner, i.e. NCVA, FÁS, Teagasc, and CERT. The next logical development was to bring these four processes together and to rationalise existing awards into a single list available to all providers, in other words, the Common Awards System. This process began in 2009/2010 and completed in 2015/2016.

National Framework of Qualifications

The significance of the 1999 Qualifications Act is that it gave Ireland two interrelated and interdependent developments – a national qualifications system and a national framework of qualifications. While Ireland might have been behind the developments in other countries in relation to the system of qualifications, the work being done to develop the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) was in the vanguard of European developments in this area. The experience in Scotland and New Zealand were of particular interest in the early stages. While the Scottish framework was limited to vocational qualifications, New Zealand had completed a full framework including all awards. The New Zealand legislation was studied at this time when the legislation was being prepared by DES.

The first task in designing a national framework of qualifications was to decide the number of levels and how each level was defined. Following extensive consultations the decision was made to construct a framework of ten levels based on learning outcomes, with each level being described in terms of the appropriate level of knowledge, skill and competence to be demonstrated by the learner. One issue that resulted in what appears to be a compromise was the two sets of level six awards, one each for FETAC and HETAC, but with only one level six on the framework. This was a consequence of the process to place the range of existing awards already in use. It is interesting to note that the rationalisation of these two levels of awards has yet to occur.

One of the main drivers to establish a national framework of qualifications was the issue of access, transfer and progression. Interest in access and progression can be traced back to the Green Paper of 1992 and most especially in the White Paper of 1995. Granville (2003) argues that the emergence of the National Framework of Qualifications in Ireland was driven mainly by the FET sector.

"…the main dynamic driving the emergence of the framework has been in the newly confident further education and vocational education and training sectors, where two decades of ground-level initiatives resulted in the establishment of new national certification systems" (p.259).

There was significant interest in the potential of the framework from the FET sector and FETAC were publically very strong supporters of it. The higher education sector, on the other hand, was more focused on the Bologna process in Europe. A European influence on the promotion of recognition for non-formal and informal learning is also clearly evident in the framework. The use of the term 'learner' in the 1999 Act was a deliberate attempt to include non-formal and informal learning in the conceptualisation of those engaged in learning. The terms 'pupil' and 'student' are most associated with a person enrolled in a formal programme of study within a school/college/university, while 'trainee' is often associated with a person engaged in a formal training programme. The term 'learner' is inclusive of both of these formal scenarios as well as the non-formal and the informal.

Clearly, the most prominent issue to emerge from the analysis is that of access, transfer and progression, including the issue of progression from FET to higher education. By placing FET and higher education on the NFQ, as well as having the two certifying bodies coordinated by the NQAI, a degree of vertical convergence between FET and HE took place under the 1999 Act. The initial convergence process meant that for the first time all qualifications in both FET and HE were described in terms of learning outcomes, i.e. used the same 'language'. This generated an impetus for progression from FET to higher education which had emerged in the early 1990s.

At each level of the framework, despite the national access policy, access to programmes continues to be the control of the provider institutions, be they colleges of further education in an ETB or higher education institutions. As

discussed earlier in the chapter, enrolments in higher education are continually on the increase, primarily from post-primary students who have completed the Leaving Certificate examination. Progression from the FET sector to higher education has tended to be sporadic and inconsistent. It tends to be focused on higher education courses that attract lower numbers of Leaving Certificate students - a situation more akin to recruitment than access or progression.

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)

As the Great Recession was taking hold in Ireland the government, as part of its cost cutting measures, was looking at the amalgamation of state agencies and quangos across all departments. In 2008, in the education arena, the government decided to amalgamate the three bodies established under the 1999 Qualifications Act, namely, NQAI, HETAC and FETAC, along with the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB), to form a single body with responsibility for quality assurance for all post-secondary education and training, and for qualifications in FET and the element of the higher education sector outside of the universities and Dublin Institute of Technology. This body, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), was established under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012. In convergence terms, both horizontal and vertical convergence has been increased. With the establishment of QQI the four legacy bodies ceased operations in 2012.

The amalgamation into a single body was the next logical step in the development of the national qualifications system. The 2008 decision initiated the formal discussions and an acceleration of the process. QQI can be seen in many ways as the manifestation of the proposal in the 1992 Green Paper referred to above of a single certifying body, i.e. the Council for Education and Vocational Awards. Figure 6.38 charts the convergence of the certification and qualification system as discussed above.

Figure 6.38   Convergence of Certification and Qualification System
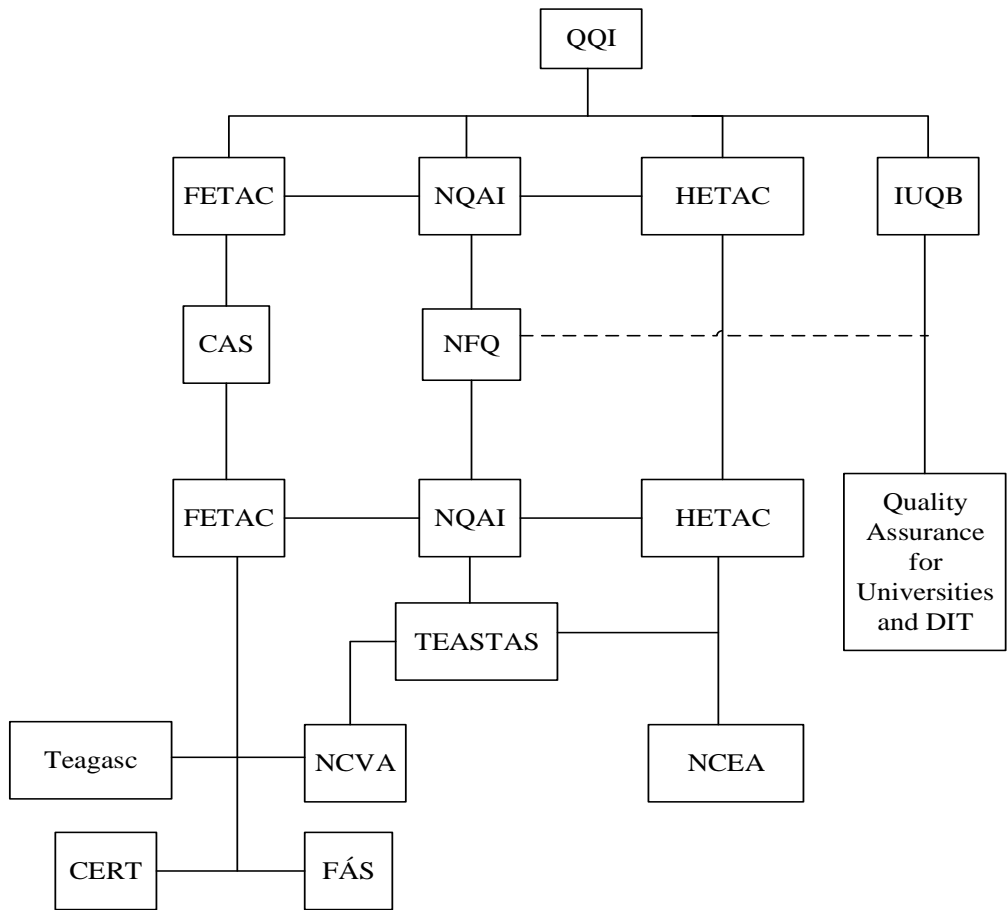
The final section of this Chapter will discuss the theme of the institutional and organisational convergence trajectories evident in the regionalisation and rationalisation of the public administration of FET in Ireland. This discussion will culminate with the establishment of SOLAS and the launch of the FET Strategy in May, 2014.

6.4.1.6   Regionalisation and Rationalisation of the Administration of FET

The discussion in this section will be divided in to three main elements. Firstly, there will be an overview of developments in public administration generally. This will be followed by a discussion of public administration developments in education and training. Finally, the discussion will focus on how the public administration of FET in Ireland has evolved culminating in the establishment of SOLAS in October 2013, and the launch of the FET Strategy in 2014. As the title of this section suggests, the discussion will be

focussing on the theme of regionalisation and rationalisation in public administration within the context of institutional and organisational change and convergence.

Public Administration

Public administration is a central part of the life of the state (Hardiman & MacCarthaigh, 2010a). Like any other aspect of the state it is not a static entity and is subject to change (MacCarthaigh, 2012). When Ireland gained independence in 1922, the administration of the new Irish Free State was based on the Westminster-type system inherited from the British (Uí Mhaoldúin, 2007). The original 11 government departments, established under the Ministers and Secretaries Act of 1924, was extended to 15 in 1937 under Article 28 of the Irish Constitution. The first major review of public administration did not occur until the late 1960s with the publication of the Devlin Report (1969). This report observed that the level of involvement by government departments in the details of day-to-day administration, rather than on more strategic planning of medium to long-term issues, was a major cause of concern (McCarthy, 2005). In the 1980's, a White Paper on the Public Service (Department of the Public Service, 1985) emphasised the development of training, encouraging initiative and managing of results (Uí Mhaoldúin. 2007).

In the 1990s the Strategic Management Initiative (SMI) was launched by the government in 1994. This promoted the concepts of strategic planning and accountability. SMI was in keeping with international trends, which began in the 1980s, to incorporate private sector corporate planning practice and free market practices into public administration, an approach known as New Public Management (NPM). In response to the government decision on SMI a coordinating group of Department Secretaries developed a report on the implementation of SMI in the Civil Service, *Delivering Better Government* (Department of the Taoiseach, 1996). It describes the central thrust of the report as being "the achievement of an excellent service for the Government and for the public as customers and clients at all levels" (p.6).

Hardiman and MacCarthaigh (2011) describe the SMI as an Irish style of NPM. The Public Service Management Act, 1997, enshrined much of the SMI concepts of strategic planning and the obligation to produce strategic plans into legislation. Murray (2001) highlights the influence of the international bodies such as the OECD and the EU, as well as the American corporations that invested in Ireland, as part of the context within which the SMI reforms emerged. He also observes that "the fact that Ireland's approach to reform was titled the 'strategic management initiative' is itself an important rhetorical and symbolic signal" (p.5). Some ten years later the OECD conducted a review of Irish public services (OECD, 2008) and produced a "landmark report on the Irish public service" (Boyle & MacCarthaigh, 2011, p.9). It states:

> "Ireland is now on a path of transformation, moving from an input-control to a more output- and outcome-oriented system. This is in keeping with the direction in which most OECD countries are moving. Ireland has significantly advanced along the '*New Public Management"* continuum…" (OECD, 2008, p.18, emphasis in the original).

In relation to the level of coordination it observes:

> "While it has created structures and systems to enable horizontal co-ordination, the Public Service remains segmented overall, leading to sub-optimal coherence in policy development, implementation and service delivery" (p.12).

The report recommends a more integrated approach to public services and rather than developing new structures it proposes the adoption of new practices, what it refers to as a networked approach to working:

> "Rather than create new structures, an integrated Public Service is one where individuals are enabled to work together across existing structures to allow greater connectivity between sectors (central

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government, health, education, local government, etc.) agencies and parent departments, as well as greater connectivity with stakeholders outside the Public Service" (p.13).

The Action Plan for Jobs (Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, 2012, 2013, 2014) is an example of this integrated approach. In response to the OECD report the then Taoiseach, Mr Brian Cowan, appointed a Task Force on the Public Service. The report of the Taskforce, *Transforming Public Services* (Department of the Taoiseach, 2008), contained a wide range of recommendations, a high proportion of which related to "establishing performance-related targets for all branches of government" (Rhodes & Boyle, 2012, p.45). It also recommended the re-evaluation of the number and mandate of the various agencies. It particular it recommends that:

> "… the OECD proposal for a new 'performance dialogue' between Department and agencies be given effect by introducing new governance and performance frameworks which clarify the expected achievements of agencies and the framework within which performance targets and resources will be agreed with parent Departments" (p.6)

In 2011, following a change of government, and during the Troika Years, a new Public Service Reform Plan was launched (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, 2011). This was followed by a second reform programme in 2014. The distribution of references to public service reform in the primary source documents is shown in Figure 6.39. It includes references to reform in general, regionalisation or rationalisation, the coordination of functions by interdepartmental committees or ministers of state, and finally references to integrated public services.

In Figure 6.39 references to coordination can be seen to decrease over the time period and are absent from the primary source documents in the 2008-2014 period. On the other hand, references to integrated public services

increase toward the latter end of the same period. These references to integrated public services in the 2008-2014 period coincide with the OECD review in 2008 and the *Transforming Public Services* follow up report. References to reform in general are highest in the 1996-2007 period which coincided with the launch of the SMI, the *Delivering Better Government* report in 1996, and the Public Service Management Act of 1997. The high incidence of references to both reform and regionalisation/rationalisation in the 2008-2014 period coincides with the public service reform programme in 2011 and the rationalisation of state agencies which followed the OECD and *Transforming Public Service* reports in 2008.

Figure 6.39   Public Service Reform
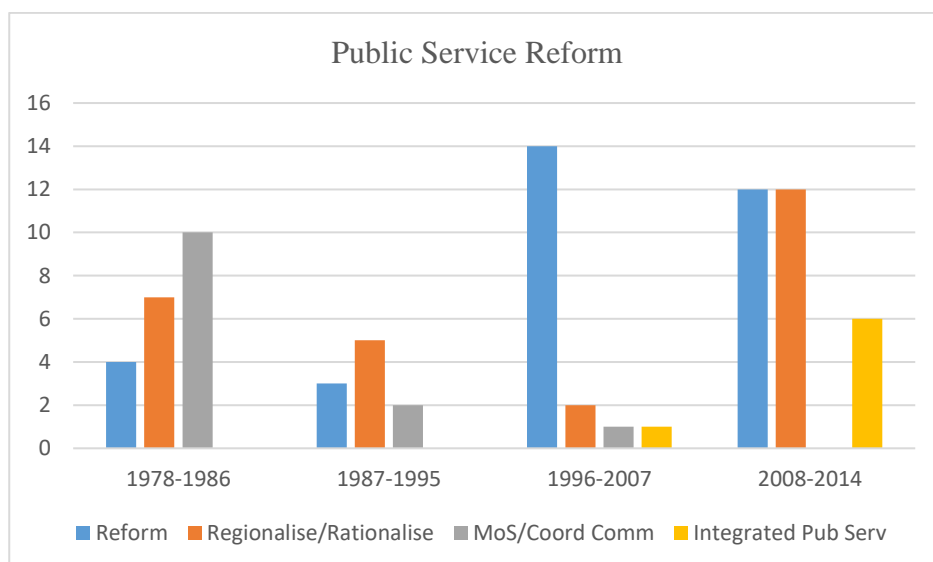
Figure 6.40 shows the distribution of references to NPM concepts, such as, strategic planning and accountability, in the primary source documents over the time period. The peak of such references is clearly in the 1996-2007 period, which coincides with the launch of SMI and the associated reports referred to above.

In the next section the discussion will focus on the establishment of and developments within the area of state agencies. This will be of particular relevance when the discussion moves on to developments in education and training.

Figure 6.40   New Public Management

Key: A full list of the themes, categories and codes is in Appendix 2.
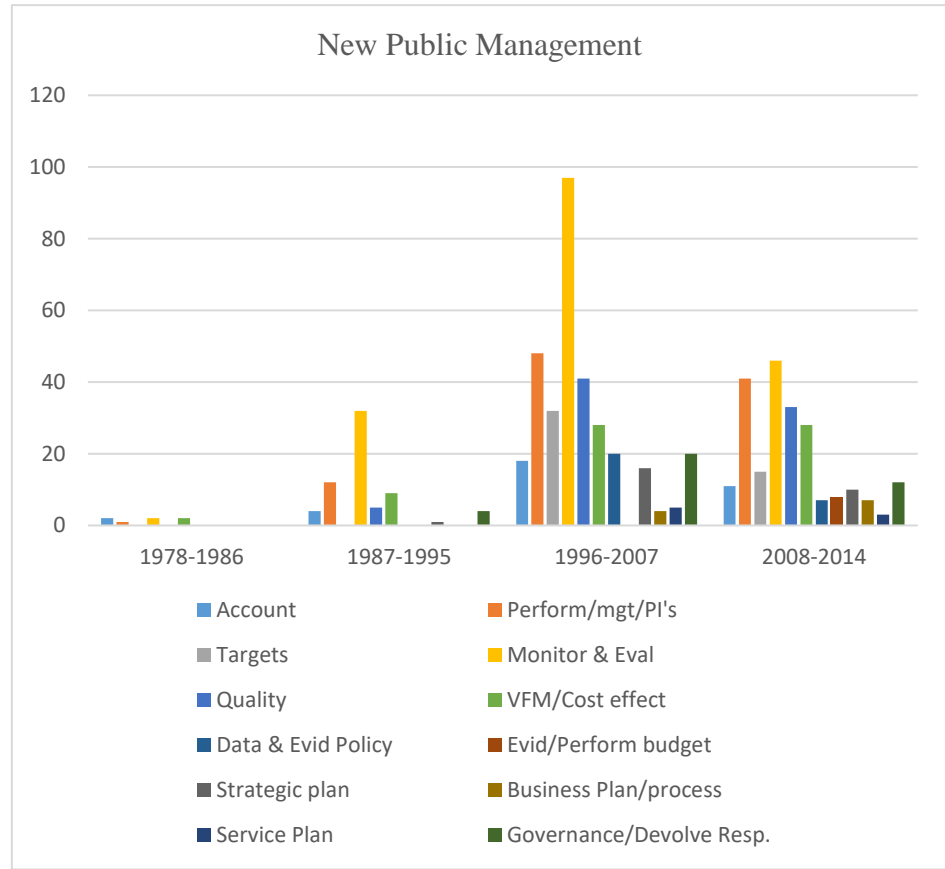
State Agencies

As mentioned earlier, the Devlin Report (1969) highlighted the over-concentration on day-to-day issues by government departments. From the 1970s an increasing number of agencies were established under the aegis of various government departments with the view to some of these day-to-day tasks being delegated to them. MacCarthaigh (2012) argues that "modern public administration is increasingly agency-centred and no examination of a national bureaucracy can ignore their role" (p.131). He refers to the delegated governance process of creating agencies as 'agencification'. As Figure 6.41 shows the rate of increase of agencies in Ireland increased dramatically in the 1980's and 1990's. As MacCarthaigh (2012) points out:

"While agencies are ubiquitous internationally, the recent agencification explosion is symptomatic of a wider international trend towards specialisation and fragmentation in government, which has been ongoing since the late 1980s" (p.128).

Figure 6.41   Establishment Irish State Agencies over time
Source: Hardiman and MacCarthaigh, 2011, p.16.
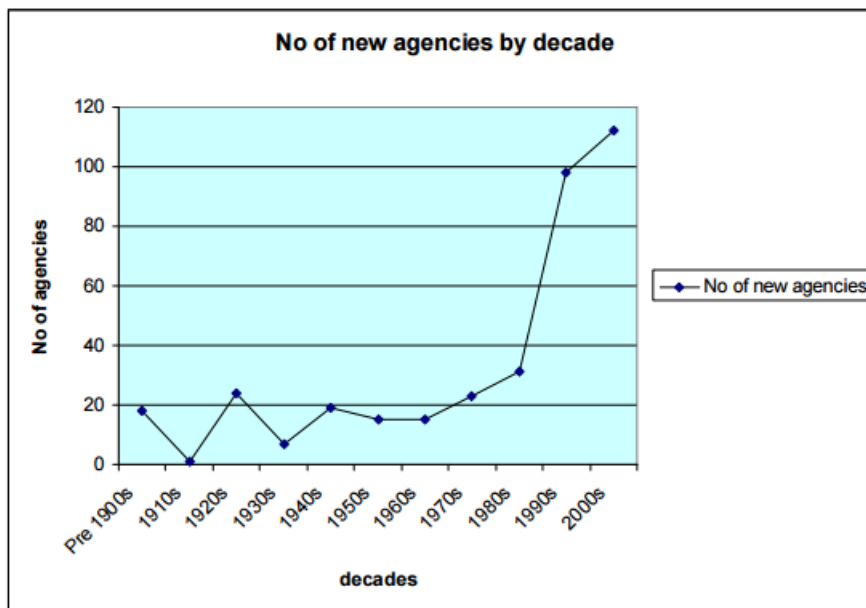
Figure 6.42 shows the distribution of state agencies by principal policy domain established over time. It is interesting to note that significant and continually increasing levels of activity in this area occurred in the education and training policy domain. This process of agencification facilitates a shift away from centralised control to a more devolved model of governance. It also allows for the development of specialisation in areas of public policy and administration. However, this can also lead to increased levels of complexity in terms of the overall governance of the policy arenas in terms of reporting and monitoring processes. With a focus on agencies in Ireland, MacCarthaigh (2012) describes their growth as unstructured and diverse in nature. He observes that in the absence of a clear framework for the establishment of agencies, the agency landscape in Ireland has resulted in what he terms an "organisational zoo" (p.134), which echoes the

observations of the OECD (2008) and the *Transforming Public Service* report (Department of the Taoiseach, 2008) discussed above.

Figure 6.42   Principal Policy Domains of Irish State Agencies
Source: Hardiman and MacCarthaigh, 2010b, p.8.
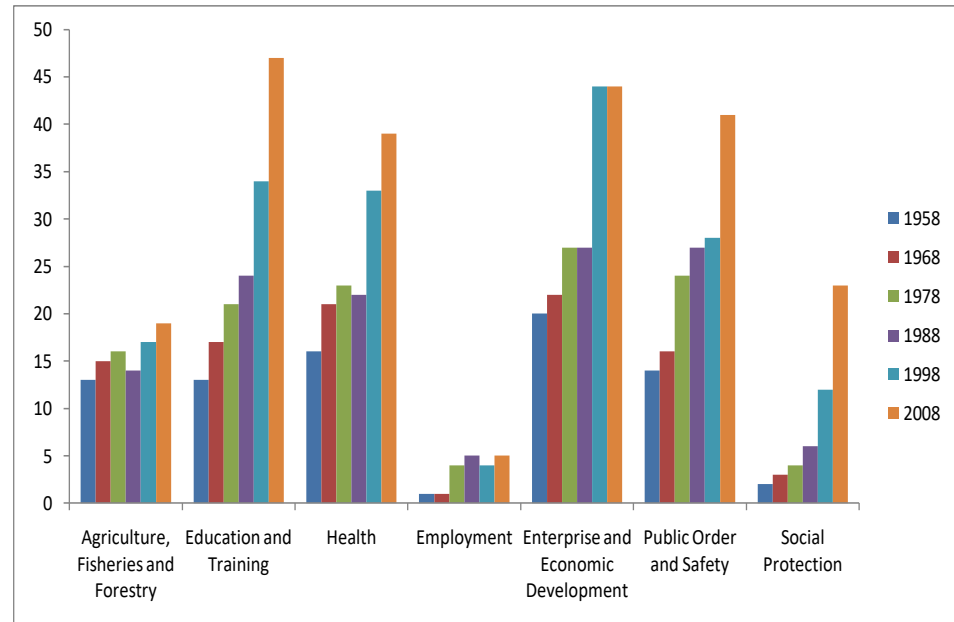
Christensen and Lægreid (2007) describe agencification as one of the negative effects of NPM. They identify a recent reversal of this process of delegated governance to what they describe as a 'whole-of-government' approach. They argue that the emergence of such post-NPM reforms was a reaction to the undermining of central and political control which resulted from the NPM reforms. The proposals in the *Transforming Public Services* report sought to re-establish political control over many of these agencies by their parent department. The Great Recession was a facilitating factor in this process whereby the government, in the context of seeking to reduce costs, reviewed the existing suite of agencies. Some, such as Forfás, were absorbed back into their parent department, while others were amalgamated, such as the example of QQI discussed earlier in the chapter.

As discussed in Chapter Four, the concept of an intermediate tier in the administration of education and training has been a standard feature of vocational and technical education from its inception in Ireland. The development of an intermediate tier in the primary and secondary sectors of the education system was more problematic due to the powerful opposition of the Catholic Church, and the non-interventionist approach of the Irish government. Within the education domain, there were a number of unsuccessful attempts to introduce intermediate structures during the first two decades of the twentieth century. The Wyndam Bill of 1904, the Irish Council Bill of 1907 and the MacPherson Bill of 1919 all contained such proposals and were all unsuccessful (Ó Buachalla, 1988). After independence the Department of Education was established under the Ministers and Secretaries Act of 1924, resulting in a rationalisation of the previous collection of bodies administering education into a single government department. Since then, the only intermediate tier within its administrative structure has been the VEC system established in 1930. In the unpublished Duggan Report of 1962 a proposal was made for the introduction of local statutory committees for post-primary education (Bonel-Elliott, 1996). In 1969, as part of the development of the policy on Regional Technical Colleges, the Steering Committee on Technical Education (Steering Committee on Technical Education, 1969) proposed the establishment of 10 Regional Education Council into which the existing VEC structure would be absorbed. As the report states:

> "We suggest that consideration be given to the establishment of Regional Education Councils having accountability in as much as possible for all education in each of the regions" (p.30).

These proposals, as well as those contained in the Duggan report, were not progressed. However, the proposal to establish a National Council for Educational Awards (NCEA) to provide certification for courses in the new RTCs was implemented. A second agency, the Higher Education

Authority, was established in 1971 to coordinate policy, planning and funding to higher education.

In the post-primary sector of education, the 1970s proved to be a period of controversy in relation to the control and management of the new community schools. Proposals issued by the department in 1971 were subject to varying degrees of criticism from the VECs, the post-primary teachers unions and the educational authorities of the Protestant churches. The Protestant authorities were critical because the department's proposals had been agreed with the Catholic Church prior to being issued. During the mid-1970's the Minister for Education, Richard Burke, sought to develop a regional structure for the education system but, given the tensions existing in the post-primary system at the time, these proposals did not progress beyond the initial discussions and consultation (Ó Buachalla, 1988).

In the 1980s, the Report of the Commission on Adult Education (Commission on Adult Education, 1983), recommended the establishment of adult education boards at county level. The Programme for Action in Education (Department of Education, 1984b) proposed the "establishment of local co-ordination committees" (p.24). This document also proposed the establishment of the Curriculum and Examinations Board, later to become the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, and was the first agency established by the Department of Education for primary and post-primary education. The Green Paper on Education published in 1985 (Department of Education, 1985) states:

> "A regionalised educational service is consistent with the Government's stated policy in regard to local Government reform which embraces the principle of the devolution to local bodies of matters affecting the welfare and development of the communities which they represent" (p.9).

The financial crisis in the state finances in the 1980s resulted in a variety of rationalisation proposals not dissimilar to those of more recent times. For

example, as a cost-cutting measure at the time, a draft bill had been prepared in the late 1980s to reduce the number of VECs from 38 to 20, but was not progressed. This period also saw proposals in the White Paper on Manpower Policy (Department of Labour, 1986) to amalgamate a number of manpower agencies into a single body, FÁS, in 1988. The absence of intermediate structures drew comment from the OECD in its review of education policies in Ireland in 1991 (OECD, 1991) which had echoes of the Devlin Report from 1969:

> "The present position of the Department of Education in unenviable… its administrative task is so exacting as to leave small room for other activities…The Department is concerned with such minor matters because there is no administrative layer interposed between it and individual institutions" (pp.40-41).

The OECD report goes on to repeat a proposal contained in the Report of the Steering Committee on Technical Education (1969) regarding the incorporation of the existing VECs into larger regional bodies.

The period of the late 1980s and into the 1990s, which coincided with the beginning of social partnership, witnessed an increase in public debate on education matters. Walshe (1999) describes it as "an unstoppable momentum towards change on many fronts" (p.7). The Green Paper on Education (Department of Education, 1992) initiated a consultative process that dominated the 1990s, a period Walshe (1999) describes as frenetic and at times painful. One of the six key aims in the Green Paper of 1992 refers specifically to the devolution of administration. According to Walshe, however, a proposal for county committees of education was deleted from the final draft by the Minister for Education, Séamus Brennan,

> "Brennan, initially, feared that the county committees would become an enlarged version of Vocational Education Committees; unlike many Fianna Fáil party colleagues, he did not come across as a firm advocate and defender of the VEC system" (p.76).

As referred to earlier, the Green Paper also proposed the establishment of a new agency in what is now known as FET, namely, the Council for Educational and Vocational Awards. The 1993 Programme for Government (Programme for Government, 1993) contained proposals for intermediate structures at both primary and post-primary levels. The NESC (1993) also supported the proposal for an intermediate structure. The Report of the National Education Convention (1994), established as part of the consultation process following the Green Paper in 1992, states that:

> "The issue of regionalisation of authority for education has been a recurrent one in the history of Irish education…It would seem that a considerable change of attitude has occurred with regard to local educational authorities since the proposals were mooted in the Green Paper of 1985…" (p.18).

A Position Paper on Regional Education Councils (Department of Education, 1994) was published in 1994 containing a proposal for eight regional education councils to be based on the same eight regional authorities established under the Local Government Act of 1991.

In 1995, the White Paper (Department of Education, 1995) contained a proposal for ten Education Boards which would not include the VECs. The White Paper also included separate proposals to rationalise the number of VECs. In the end the proposal did not proceed following a change of government. A modest rationalisation of the VEC occurred with the five town-VECs amalgamated into their respective county VECs, thus reducing their number from 38 to 33. The White Paper also contained a proposal for a number of new agencies. The proposed Irish National Certification Authority, TEASTAS, was discussed earlier. A second agency, the Further Education Authority, was proposed to "provide a coherent national developmental framework, appropriate to the importance of vocational education and training (outside the third-level sector) and adult and continuing education" (p.86). With a striking resemblance to SOLAS

(minus the training element) this proposal was not progressed at the time. The end of the 1990s witnessed the passing of significant pieces of legislation in the education and training arena. In addition to the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999, discussed earlier in the chapter, the Universities Act of 1997 and the Education Act of 1998 were passed. The 1990s also saw the separation of the RTCs (later called Institutes of Technology) and Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) from their respective VECs.

The year 2000 was significant for both the further education and the training arenas. Funding from the ESF for PLC courses and for training provision ended. On the training side this resulted in the establishment of the National Training Fund (NTF) which was generated through a levy on employers. On the further education side the impact was not on the funding side but on the monitoring and evaluation side. Also, on the further education side, the White Paper on Adult Education contained a proposal for a review of the PLC sector. This review would focus on the structural issues relating to the provision of PLC programmes within second-level structures. Published in 2003 the McIver Report (Department of Education and Science, 2003) proposed a new staffing and resourcing structure for schools and colleges providing further education programmes. This report was not acted on to any great degree.

Department of Education and Skills, the ETBs and SOLAS

The Great Recession, which began in 2008, put the national finances under severe strain. As discussed earlier, GDP plummeted and unemployment soared. Unlike the recession of the 1980s, the two policy options available to the government within the stricture of the EU Treaties were reduction of costs and spending, and structural reform of the labour market (Regan, 2013). When the crisis began, and unemployment in particular began to increase markedly, all of FET provision was spread across four government departments. The impact of this fragmentation was highlighted as the Government sought to address the challenge of rapidly increasing

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unemployment. One commentator proposed a rationalisation of the current system.

> "What if the training elements of FÁS, Fáilte Ireland, Teagasc and BIM [Bord Iascaigh Mhara] were to join the further education schools and colleges, and indeed all the higher education institutions, under the remit of a Department of Education and Training? Could this ensure a more coherent, standardised approach across all sectors of education and training, further and higher?" (O'Sullivan, 2009).

As discussed earlier, the government had already announced the amalgamation of the quality and qualifications bodies in 2008. In 2010, the government transferred responsibility for the training function of FÁS to the renamed Department of Education and Skills. Responsibility for the employment services within FÁS was transferred to the renamed Department of Social Protection. 2010 also saw the decision to reduce the number of VECs from 33 to 16.

On the training side 2008 witnessed an expenses scandal in FÁS. The state training agency had become politically toxic and, despite the appointment of a new Director-General and a new Board of the organisation, the government decided in 2011 that FÁS should be disbanded. While this was announced by the out-going government it was implemented by the new Minister for Education and Skills, Mr Ruairí Quinn, in July 2011 when he announced the establishment of a new further education and training authority SOLAS (Seirbhísí Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna) (Quinn, 2011). In disbanding FÁS it was decided that the training centres would be transferred to the proposed 16 VECs which would be known as Education and Training Boards (ETBs). The establishment of the ETBs has echoes of the on-going proposals for an intermediate tier in the public administration of the education system. While the ETBs are not responsible for all education provision in their area the legislation is designed to facilitate such an extension of responsibility into the future.

A SOLAS Implementation Group under the chairmanship of the Minister of State for Skills, Mr Ciarán Cannon was established with representative of the Department of Education and Skills, FÁS, the Irish Vocational Education Association (the representative body for VECs), and the Department of Social Protection. It is interesting to note that there was no representative of the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation at this stage, even though, according to section 9 of the Further Education and Training Act, 2013, SOLAS is obliged to consult with the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation in developing the FET Strategy. In December 2011 a consultation paper on the establishment of SOLAS (Department of Education and Skills, 2011a) was published and launched the public phase of the consultation process after which an Action Plan for SOLAS (Department of Education, 2012) was published. The Further Education and Training Act was passed by the Dáil, the Irish Parliament, in 2013, as was the Education and Training Boards Act. The ETB's came into being on July 1st, 2013, while SOLAS commenced operation on October 27th, 2013.

In 2011 the government reached an agreement on a three-year financial assistance programme with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Commission, and the European Central Bank, a triumvirate known as 'the Troika'. On-going meetings were held throughout the period and specific actions and targets agreed.   Defending practices that were no longer viable became a wasted effort. While the sense of crisis facilitated an acceleration of the reforms "the Troika was quite a potent force in pushing change" (Baldwin, 2013). The extent of change since 2008 has been significant. Facilitated by the sense of national crisis, the usual forms of institutional defence did not have the same potency as they might normally have had. The Troika, for the three years of the programme, was a strong facilitator, and in some cases, a driver of change. However, credit must be given to the Department of Education officials who were key policy entrepreneurs during this episode. While the crisis facilitated a more receptive environment for change, the direction of change needed to be charted so the opportunity was not lost. From a FET perspective, the

decision to transfer responsibility for training to the renamed Department of Education and Skills was one of the most significant decisions for many years. This decision and the subsequent creation of the Skills Division in the Department headed up by an Assistant Secretary, created a critical mass within the Department. From a total post-secondary skill formation perspective, there are now two separate divisions each headed by a member of the Departments Senior Management Team to bring a coherence to this policy area which has hitherto been absent. This critical mass has led to an increased level of cooperation between the two divisions.

This section presented the first set of results in this case study based on a qualitative document analysis of the 32 primary source documents. The next section will present the second set of results based on the interviews with the senior policy actors.

6.4.2 Interviews with Senior Policy Actors

This section presents the results from the second source of data in this research, namely, the interviews with the 13 senior policy actors. The research themes will provide the scaffolding for the presentation of the results of the interviews. As discussed in the last chapter, this group of policy actors contains many of the key people who were involved in the development of, or the authoring of many of the policy documents included in this study and the policy developments contained within them. Using the concept of the 'iron triangle of government' discussed in Chapter Five, the nature of the relationships between the actors at the government level, the agency level, and the interest group level, during the policy development process over the time period of the case study will provide the structure for the discussion of each of the research themes. These results place those of the qualitative document analysis in the previous section in the context of the relationships referred to above.

In this section the discussion will focus on relationships within the 'iron triangle' in general, while specific tensions between actors relating to events under the four research themes will be addressed under the discussion of these themes. The relationships at the government level will be discussed in the first instance. This will be followed by an examination of the relationships at the executive agency level and will conclude with the relationships at the interest group level.

<u>Government Level</u>

Relationships at this level refer to those between government departments and also between the national government and supranational bodies such as the OECD, the EU, and more recently, the Troika. At the national level, relationships between departments are broadly of two types. Firstly, there is the relationship between a department and the funding department of government, namely, the Department of Finance, or more recently, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER). Secondly, there is the relationship between each of the other departments.

Regarding the position of the Department of Finance within the Irish government, Considine and Reidy (2012) observe "…because they hold the purse strings, finance ministries and treasuries are usually thought to be among the most powerful players in government policy-making" (p.88). They further observe:

> "The Department of Finance has an oversight role in policy-making; it must see all memorandum prepared for government in advance of circulation…In practice, , nearly all legislation contributes to public expenditure, reinforcing the position of Finance at the centre of policy making" (p.89).

As a result of this powerful position within government, the relationship between the Department of Finance and other government departments is characterised by a tension. As one former DES official put it "in relations where people hold the budget strings it's always interesting" (INT3).

When the decision was made to establish SOLAS, and to establish FET as the 'fourth pillar' of the education and training system, the issue of budgetary allocation came to the fore. While DES was not starting from a zero base, establishing the budget for FET would happen in one of two ways. The first option, from within the total DES allocation, was to reduce the allocation to the other three pillars of the education system – primary, post-primary, and third level. This would prove politically difficult. Another option was, rather than reducing the size of the slices of the budgetary cake to fit another slice, look to get a bigger cake. In this case "the loser would be the Department of Finance" (INT1). A combination of these two options is also a possibility.

As mentioned in Chapter Five, seven of the policy actors have experience of working in DES or DJEI. They describe relations between the two departments in general as having been reasonably good (INT7, INT8). One former DES official described it as there being cooperation but a "competitive rivalry" (INT1). Where a policy space straddles the boundary between two or more government departments these observations are as might be expected. Indeed, "the competitiveness and rivalry sometimes can get in the way" (INT1). Areas such as apprenticeship and ESF funding were points of intersection between the two departments. Regarding the area of ESF funding, a former DES official states:

> "…there was a degree of suspicion and competition because they [DJEI] obviously had a vested interest in making sure FÁS and their agencies got plenty of money but we had the bigger capacity to drawn down aid so they needed us as well" (INT8).

A former DJEI official described the relations as "mixed" (INT12) and further observes:

> "The issues were around structures…structures and ownership of structures and therefore ownership of policy, but as a result of the siloing that didn't create any real relationship between the two of them".

Another former DJEI Official elaborated further:

> "…in the further education and training spaces ET&E very much had this big beast of an animal called FÁS…so I think their focus was very much on trying to mark or monitor that agency, rather than necessarily on getting synergies or collaboration between the FE and the T space" (INT7).

The developments in the 1990s in the area of qualifications were a low point in the relations between the two departments and this will be examined in more detail under the thematic discussion on certification and qualifications. At the time, the tension between DES and DJEI manifested itself in the publication of 1997 White Paper on Human Resource Development (Department of Enterprise and Employment, 1997) in the context of the recurring issue of the demarcation in relation to areas of responsibility between education and training. In this regard, the 1997 White Paper states:

> "The relatively high, but declining, proportion of school-leavers leaving the education system with no or low qualifications and the under-developed vocational orientation of second-level education have combined to place particular strains on the national training system. As a consequence, much of the national training effort has been directed to remedial training, initial training to facilitate entry of school leavers to the labour force, or training to help reintegrate

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unemployed people with poor educational attainment into the labour force" (p.45).

A former senior DJEI official sees this as a clear criticism of the Department of Education and Science (INT12). This former senior official went on to say:

> "…the relationship overall I would characterise as poor. That's without attribution to either side" (INT12).

Since 2010, when the employment services functions of FÁS were transferred to the Department of Social Protection (DSP), a new relationship with DES began to emerge in light of the emergence of the activation objective of FET. One former DES official describes this relationship states as still settling down (INT3).

The OECD and the EU have been very influential on the direction of education and training policy in Ireland. In DES the OECD would be regarded as "really important" (INT5). A number of the actors share this view (INT4, INT6, INT7, INT9, INT10). The OECD research reports in particular were considered to be very important. As one actor put it, "they were in a position to do more research than we were" (INT3). However, one DES official enters a note of caution about OECD reports:

> "OECD reports can be a mixed bag and they wouldn't over influence. Bear in mind they may be consistent with what happens but they mightn't be the cause of what happens" (INT7).

The influence of the EU on DES, on the other hand, was seen to have been "traditionally more on the FET side, but they are very linked in with the EQF and the Bologna process" (INT5). A former DES official observes that ESF funding had led to a convergence of policies across the EU in a number of areas (INT8). EU influence in DJEI, according to a former senior official, had been primarily in the labour market and employment

areas (INT12). One senior DES official points out that EU policy was not a one way street from Brussels to Dublin. This actor describes the development of EU policy as a collaborative process between the Member States:

> "…while there certainly are things that happen at EU level very often Member States will pitch in as their contribution to the direction of say, EU policy and of course there's a limited competence in the education area, but Member States will pitch in and will influence where it's going…on the NFQ sort of stuff, certainly we were ahead of the game there and we would have influence that…" (INT7).

The final group to be discussed at the government level is the Troika, a group comprising the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Central Bank (ECB), and the European Commission. The relationship with the Troika will be discussed later in the chapter under the theme of active labour market policy. The discussion is the next section will examine the relationships involving the executive agencies group.

Executive Agencies

This is the second area of discussion on relationships between actors within the 'iron triangle'. Within this group of actors the relationships can be grouped under three broad headings:

1. Between government department and executive agency, e.g. between DJEI and FÁS, DES and the VECs, and between DES and the qualifications bodies;
2. Between executive agencies under the direction of the same department, e.g. between the VECs and the qualifications bodies;
3. Between executive agencies each of which are under the direction of different departments, e.g. between FÁS and the VECs, and between FÁS and FETAC.

Referring to the function of agencies Osbourne and Gaebler (as cited in MacCarthaigh, 2012, p. 143) state "…if the function of agencies is 'rowing', governments are charged with 'steering' them". The governance relationship, from the government department's perspective, is one of policy direction and monitoring. However, executive agencies, having been established by statute, would often assert their independence within the policy direction set down by the government. In recent times the issues of accountability and control of their executive agencies has been to the fore (MacCarthaigh, 2012). MacCarthaigh states:

> "In reality, there is considerable evidence that agencies in Ireland have developed their own steering capacity in relation to policy formulation, while many departments have failed to develop the capacity to adequately manage their agencies" (p. 143).

Executive agencies under the aegis of DES relevant to this study are the VECs/ETBs, the certification bodies and, in more recent times, FÁS and SOLAS. The relationship between DES and the VECs was characterised as the VECs feeling like the "poor relation" (INT9). In many ways this echoes the historically low esteem afforded to VECs within education circles as discussed in Chapter Four. From DES perspective one official states that "…VECs had…been very parochial or narrow in their view of their role" (INT7). A former DES official differentiates between the relationship between DES in general and the VECs, and the VECs relationship with the ESF/Further Education section:

> "In the mainstream…the view of the VECs suffered from being seen as the third choice option at post-primary…It was different from the ESF view. But to be fair, the further education sector is still the most innovative of what the VECs do" (INT8).

From the VEC perspective, a former CEO of a VEC agrees that there was a difficult relationship at times with DES. Referring specifically to events in

the 1990s this former CEO was of the view that there was an anti-VEC sentiment in DES (INT11). Prior to 1992, the Regional Technical Colleges and the Dublin Institute of Technology had been managed by the local VEC. The 1992 Acts separated them away from the VECs to be stand-alone entities:

> "… [it] was a very difficult time for CEOs because the Regional Colleges were separated from the VECs. There's no CEO in their right mind who'd be keen on that and that I think led to a lot of distrust and tensions…[it]would have upset everybody. Particularly the people at senior level who might have put a lot of work into the development of ITs [Institutes of Technology] and suddenly saw them taking off under a new act and getting loads of staff when they weren't getting anything" (INT11).

Added to the general perception of an anti-VEC sentiment in the Department, this separation led to an increase in tension at the time. The issue of trust also extended to the relationship between the VECs and actors in the adult education space. In the White Paper on Adult Education (Department of Education, 2000), this lack of trust appears to have been such that it merited particular mention. The White Paper proposed a National Adult Learning Council and a number of Local Adult Learning Boards, which were to be hosted in the local VEC. In describing the consultation phase after the publication of the Green Paper in Adult Education (Department of Education, 1998), the White Paper refers the issue of the local adult education structures:

> "There was no consensus in the consultation process regarding the hosting of local structures for Adult Education… Put simply, where disagreement emerged, it crystallised around one issue -- a pro-VEC and an anti-VEC position" (p.79).

The relationship between the VECs/ETBs and DES in more recent times will be discussed in the thematic discussion on the regionalisation and rationalisation of the administration of FET.

In DJEI the primary executive agency in the FET domain was FÁS. While a former senior official of FÁS describes the relationship with DJEI as "very good" (INT4), a former senior official of DJEI described the relationship with FÁS as "unusual" (INT12). This actor goes on to say:

> "…there is always a bit of tension between a policy department and its executive agencies, and the tension can be good and that tension can be bad. In my experience with the executive agencies it was a kind of healthy, constructive tension and there was healthy, constructive dialogue between two agencies. I found that to be much less the case in the relationship between the department and FÁS where FÁS, quite frankly, saw itself as being effectively independent of the department…However, there was a big difference between FÁS on the ground and FÁS central. I had very constructive relationships with some of the managers in the training centres but less so with the central administration of FÁS" (INT12).

In 2010 policy responsibility for training transferred to DES. Prior to this point the relationship between FÁS and DES was been described as a "healthy rivalry but also competition" (INT1). There was also "a lot of cooperation on the apprenticeship provision" (INT5).

The final relationship to be examined in this section is that between the VECs and FÁS. A former CEO of a VEC says that VECs had very little dealings with FÁS but that there were "always some misgivings from our sector of FÁS. That they were somehow encroaching on what we were doing…" (INT9). One former DES official said that at times "there was antipathy" between the VECs and FÁS (INT1). A former senior FÁS official took a more measured view:

"…if you look at three states…cooperation, competition and coopetition…depending on the VEC or depending on the FÁS training centre, one or other of those states existed…it was characterised by a level of personal relationships, local circumstances, and local need, and I suppose the nature of the particular programmes involved in the nature of those personal relationships" (INT6).

The relationships involving these departments and agencies around certification and qualification will be examined in the thematic discussion to follow. The relationships involving the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) will be examined under the active labour market theme. In addition, the relationships between DES, SOLAS and the ETBs will be discussed under the theme on regionalisation and rationalisation of the administration of FET. In the next section the discussion will focus on the third set of groups in the 'iron triangle', namely, the interest groups.

Interest Groups

Interest groups are seen as central to the policy making process (Murphy, 2010). Hardiman (2012) expresses the view that some form of engagement with civil society interests is a normal part of the policy making process in most democratic countries. The social partnership process in Ireland, beginning in the late 1980s, saw the development of a more corporatist approach to decision-making at government level (Martin, 2012). Murphy (2010) places interest groups into two types – sectional-base and cause-centred. The sectional-base interest groups, as the name suggests, are focused on sectional interests of the economy or society, such as farmers, trade unions, and employer representative groups. The cause-centred interest groups are interested in particular issues of concern to them, such as climate change, Irish neutrality, and adult literacy. Citing data from 2008, Murphy (2010) states that at the end of the social partnership period the numbers of sectional-base interest groups in Ireland was a total of some 412

such groups. He also cites data showing that in 2008 there were an additional 536 cause-centred interest groups (p. 334).

In the FET policy space the majority of the interest groups in the policy making process come under the sectional-base grouping, with the notable exception of the Community and Voluntary Pillar in the social partnership process. Within skill formation policy in general, and FET policy in particular, international experience would see three primary stakeholder groups within this politically contested space, namely, the state, employers and trade unions (Thelen, 2004). However, the actual texture of the groups of actors within the 'iron triangle', not to mention their number, makes the policy-making space highly complex. Although the various actors in the process do not have the same level of power, this complex array of competing interests, by its very existence, places some constraints on the policy options available in any given situation. As Richardson (cited in Murphy, 2010, p.329) states, "…[the] process of governing societies always involves some accommodation of the wishes of pressure and interest groups".

The two primary interest groups with the state actors involved in the skill formation space, are the employer representative bodies and the trade unions. Each of these sets of bodies is of themselves quite heterogeneous. In Ireland, the Irish Business Employers Confederation (IBEC) are a national body representing the interests of the primarily larger employers, while the Small Firms Association (SFA), a part of IBEC, and the Irish Small and Medium Enterprises Association (ISME) represent the interests of the small and medium enterprises (SME) employers. Chambers Ireland is the national body for all the chambers of commerce around the country. Trade unions' interests are collective represented primarily by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), although not all trade unions are affiliated to ICTU. Traditionally, in the apprenticeship areas, the construction sector employer body, the Construction Industry Federation (CIF), engages with the various unions representing both craft and non-craft

construction workers. Within particular sectors of the economy there are also other sector-specific employer representative groups.

From the FET provision perspective, there are also a number of key interest groups. The representative body for the VECs was the Irish Vocational Education Association (IVEA). When the VECs were amalgamated and the ETBs established this body was reconstituted as Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI). The Chief Executives have a representative group, while the Principals and Deputy Principals of the Colleges of Further Education (CFE) are represented by the FET Committee of the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principal (NAPD-FET). The teachers working in CFEs are represented by the two post-primary teaching unions – the Teachers' Union of Ireland (TUI), and the Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland (ASTI). In the education policy arena the Churches, and in particular the Catholic Church, is also a powerful interest group. The Churches are relevant to FET provision in Ireland as it takes place within the post-primary sector.

Since the emergence of skill formation policy in Ireland in the late 19th century, as discussed in Chapter Four, employers and trade unions have been involved in apprenticeship. The 1987 the Labour Services Act, which established FÁS, coincided with the beginning of the social partnership process in Ireland. This model of collective engagement with a wider group of stakeholders at the national level, known as the social partners and, similar to the European approach, also set the precedent for similar approaches within specific policy domains. Skill formation policy was no different. The composition of the Board of FÁS reflected this approach. This approach to the composition of the boards of state organisations continued through the 1990s with the boards of the NCVA and TEASTAS. By the end of the 1990s, this representative approach to board formation was enshrined in the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, with the composition of the Boards of NQAI (section 6), FETAC (section 13), and HETAC (section 22).

One of the most cited examples of the influence of employers on education and training policy was the *Review of Industrial Policy* (Culliton Report, 1992). A number of the actors described the Culliton Report as being very influential within general education policy at the beginning of the 1990s (INT5, INT8, INT9, INT11). While the report was critical of FÁS provision for what it saw as an over-emphasis on training for the unemployed, one former DES official commented that they did not detect much of an impact of the Culliton Report on the further education dimension of FET (INT8). A former CEO of a VEC observes that the report emphasised the link between education and unemployment, and set a more coherent tone for the subsequent green and white papers (INT11).

A number of the actors observed that the Culliton Report, and the subsequent Moriarty Report (Department of Enterprise and Employment, 1993) on its implementation, were the first national whole of government taskforces to be established (INT11, INT12). Employers, through their representative bodies, especially IBEC, are a powerful interest group in the skill formation space. A senior DES official observes that getting an employment perspective can be difficult without consulting with the representative bodies such as IBEC (INT5). Another senior DES official elaborates on this point:

> "…because of their contribution to the economy over years, what employers say and particularly those that employ thousands, the big FDI guys, carry weight certainly with the centre of government. And rightly so to a point. And that does influence the demand that's placed on the department and on the providers that the department funds. We have to try and mediate that because what employers look for is not always what an informed employer might look for" (INT7).

In FET, with the emphasis placed primarily on the social imperative rather than the economic for many years, a key challenge is its connection with enterprise. As one senior DES official states:

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"…one of the challenges is to increase the connect of further education with enterprise development as well as with creating opportunities for people to gain employment…that's one of the challenges in the FE strategy" (INT7).

FÁS had developed strong relationships with employers' representative bodies, as well as with individual employers involved in the apprenticeship schemes. A former senior FÁS official describes the relationship with the employer bodies as very strong but that this loosened during the Celtic Tiger period (INT6).

The apprenticeship scheme necessarily involves employers. As one senior policy actor states, "one of the key strengths of the apprenticeship model is the strength of *a priori* commitment of the employer to an individual. You can't be an apprentice if you don't have an employer" (INT10). Within the Irish economy, of some 200,000 employers, there are currently around 3,000, or 1.5% of employers involved in apprenticeship. That is down from a peak of 10,000 employers during the Celtic Tigers years (INT4). However, as a former senior FÁS official states, "there's a Golden Rule with apprenticeships – where you have apprenticeships, you have redundant apprentices" (INT4). Referring to the situation after the Great Recession had commenced, and the consequences for apprentices, a former senior FÁS official elaborates on the response of employers during this period:

"…not only did we have a problem with apprenticeship when it [the economy] collapsed but all the employers took a step back with the redundant apprentices and said 'Hands over to you now FÁS you had better deal with that'. Ireland and Irish employers do not have a good track record or a provenance that's sympathetic towards apprenticeship" (INT4).

The trade unions' involvement within the partnership approach, on the other hand, tends to come from a different perspective. Within this set of interest

groups there are two types of trade unions. Firstly, there are the trade unions representing the interests of people working within the FET system, and secondly, those representing the workers in the employment sectors for which people are being trained, e.g. the construction sector. In the first group, instructors in the Training Centres are represented by the Services, Industrial, Professional and Technical Union (SIPTU), while the teachers in the ETB schools and colleges are represented by the post-primary teachers unions, predominantly the Teachers' Union of Ireland (TUI) with a fewer number represented by the Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland (ASTI). The teacher unions are politically very powerful within the education and training domain and can be both the driver and the barrier to the implementation of policy initiatives. The McIver Report (Department of Education and Science, 2003) into the review of the PLC Sector is a case in point. The TUI, in particular, had been pushing through the social partnership for the McIver Review Process to take place. However, once completed it was the teaching unions who rejected it (INT11). A former CEO of a VEC states "…they seem to have kind of see-sawed between wanting it to be a separate sector and then not wanting it to be a separate sector" (INT9). Shortly thereafter, in 2008, a restructuring of the teacher contract for post-primary teachers working in CFEs (Department of Education and Science, 2008), which had its origins in the McIver Report process, was agreed as an outcome from the final social partnership process, *Towards 2016* (Government of Ireland, 2008a). DES and the management bodies had agreed with the proposal, but the unions took too long to agree and the money ran out in the autumn of 2008 (INT3). The sectoral unions' engagement with skill formation policy has been most prominent in the area of certification. This will be discussed in more detail in the thematic discussion below.

The other most notable interest group in the policy making space was the Community Pillar in social partnership. Their impact on raising the profile of the social dimension of education policy within the social partnership process was discussed in the previous results section. The inclusion of the Community Pillar in the social partnership negotiations was of particular

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significance for further education as they became a major player and the biggest supporter of further education (INT8). They were also seen to have an impact on the approach of DES to education policy as a whole, particularly in the context of the first National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) in 1997. A former DES official observes:

> "…the role of education began to be centre stage…there was quite a lot of hostility from the CandV [Community and Voluntary] pillar towards mainstream education. But that changed over time and it led to…the department looking wider than the traditional partners in education …it had a major effect in widening the focus of education, and making it more outward looking and more co-ordinated with the training sector" (INT8).

The discussion in this section has focused on the relationship between the key actors in the 'iron triangle' of the Irish government, particularly, within the FET policy arena. Focus will now turn to examining these relationships within the context of the purpose of FET and how it changed over time.

6.4.2.2   Purpose of Further Education and Training

Until 2010, when responsibility for training was transferred from DJEI to DES, both departments operated within the FET policy space. As referred to in the previous section, the lack of clarity about the demarcation between the responsibilities of the two departments drew comment in several of the policy documents in this study. Despite this lack of clarity, there were numerous areas of commonality between the two. For both DES and DJEI, the recessionary periods of the late 1970s and 1980s created a new focus on training (INT12). One former DJEI official observes:

> "Apprenticeship obviously was always there as a thing in itself and… [during] that whole historical period there was always this kind of push and pull between whether we were talking about labour market interventions or education and training as distinct from a

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pure labour market intervention that were arguable driven by the need to manage unemployment. That was one of the big tensions that I would have seen all along" (INT12).

The same policy actor went on to place FET within the broader skill formation space:

"…further education and training sits within an overall framework of further education, and higher education and training. So it's one component of that larger spectrum" (INT12).

Within DES, the rise of youth unemployment, which was an issue at European level, attracted European Social Fund (ESF) funding for programmes aimed at supporting young people at risk of leaving school without sufficient preparation for the workforce. While the driver of this development was the high unemployment during the recessionary period following the oil crises of the 1970s, the availability of ESF funding was a significant facilitating factor. This development also coincided with the emergence of information technology (IT) as a basic office tool (INT8). Both DES and DJEI developed responses to the crisis at the time. DJEI had the training provision through AnCO and DES looked to the VECs to develop new programmes. Within DES, the Pre-Employment courses launched in 1978 became the Vocational Preparation and Training (VPT) programme in 1984. These later became the PLC courses. One former DES official describes the differences between the two departments' offerings:

"The AnCo courses were there at the time but they were seen as rather narrowly focused, but they had the attraction of an allowance and were only six months long…whereas the VPT was broader and it dealt with both the core transferable skills like communications as well as specific vocational emphasis and IT was a mandatory part of all of them… [as well as] work experience" (INT8).

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According to the same former official the purpose of further education broadened over time rather than changed from its inception in the late 1970s. By the late 1980s the number of programmes within DES funded as vocational training by the ESF had broadened to include early school leavers (Youthreach) and the long term unemployed (VTOS). The PLC programme, while having a social inclusion dimension, was primarily labour market focused (INT8). Referring to more recent times, after the 2010 transfer of training to DES, another DES official describes the purpose as being on a spectrum between an economic imperative at one end and a social imperative on the other, with priority being given to specific aspects of further education and training depending on the circumstance at a point in time (INT7).

At the beginning of the Great Recession in 2008, a former DES official saw the focus change from social inclusion towards activation, particularly during the 'Troika Years':

> "…it was being seen as a social inclusion measure, even when the programmes like VTOS or PLC would have been designed for skills for jobs. And as the crisis took hold and we went through it…we portrayed it more as an activation and a skills measure. So I think that might have been a question of perception, and also a question of where we as a department, we as a government, wanted it to go, and I think the Troika wanted to see that too" (INT3).

While the economic imperative has been present, the emphasis on the social inclusion imperative of FET within DES is a view expressed by a number of the policy actors (INT1, 3, 7, 8, 9, 11). The labour market focus of more recent years has been dominated by third-level interests (INT8). This is in line with how FET and higher education are presented in DES Annual Reports since 1999 (www.education.ie). However, Annual Reports since 2010 have increased the labour market orientation for FET.

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An important dimension in the evolution of FET has been the development of the administration and policy infrastructure for FET within DES. For DJEI, there had been an executive agency responsible for training since 1967, first AnCo, and then FÁS from 1988. However, within DES, what became known as further education in the mid-1990s was delivered primarily through the network post-primary vocational schools managed by the VECs. There was no single coordinating agency for FET within DES until the establishment of SOLAS in 2013. Many of the policy actors commented during the interviews on the organic nature of the development of the further education dimension of FET within DES and, in particular, the absence of any central strategic direction. As a senior DES official states:

> "…there was very little policy initially and it was very much the European funding and the innovation of the VECs in responding to what was there locally…" (INT5).

This would suggest that the priority for further education policy in Ireland at the time was aligned with the funding criteria of the ESF rather than the labour market needs (NESC, 1993). Indeed, as a former DES official states "...it was a national priority to get in the ESF aid for whatever we could…" (INT8). Referring to its place within the administrative structure of DES in the 1990s, another policy actor observed "…it was difficult to try to visualise a structure for it" (INT1). The absence of an internal policy infrastructure led to a fragmented approach to FET within DES. A former CEO of a VEC expresses the view that "the fragmentation within the department I think probably increased the fragmentation of further ed." (INT11). This fragmentation within DES did not augur well for further education provision when it came to being prioritised on the department's agenda. As one actor says "it was a very minor element in the totality of its work" (INT2). This view was shared by a number of the actors (INT1, INT3, INT7, INT8, INT9, INT11). One former DES official describes further education's position in DES in the earlier years, "it was side show…there was an element of deliberate neglect" (INT8). In the annual

budgetary process further education was fourth in line in the hierarchy of priorities after primary, post-primary and higher education (INT1). The change in how FET is viewed within DES at the present is described by a senior DES official:

> "…further education…wasn't regarded as important, it certainly wasn't given the prominence that it is in recent years, so that's changed over time and it's got to a stage now where actually it is seen as important by a variety of players" (INT7).

In the next section the discussion will examine the relationships between the actors within the four research themes for this study. This will begin with the active labour market policy.

6.4.2.3   Active Labour Market Policy

Over the 1973-2014 time span of this study, the two episodes of high unemployment, namely the 1980s and the Great Recession beginning in 2008 coincided with significant institutional and organisational change within the FET space. In the 1988, within DJEI, AnCo, the Youth Employment Agency, and the National Manpower Service were amalgamated to form FÁS. During the same period, in DES, ESF funded school-to-work transition programmes, primarily the Pre-Employment, and later the VPT/PLC programmes, were being rolled out in response to the high youth unemployment. VTOS, another ESF funded programme, was established in 1989 in response to long-term unemployment among over 21 year olds. The issue of early school leavers led to the development of Youthreach jointly by DES and FÁS, also in 1989. In the 1990s, national reports began to identify a link between unemployment and education (Culliton, 1992), and the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) linked unemployment and poverty with educational disadvantage (INT11).

A former senior FÁS official describes the approached taken to activation within AnCO, and then FÁS in the 1980s and 1990s:

"…it was very clear, with ANCO it was on skills for employment and that was basically it and so everybody was clear. So there was no big discussions on what it was we were supposed to be doing – it's training people to get a job and there was no ambiguity about that…" (INT4).

This actor goes on to describe how the focus of FÁS had shifted toward apprenticeships during the Celtic Tiger years thereby leaving FÁS somewhat wrong footed when the unemployment crisis happened:

"…the organisation was not prepared for the huge unemployment problem…The reason it wasn't prepared for the large number of the unemployed was that the only focus of FAS at the time was on the apprenticeship system which was a massive programme and everybody was geared to delivering that. So the focus on unemployed people was really minimal…" (INT4).

When the Great Recession began in Ireland, a former senior FÁS official describes the situation in 2009:

"…the big push was to extend the volume of interventions. Unemployment was rapidly increasing. The state was in the grip of recession. Public finances were in tremendous difficulty, and there was a belief in the importance of having unemployed people maintain some form of contact with the system…" (INT6).

By 2010, according to a former DES official "there was a sense of the empire crumbling. The whole thing was just falling apart on us" (INT3). The same former DES official speaks about the unemployment crisis in particular:

"The unemployment was going out of control, and you've got those hundred thousand we're talking about (jeez, when I think about it)

the construction workers, men of a certain age with less qualifications…and young fellas with no chance of getting a job because they've finished…it was just horrific" (INT 3).

In the Great Recession, as in the 1980s, the growing sense of national crisis was a major driver of government policy. A combination of the unemployment crisis, the toxicity of FÁS as an organisation in political circles, and government policy of reducing the number of executive agencies as a cost saving measure, ultimately led to the amalgamation of the ETBs, the disbandment of FÁS, and the establishment of SOLAS. However, following the transfer of the training function to DES in 2010, the activation objective of FÁS courses was transferred to all FET courses by default. This was borne out by the Sweeney Report in 2013 *A Strategic Review of Further Education and Training and the Unemployed* (Sweeney, 2013). A former senior official who, in focusing on criticisms of the effectiveness of the PLC programme in particular in relation to activation, states:

> "PLCs were never there as an employment programme…So criticising them for not having the long-term unemployed on them wasn't fair…It [the report] wasn't contextualised properly" (INT8).

A senior SOLAS official concurred and compared this to similar changes in public policy:

> "I think that is a little bit indicative of how public policy gets developed where the level of ex ante evaluation of particular interventions can be light, or the clarity of purpose of the objectives of the policy or the intervention are fuzzy, and change over time because of prevailing circumstances, and then there is an ex post analysis a period of time after and say well that didn't work did it" (INT6).

While the orientation of further education courses under DES, and in particular the PLC programme, was changing towards responding to the unemployment crisis, a number of actors express the view that it was the arrival of the Troika in 2011 that particularly brought the activation of the unemployed through education and training programmes into particular focus (INT3, INT4, INT7). While the Troika have been portrayed in the media as almost an occupying force, their primary methodology was, not to tell the Irish government what to do but to ask very focused questions and seek the Irish governments response. A senior SOLAS official expresses the view:

> "They shone a light on a set of practices that had grown up over a long period of time in terms of the activation on unemployed, and urged the state to respond" (INT6).

The process by which a government department, such as DES, would agree to a set of commitments with the Troika, also involved the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (INT7). The timescales would be agreed and the department would be under pressure to meet the deadline - "the troika was a great facilitator of speed" (INT7). However, one senior policy actor introduced a cautionary note in describing the impact of the Troika on skill formation policy in giving the DSP referral service 'Intreo' a more central role in the skill formation space than would perhaps be advisable:

> "There's one big element where Intreo should be a very junior party to this dialogue. Intreo is basically about management of the live register, and I regret a bit that, in the wake of the Great Recession, and the clout that the Troika had, that instead of viewing activation as a subset of skilling policy it's almost the other way around that skilling is seen as a subset of activation policy… I'm afraid that the Department of Social Protection is currently too much in the driving seat on that" (INT10).

Expert Group on Future Skills Needs

While the two periods of high unemployment, i.e. the 1980s and the Great Recession, coincided with significant episodes of institutional and organisational reform, it was the economic boom of the Celtic Tigers years from the late 1990s into the 2000s which brought to the fore the issue of skills shortages, particularly in relation to high-tech industries. The White Paper on Human Resource Development (Department of Enterprise and Employment, 1997) was the first government policy document to make reference to the knowledge economy. It described the emerging challenge of the time as the capacity of citizens and business to respond to increasing pace of technological change by investing in skill development. One of the White Paper's recommendations was to establish a "Future Skills Identification Group" (p.120). The establishment of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) was a response to this proposal. A former senior DJEI official describes the initial driver behind the establishment of the EGFSN:

> "…that was given by a very, very specific issue of skills shortages in the tech industry…and morphed into something much bigger over time" (INT12).

Another former senior DJEI official elaborates on this point:

> "…the expert group on future skills needs was established by ET&E as a way of looking at what skills needs, not just the country needs, but with a view of FDI and it goes back to the articulation by the IDA of…the needs of the high-tech sector and of pharma and of those companies that they were targeting so there was, you know, inevitably a greater focus on higher education…because it was very much being enterprise driven, very much focused on what enterprise wanted and even where, even now, enterprise tends to demand a higher level of qualification than perhaps necessarily it needs…the expert group certainly would be answering a demand from the high-

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tech side and the IDA driven side, more so perhaps than other sides"
(INT7).

Five of the interviewees for this study are either current or former members
of the EGFSN Board. While one former member "fundamentally
disagreed" (INT5) with this view, and regarded this view as a case of
perception rather than reality, the other policy actors were in agreement that
the focus of the deliberations of the Expert Group was, and continues to be,
dominated by higher education (INT4, INT7, INT11, INT12). One former
member of EGFSN states he thought there was an unhealthy obsession with
higher education such that "intermediate skills were significantly
deemphasised and perhaps even devalued" (INT12). Another policy actor
states that "it's very difficult to get the further education sector issues into
the forefront" (INT4). A former member of EGFSN from the FET sector
states

> "I found it incredible. You couldn't get them to talk about anything
> other than higher education...And they also didn't accept and I don't
> think they still accepted that there's medium skills…in my time on
> it, it was one of the most frustrating things I've ever been on"
> (INT11).

Interestingly, DES commissioned a report from Forfás (2012) on *Guidelines
for the Alignment of Further Education Programmes with Skills Needs of
Enterprise* which makes reference to EGFSN reports as sources of labour
market intelligence in this regards. While the majority of the policy actors
referred to above hold the view that the EGFSN needs was dominated by
higher education, the publication of the Forfás report suggests that FET, or
intermediate skills, are part of their deliberation to some extent. However,
the divergence of views among current and former Board members would
suggest that some clarification of the mission of EGFSN may be required in
light of the significant reforms in FET in Ireland in recent times, in
particular, the establishment of SOLAS, and the launch of the first ever
National FET Strategy.

In this section the discussion will focus on the views of the policy actors on the convergence of education and training from being regarded as separate entities to a single concept. As outlined in Chapter Four, the separation of policy responsibility for education and training between two government departments in the early 1930s was administrative and arbitrary. A former senior FÁS official described the separate as a "spurious divide" (INT4). A senior DES official states:

> "I don't believe in the difference. I think it's the way it traditionally has been organised and then other understandings have been built up around the extremes of either end" (INT5).

The influence of both the OECD and the EU on education and training, as well as labour market and employment policy domains was discussed earlier. Indeed, much of this convergence, while originating in the labour market policy arena, was expanded into the qualifications space. While the influence of the EU in this convergence was discussed earlier in the chapter, a senior DES official would not have separated out the European thinking from the national and departmental discussions taking place at the time, noting in particular, in the case of the NFQ, that Ireland was ahead of nearly all other EU Member States (INT5). This senior DES official reflects on how the need for a more coherent approach between education and training evolved over time:

> "I think there's been a recognition since as early as the mid-90s that there was a need to bring it together more coherently but arguably we haven't achieved that successfully until it could be done with training, and that coherence came with the government deciding that we got training…I think it took the qualifications legislation to give a framework for that and the agreement between the two departments on that…I think it began to come together more in the

lifelong learning work that Enterprise led…I think the absolute coherence came when the single department had responsibility for it" (INT5).

In many ways the convergence of education and training has been a consequence of a series of events and trajectories over time. In addition, the establishment of the national qualifications system, as well as the qualifications framework, facilitated a space within which all education and training stakeholders, regardless of sector or policy department, could engage, even though at times the engagement was fraught. The language of the framework, in terms of its 10 levels based on learning outcomes, also provided a common 'language' for all actors to use.

6.4.2.5   Convergence of Certification and Qualifications

While the certification and qualification space facilitated the highest level of engagement between the actors, it also witnessed the greatest degree of conflict and tension involving the actors in all three groups in the 'iron triangle'. The EU was a strong influence in the early stages of the developments in the 1990s but the developments in Ireland, particularly in relation to the NFQ, outpaced those in most other Member States (INT1, INT2, INT5). As discussed earlier in the chapter, the issue of a national qualifications system began to emerge at departmental level in the early 1990s. The influence of the EU at this time is evident in Trant's (2002) research. While the Culliton Report (1992) referred to the need for national certification, the establishment of the NCVA in 1991 was not an employer-led initiative but in response to developments at a European level. A former senior official observes, "…there would have been employer interest in the sort of the output if you like of the various colleges, but only from the Post-Leaving Certs" (INT2). As mentioned earlier, the concept of a single certifying body for vocational education and the technical third-level education, the CEVA, was published in the Green Paper on Education (Department of Education, 1992). At an early stage of the deliberations there had been consideration of extending the remit of NCEA to include

further education. However, the level of development that such an initiative would have taken is described by a senior DES official as being "a step too far to do them all at the one time" (INT5). A former senior DES official describes the proposal:

> "…what they proposed was a CEVA that would basically merge the NCEA and the NCVA but also embrace the training sector. Now that wasn't exactly welcomed at the time either by the third level interests…or by the training side…they hadn't had adequate discussions with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and at the time FÁS were quite happy, they had a contract with City and Guilds…so they didn't see the need to change" (INT8).

The NCVA began providing certification in 1993. However, as this was some nine years after the commencement of the VPT/PLC courses, and some 16 years after the Pre-Employment courses had begun, many of the individual schools providing these courses had made alternative certification arrangements, e.g. City & Guilds, and Pitman. The level of innovation that had taken place in many of these schools was significant. One former CEO of a VEC states

> "… I accept that NCVA brought a lot of coherence to the system…[however] I felt for some of us it was actually, it dragged us back a bit" (INT9).

The policy debate evolved by the time of the White Paper on Education (Department of Education, 1995) with a proposal for the establishment of a national certification authority, TEASTAS, as discussed earlier. Following the establishment of TEASTAS, the consultative meetings between the various stakeholders were the first time many of these actors had met together (INT2). The process of finding agreement between these groups proved difficult. As a former senior DJEI official states:

"In any area when you have multiple implementation actors it's not as simple as the relationship between the policy departments because it's the bigger network that…has significant gravitational pull as well" (INT12).

At the governmental level, the late 1990s was also a time of contestation between DES and DJEI over the ownership of the national qualifications system. A former senior DES official says that "there was a significant turf war between DES and DETE about who would be the owner of this" (INT1). As mentioned above, the relationship between DES and DJEI at this time was described by a former senior DJEI official as "poor" (INT12). Within the TEASTAS discussions such a relationship did not augur well for reaching an agreement. A senior policy actor states:

"…the feeling then was that these groups were never going to agree themselves on what was the best way forward and the only thing that would work was legislation. So there was a turning point at that stage … TEASTAS actually was a seminal moment if you like. They realised that it wasn't going to happen voluntarily" (INT2).

Indeed, according to this senior policy actor "the one thing you got agreement on is that everybody was opposed to TEASTAS" (INT2).

1999 Qualifications (Education and Training) Act

Following the suspension of TEASTAS operations, preparation began on the legislation for a national qualifications system. In relation to the form the new organisational structure for the qualifications system should take, the opinions broke down into broadly two camps – those in favour a single certifying body, primarily the DJEI and FÁS, and those in favour of two which included DES. One senior policy actor observes that "the strongest voice for a unified body was FÁS" (INT2). The same actor elaborates:

"...you had all these disparate sort of parts and nobody is talking to each other. So it was deemed more practicable at least to get further education and training together, let's get that group talking to each other at least and moving on" (INT2).

This actor also agreed with Granville's (2003) view that the main driver for the development of the NFQ in particular was from the FET sector. The actor observes:

"...the prime mover, I think for any national qualifications system, the requirements and needs of people who are outside of higher ed. are the things that make the difference. Higher ed. thinks it can do without a qualifications framework because they've done without it for years and they have the institutions. Further ed. doesn't have that so they need the structure" (INT2).

The Qualifications Act was passed in 1999, and has been described as "a seminal moment" (INT5) in Irish education. Under the Act, the organisational structure mirrored that set up under TEASTAS, namely, a coordinating body, NQAI, and two certifying bodies, HETAC, and FETAC. At the executive agency level, the relationship between the bodies in the early days exhibited some tensions, particularly around the issue of autonomy. A senior DES official observes:

"...effectively NCEA transformed into HETAC and NCVA transformed into FETAC ...they no longer had the freedom and autonomy and they had a body over them so there was tensions in that but they had to have a working partnership and the qualification authority reviewed the pair of them so there was tension and it was difficult and there was, in terms of what their respective roles were but they worked it out and they worked it through" (INT5)

A former senior official went further in saying that "there was huge resistance within HETAC [to NQAI] because they were happier being

NCEA" (INT2). The relationship between FETAC and HETAC did not exhibit the same tension, and is described by a former policy actor as being "a good working relationship" (INT2). In the FET sector the relationship between FETAC and the key stakeholders was mixed in the early period. A former senior official describes the relations with the VECs:

> "…registration with NCVA and later FETAC was with the schools directly… so our links with the VECs were tenuous. They knew what was going on, they were all in favour of it but 'just get on with it don't bother us'. The VEC [Head Offices] were more interested in secondary, you know. They were up to the oxters in that. So if things happened within NCVA or indeed within FETAC, then they sort of said let us know if something goes wrong… I would say that our main sort of reference points were the Principals of the larger colleges in the VEC sector without a doubt…the NAPD [National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals] Further Ed Committee" (INT2).

A former CEO of a VEC shared this view, and observes "I don't think it [FET] was ever seen as being high on the priorities of a lot of VECs" (INT9). However, this former CEO was of the view that FETAC had a positive impact on the FET sector, "it enabled a professionalisation of the sector" (INT 9). A second policy actor from the FET sector states

> "The advantages [of FETAC] were it gave further ed. from the beginning a kind of structure to work with. It gave them identifiable certification and it began the process of quality assurance" (INT 11).

Once established, FETAC assumed responsibility for the former NCVA processes. The certification process in CERT and Teagasc remained distinct but under the FETAC banner. FÁS, on the other hand, was very resistant to FETAC from the outset. A former senior FÁS official describes the history as "challenging" (INT6), another senior policy actor states:

"The greatest difficulty, the greatest challenges were always, always
with FÁS and just getting FÁS to change anything…" (INT2).

A former senior official from FÁS says that "FETAC wasn't a good time"
(INT4), and put forward the view that the approach being taken by FETAC
in terms of certification was contrary to training based on occupational
profiles:

"Now in other jurisdictions, practically all jurisdictions in Europe
have a compulsory link between the award and an occupational
profile, and the occupational profile is missing here in Ireland. It
doesn't drive the award…the curriculum was reorganised to meet
the award and not to meet the skill needs of the learner or industry.
And we are still in that position today" (INT4).

This view is echoed by a former CEO of a VEC who argues that the current
system has become over-reliant on qualifications at the expense of the
occupational link (INT9). Interestingly, a former senior official identifies
the absence of occupational standard-type groups within the qualifications
system as a weakness (INT2).

As discussed in the previous results section, the rationalisation of the four
legacy certification processes into one, known as the Common Awards
System (CAS), began in the 2009/2010 period, and this was not without its
difficulties. While a significant driver of the common awards system
development was progression (INT2), a former CEO of a VEC expresses
the view that the end result of the process has led to a degree of
homogenisation of FET provision and a loss of local variety and emphasis
(INT9).

At interest group level, the trade unions, and in particular the TUI, played a
role in these developments. During the NCVA time, TUI was represented
on the Council. However, one former official observes that they were, by
and large, wary of developments and in some cases a hindrance to progress.

This policy actor cites an incident when the TUI was resistant to the widening of the NCVA's brief, to include Teagasc programmes, because it was into areas where there were no TUI members (INT2). The proposal was agreed by the NCVA Council despite this opposition. When the Interim Board of TEASTAS was being established, the trade union movement was represented by a nominee from the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU). This was also the case when the FETAC Council was being established (see Appendix 6). TUI sought to provide the ICTU nominee but were unsuccessful, and were "really annoyed" (INT2). A former official states, "…they [TUI] were only going to be looking after their members" (INT2).

National Framework of Qualifications

In preparing for the implementation of the NFQ one key area of contention that emerged was around the placement of existing awards on the framework. The trade unions were the interest group that came to the fore on this occasion. While there were a plethora of bodies involved in certification, placing the awards on the framework meant assigning equivalencies between some, and relativities between others. The process was inevitably highly political between the various stakeholder bodies and groups. At the time the approach taken, given the range of certificates and awards in use at the time, was "a pragmatic best fit" (INT8). When it came to placing the apprenticeship on the framework the disagreement became public. In the early 2000's, pressure came from the construction sector trade unions, particularly the electrical trade union, that apprenticeships should be at level 7 on the NFQ (INT8). FÁS agreed but an evaluation process had been put in place by the three qualifications bodies, NQAI, HETAC and FETAC. After completing a placement evaluation process, all apprenticeships were placed at level 6. However, not all apprenticeships were under FÁS's remit and these were never looked at in this process:

> "…the Teagasc ones, the farming apprenticeships and the Chefs in
> CERT. These never came within that remit and it was as if the only

ones that count are the ones in the building trade…the building trade unions were the most aggressive trade unions…" (INT2).

One of the main drivers to establish a national framework of qualifications was that of access, transfer and progression. The FET sector had great interest in the potential of the framework and FETAC were publically very strong supporters of it. However, HETAC, and the third level sector generally, were more focused on the Bologna framework in Europe:

"…the framework was the second runner to what was happening in Europe…It was all about Bologna…" (INT2).

Some five years after the three qualifications bodies had been established, in around 2005, informal discussions took place regarding the rationalisation of these bodies (INT2). It was regarded as the next logical step in the evolution of the certification system. When the system was established the view was that there was no long-term justification for keeping the three bodies separate (INT5).

A great deal of development and debate has occurred, both internationally and national, about the important of qualifications in securing employment. One senior DES official expresses the view that while qualifications are a proxy for skills, both within the policy arena and in the labour market, their use by employers is not necessarily precise:

"…you see quite a lot of people or employers using higher ed. qualifications as a filter" (INT7).

The litmus test for certification will be the currency given to it by employers in recruiting new staff (INT10). A policy actor expands on the role of qualifications in securing employment, pointing out that it is not as straight forward as one might think:

"Qualifications need to acquire credibility. That means that what we call industry certification is often a very good choice for a young person and it's a huge challenge to our QQI to ensure that it gives full space to industry certification" (INT10).

Within the certification and qualifications arena, political conflict characterised many of the relationship between the various key stakeholders. As mentioned earlier, DES and DJEI had a poor relationship during the 1990s in the main due to the dispute over the ownership of the qualifications system. FETAC and FÁS had a difficult relationship. The VECs seemed to have, in the view of the actors, supportive of FETAC but not really engaged. It was the Principals of the larger CFE's who proved to be the more valuable partner for FETAC. The trade unions relationship with the qualification system was wary and in some cases conflictual, but ultimately they were unsuccessful in altering developments. The discussion in this section ended with a number of actors raising a question as to the currency of the qualifications in the labour market. They suggested that some divergence may have occurred between the qualifications available and the occupational profiles. This is an issue that will be discussed further in the next chapter.

The final theme of this section of the chapter to be examined is the regionalisation and rationalisation of the administration of FET. As with the themes already discussed, the relationships between the actors, particularly between the new bodies which have emerged following the most recent reforms, will be focus of this discussion.

6.4.2.6   Regionalisation and Rationalisation of the Administration of FET

A detailed account of the events relating to the rationalisation of executive agencies since 2008 was given in the previous results section. In this section the discussion will concentrate primarily on the relationships between the various actors during the latest reforms which took place over

the period of the period of the Great Recession, with particular reference to the Troika, the Public Service Reform Plans, the formation of the ETBs and SOLAS, and the launch of the FET Strategy in 2014.

As discussed earlier, there have been various episodes of regionalisation and rationalisation within the administration of FET. Within the public administration of FET, the governance requirements associated with ESF funding until it ended in 2000, were in many ways, more rigorous that those in place for mainstream education. When the Strategic Management Initiative was launched in 1994, its requirements were not out of line with ESF requirements. A former senior DES official observes:

> "That wasn't new territory…if you look at the ESF administration you had policy planning, clear target groups, clear objectives, and monitoring of the results via placement and evaluation studies.   You had performance indicators, and a monitoring committee that met twice a year, and you had formal progress reports twice a year, way before SMI was thought of…this was being done in structural funds, largely thanks to the European Commission" (INT8).

When ESF funding for the PLC programme ended in 2000, there was an initial concern that the programme might be discontinued. However, as a former senior DES official states:

> "…all those programmes were under threat when there was no EU money and we were lucky that there was kind of a resurgence in the economy at the same time which enabled them to be continued" (INT8).

However, while the initial concern over funding for the PLC programme had been resolved, the absence of the ESF reporting requirements was seen to have an effect. Further education, by the nature of its fragmentation, depended on the rigour of the programme's governance to provide the operating structure. The reduction of the requirements associated with ESF

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funding appears to have had a negative impact. A former CEO of a VEC expresses the view that the lack of scrutiny enabled "mission drift in terms of the PLCs" (INT9). A former senior DES official concurs with this view with particular reference to the impact of no longer having to engage in ESF-type requirements, such as evaluations, stating:

> "…the administrative requirements of the ESF where you had to do evaluations and you'd do placement surveys and all that, that all stopped. The absence of regular follow-up studies after that led the FE sector to take their eye off the ball…" (INT8).

On the training side 2008 witnessed the expenses scandal in FÁS. The state training agency became politically toxic and, despite the appointment of a new Director-General and a new Board of the organisation, the government decided to disband it. One senior policy actor describes the situation:

> "FÁS had become a toxic brand and there was a desire to get FÁS off the pitch and bringing skills and training under the Department of Education again provided, if you like, a departmental platform for getting the synergies. At the same time there was the whole desire to reduce the number of public sector bodies, so the burning of the quangos and so on, as it was referred to, and that provided an opportunity to do something which I think the department would have wanted to do for quite some time which was to rationalise the VECs into larger geographical entities" (INT 7).

Given previous attempts to amalgamate the VECs, especially in the 1990s, the government's decision in 2010 to amalgamate the VECs was not unexpected. 2010 also saw the government's decision to transfer policy responsibility for training to DES and for employment services to DSP. In 2011, the decision was made to disband FÁS, and to create the ETBs from the former VEC schools and colleges, and the FÁS training centres. 2011 also saw the announcement of the establishment of SOLAS. This realignment of departmental responsibilities, as well as the creation of new

agencies from elements of legacy bodies inevitably led to an unsettling of previous relationships between actors. These reforms provoked a great deal of suspicion between DES and the VECs. Referring to the amalgamation of the VECs and the creation of the ETBs, as well as the establishment of SOLAS, one senior DES official states:

> "Initially you had huge suspicion from the VECs/ETBs around the creation of SOLAS as an oversight body because they actually saw it as a takeover by FÁS…at the time there was almost a push-back from the VECs and it was both from the political and from the administrative side…" (INT7).

Given the previous relationship between FÁS and the VECs, a great deal of work took place by DES officials in providing reassurances to the VECs. At one stage a meeting was arranged between the Minister for Education and Skills, Mr Ruairi Quinn, and the Chairs and CEOs of the VECs to provide such reassurances. At this meeting the Minister, referring to the rivalry between FÁS and the VECs, said "the war is over, you've won the war" (INT3, INT7).

In 2010 the change in reporting lines from DJEI to DES for FÁS was "a big change" (INT4). This former senior FÁS official elaborates:

> "……it was difficult to overcome perceptions at that stage which had been in the media – that the programmes were no use…it is very hard to shake it [perception] off. So that was a very serious blow because some of the people in the Department of Education were privately convinced that that was the case, not understanding the training situation" (INT4).

This policy actor also pointed out the difficulties FÁS had in understanding the education side:

"…we ourselves had challenges around education because we immediately came up with a spurious divide about education and training, and that was quite embedded in, we felt our experience was that it was quite embedded in both ourselves and in the Department of Education" (INT4).

Following the decision to establish SOLAS, the Director-General of FÁS was named as the Chief Executive-Designate of SOLAS. The staff that had been working in FÁS Head Office would become, in effect, the staff of SOLAS. During the period commencing in December 2011, DES initiated a consultation process on the establishment of SOLAS (Department of Education and Skills, 2011a, 2012). One of the most contentious issues to address in public perception terms was whether SOLAS was the 'new FÁS'. Mooney (2013), in posing this question, states that the new "structures [SOLAS] need to be more than FÁS – The Sequel". The vast majority of the policy actors are of the view that SOLAS is not the new FÁS but is very different. However, one former FÁS official accepts that the public perception is that SOLAS is seen as the new FÁS (INT4).

Another set of agencies that were created were the ETBs. Of the original 33 VECs only three became ETBs without any amalgamations, namely City of Dublin, Donegal and Kerry. The remaining 13 ETBs involved an amalgamation of two or more VECs. The establishment of the ETBs also involved, in many cases, the amalgamation of the former FÁS training centres into the new ETB structures. At the level of organisational cultures the differences between FÁS and the VECs were less than might be initially thought. Broadly speaking, both were providing similar courses to the same profile of learner. As a senior SOLAS official states "it was really about helping people as best they could, and it is absolutely identical to the ethos in further education" (INT4). As Walshe (2014) points out "though scepticism abounded within the different cultures of FÁS and the VECs, bringing them together was not as radical an idea as it seemed" (p.153). A senior SOLAS official outlines some of the initial difficulties in the relationship between SOLAS and the ETBs:

"I think one of the problems to be honest with you is that a lot of the, and I include myself in this, the ethos of the former VECs, let's say the ETBs is not well understood in SOLAS, or wasn't well understood at the beginning. About what was important to people, how they worked or their work culture and what they felt was important. And that wasn't understood clearly enough I think at the early part, and some of the tensions that arose then, which I would say were due to SOLAS to be honest with you…but there's still a residue there" (INT4).

However, this official describes the engagement between SOLAS and the ETBs, and vice versa, as being "very good and very professional". This concurs with the view expressed by two former CEOs of VECs (INT9, INT11).

It is also important the bear in mind that the interviews for this study took place in November and December of 2015, when both SOLAS and the ETB were just two years in existence and, in many ways, still in their operational infancy. A further relationship that is similarly in its infancy is that involving these new bodies and the Department of Social Protection (DSP). During the period of peak unemployment, referral processes between DSP and the ETBs for people on the live register to FET courses were commencing. However, government policy places the priority for DSP on activating unemployed persons into employment rather than education and training. One senior SOLAS official identified the referral protocol as an area for "potential policy clashes" (INT9). A CEO of an ETB states that "there's definitely tension there" (INT11).

The relationship between the ETBs and DES has also evolved. The Secretary-General and members of DES Management Advisory Committee (MAC) hold regular meetings with the Chief Executives of the ETBs "which is a new phenomenon" (INT11). Within DES since 2010, Skills Division has been created and is headed up by an Assistant Secretary. This

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has created a critical mass within DES for policy development in the FET space. Indeed, there are significant levels of collaboration between Skills Division and Higher Education Division. As a senior DES official observes:

> "…there's a lot of cooperation between the two [divisions] and in fact there's a shared principal officer between the two divisions…they're working together on things like the skills strategy…it's the coherence between the two because there's a lot different about the two of those than there is about schooling" (INT 5).

All of the institutional and organisational reform since the onset of the Great Recession has been part of the government's response to the need to reduce public expenditure (Government of Ireland, 2010). Coinciding with the arrival of the Troika in January 2011, and following a change of government in February 2011, two public service reform plans have been published (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, 2011, 2014). A senior official in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform differentiates between these two reform plans:

> "Our first public reform plan is all about efficiency. The second plan we published is all about services to the public and better outcomes…So a shift from efficiency to better service" (INT13).

A senior SOLAS official is more succinct in describing the difference as, "[the 2011 plan] do more with less...it's now better for less" (INT6). The 2008 review by the OECD of public services in Ireland (OECD, 2008) is identified as being influential in "setting the direction for how the public service could be more efficient" (INT4). A senior DPER official agrees that the OECD review definitely did inform the public service reform plans (INT13). The reform plans coincided with the 'Troika Years'. Says the same senior DPER official "the Troika played an overarching role…they obviously wanted reforms, so some of the things like government

procurement, centralising that to drive efficiencies…they just wanted the savings to be delivered, they were less concerned about how we did it. But certainly they would have been a driver of reform…" (INT13). The 'Troika Years' were a period when not only did the volume of reform increase but so too did the pace of the change (INT1, 5, 7). As one former DES official says "never let a good crisis go to waste" (INT1). As discussed previously, many of the policy initiatives that DES had wished to implement in the past, but circumstances had not permitted, formed the basis for number of the reforms of this period. Within the FET domain, a senior DES official agrees that the Troika was a driver of reform, with a particular focus on activation (INT7).

A senior ETB official saw the Public Services Reform Plans as a time of little or no resources, either financial or staffing (INT11). This actor also observes that the reform process also meant "less local and more central control" (INT11). However, this actor points out that it is during such recessionary times when a review of practices can often be most effective:

> "One of the things you can say about public sector reform in a recession you have to look at everything so when you start to look at things, something that made total sense to you in a particular set of circumstances, suddenly doesn't make sense" (INT11).

However, a former DJEI official questioned the rationale of placing the task of reform in the same department that controls expenditure:

> "…you cannot put public sector development as opposed to reform in with the spending controlling department. The ethos of a Department of Finance is fundamentally not developmental, so reform and development will always be seen through that prism" (INT12).

The final element of this thematic discussion is the development and launch of the FET Strategy in 2014. In July 2011, when the establishment of

SOLAS was announced, the development of a FET Strategy was not part of the initial discussion. However, Mr Paul O'Toole, the Director General of FÁS, and later the Chief Executive of SOLAS, argued strongly for the need for a FET Strategy. This was accepted by DES when preparing the draft legislation and the requirement for the strategy was included in the section 9 of the Further Education and Training Act, 2013. As one senior policy actor states:

> "…if we had a diffuse sector, as was being described, and we simply put in a set of institutional reforms without some set of guiding principles about what it was meant to achieve, we would run into trouble" (INT6).

While the FET Strategy was submitted to DES at the end of March 2014, some five months after SOLAS commenced operations on Oct 27th, 2013, a great deal of work had been taking place in advance of this formal initiation of the strategy development process. A senior policy actor states:

> "…in advance of the establishment of SOLAS, we were aware that this was coming down the tracks because we had seen the draft legislation, and we were made aware of this commitment. Therefore we put in the processes to move it so that we would be able to achieve all that" (INT6).

The formal development work on the Strategy commenced in September 2013. It involved a research report by the ESRI (McGuinness, et al, 2014) and international benchmarking. The Action Plan of the Strategic Implementation Group (Department of Education and Skills, 2012) has also been cited by a senior SOLAS official as being "hugely influential" on the final strategy (INT9). A senior actor describes the consultation process:

> "There was an extensive consultation, a structured consultation with all of the actors in the sector, unions, enterprises, providers, learners, advocates, representative bodies, government departments etc. so

there was a process there. Then there was a steering group which worked to assimilate that" (INT6).

A senior SOLAS official describes the involvement of such a range of diverse stakeholders:

"…you get people that have the expertise in certain areas there, who counterweight, so you have different people counter weighting. So you have the policy maker, the practitioner, and the funder…triangulated and often they don't agree, the three of them. So it's about making a call, essentially the strategy is about making a call on the balance of that. So that's what they are very useful for" (INT4).

While one policy actor described the content of the strategy as the "amalgamation of 20 years of thinking" (INT11), a senior SOLAS official was of the view that to think of the Strategy as just "a rehashing or a kind of repositioning" (INT9) would not be a fair reflection of the outcome of the consultative process which this official described as being a "huge balancing act in terms of who wanted this and who wanted that" (INT9). The Troika, and the Public Service Reform Plan, of which this Strategy was part, were identified as important drivers of the Strategy (INT4, INT6, INT9). In particular, the importance of evidence-based policy making is identified by one actor as having made a particular impact of the Strategy (INT6).

When the FET Strategy was launched in May 2014, it set out five strategic goals for FET for the five year period until 2019:

1 Skills for the Economy
2 Active Inclusion
3 Quality Provision
4 Integrated Planning and Funding
5 Standing of FET

These five goals were proposed by SOLAS as part of development process of the Strategy. A senior official describes the inter-connectedness between the goals:

> "…there are two sort of drivers of what you are looking for, skills for the economy and active inclusion. Quality provision is almost a hygiene factor. Integrated planning and funding is the enabler and the standing of FET is Desirable by product of all of the previous" (INT6).

DES accepted the FET Strategy in March 2014 without amendment. It became official government policy when it was launched by the Minister for Education and Skills, Mr Ruairi Quinn, in May 2014. Referring to the five month delivery period for the Strategy compared to the two years for the Hunt Report in Higher Education (Department of Education and Skills, 2011b), one senior official says, "if we had two years to do the FET Strategy I'm not entirely sure it would have been that much better" (INT6). A senior SOLAS official did qualify this position by saying, "on reflection, the timeline was very tight for a strategy of such magnitude" (INT4).

At the governmental level a set of departmental relationships are set out in section 9(4) of the Act for SOLAS in preparing the FET Strategy. According to the Act, SOLAS is obliged, in preparing the Strategy, to consult with three Ministers, namely, the Minister for Education and Skills, the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, and the Minister for Social Protection. Each department had particular lenses through which the Strategy was viewed. For DJEI and DSP the 'Skills for the Economy' goal was very important (INT4). However, although not named in the legislation, DPER has an input (INT4). Their emphasis was on the immediate concern of addressing high unemployment (INT4). A senior official of DES describes the establishment of SOLAS as the vehicle to implement FET policy into the future, "but it think it'll take a long time"

(INT3). A senior DES official appears to echo this view in describing the FET Strategy:

> "…the further education strategy was never going to deliver everything in the strategy. It's really an enabling strategy to address things over time so whether it's data, whether it's teacher education or trainer education, whether it's review of PLC, whatever it is, it's an enabling structure within which it can happen over time…" (INT5).

Reflecting on recent developments in FET a senior DES official states:

> "I think the nature of what we do in further education and training, how we do it and what we do will be radically different in ten years' time" (INT5).

6.4.3 Validation Process – Triangulation of Results

The purpose of this section is to validate the results presented from the analysis of two data sources in this case study, namely the policy documents and the interviews with the policy actors through a process of multiple triangulation as discussed in Chapter Five. While the analysis of each of the two data sources took a thematic approach, based on the four themes identified from the literature, the triangulation process will take a chronological approach, based on the four time periods used in presenting the results. This will facilitate the linking of the developments identified under each theme contemporaneously. This process will greatly assist the development of a fuller understanding of the processes involved in the evolution of FET over the period of this study.

In Chapter Two, in setting out the theoretical framework of institutionalism for this study, an institution was defined as a set of rules which impacted on the behaviour of people or organisations. Thelen (1999, 2004) emphasises the coalitional approach to institutional genesis and change, in which an

institution is developed through the collective action of a number of actors to reach an agreement on the 'rules'. In other words, an institution is established, and/or changed by people reaching an agreement, albeit a compromise among competing political forces. Consequently, the institution and the actors and inseparable, and a discussion of institutional change must consider both (Conran and Thelen, 2016). While the policy documents and the associated legislation provide evidence of institutional genesis, continuity and change, the analysis of the interviews, with their focus on the relationships between the key actors gives an insight into the process of building the necessary coalition. By triangulating the results of the documentary analysis and the interviews on a chronological basis, placed within the context of the period, a greater understanding of the evolution of FET in Ireland involved can be achieved.

<u>1973-1986</u>

The period of the study begins with Ireland joining the EEC. This was followed closely by the two oil crises in 1973 and 1979 which initiated global recessionary pressures which, led to economic recession in Ireland for much of this period. In the field of FDI, 1973 was identified by Barry (2007) as the beginning of the shift into higher technology sectors, which had a consequential impact on the demand for skills. By the end of this period, as a result of the Keynesian policies and deficit spending of six successive governments, Ireland was economically stagnant, and "the panacea of membership of the EEC seemed nothing but a chimera" (Murphy, 2016, p.10). At this time unemployment, which reached a peak of 17.1% in 1986, was regarded as a problem for the government to resolve. The sense of national crisis which ensued in the mid-1980s led to the emergence of Social Partnership.

In education, senior cycle enrolments had increased by over 80% by 1986, putting significant pressure on the national exchequer. Participation levels in third-level education over this period also increased significantly by over 92%. Within the FET space, the two government departments, DES and

DJEI, operated almost entirely separately, with the exception of the apprenticeship area. On joining the EEC, ESF funding became available to respond to the issue of high youth unemployment. Under the remit of DJEI an executive agency was in place with responsibility for industrial training and apprenticeships, AnCO. DES, on the other hand, had no single statutory body, but a network of VECs. However, with the expansion of second-level provision, and the steady displacement of the vocational curriculum with the more academic Leaving Certificate, the capacity of the vocational school to respond to the need to provide vocational training to young people who had completed reached school leaving age had been reduced over this period. In essence, in this period, the difference in approach between the two departments came down to capacity. Within DJEI, the AnCo Training Centres were an existing infrastructure through which training was delivered. Within DES, as one senior DES official put it, there was little or no policy, just access to ESF funding, and their dependence on the VECs to innovate (INT5). The difference between the two departments could be framed as DJEI focusing on the type of training to be delivered, whereas in DES, the focus was on how to deliver training, and also what training, for which there was ESF funding.

Of the four time periods of this study, analysis shows that the 1973-1986 period had the lowest volume of references to skills in the policy documents. According to a former senior DJEI official, this period saw a new focus on training (INT12). Apprenticeship was suffering from a negative public image and in need of review. While the number of registered apprentices increased during the 1970s, from the early 1980s until the mid-1990s this number declined steadily. Within DES, in the period prior to commencement of ESF-funded programmes, a small amount of preparation for work-type courses took place under the headings of 'Secretarial' with enrolments in 1973 of 4,337. By 1986, enrolments in school-to-work transitions courses had increased to 19,583, which represent an increase of over 450% over the period. Within AnCo, the volume of training also significantly increased by over 300% over this period.

From 1973 until 1986 the purpose for FET, while associated with social inclusion objectives, was seen as primarily labour market related and having an economic imperative, as did higher education. One of the objectives for FET in this first period as identified in the policy documents was training for people who were unemployed – what is now referred to as labour market activation. This purpose was the exclusive preserve of the courses provided by AnCo as there was no provision at higher education under this category. Under DES the VPT programmes were aimed at preparing young people for the labour market before leaving school and therefore did not have an activation objective.

In the 1973-1986 period, education and training were seen as remaining distinctly separate policy entities, even though in reality the distinction was becoming more blurred due to the availability of vocational training programmes under DES as well as DJEI, facilitated by the availability of ESF funding. Indeed the European Council resolution which preceded the establishment of the Pre-Employment Courses states that Member States will promote "closer links between these two types of education [general education and vocational training]" (European Council, 1976b, II, para 1 (a)). This separation was also put under the spotlight in the apprenticeship area where the classroom based element of the programmes were delivered in educational organisations under the control of the VECs, namely, vocational schools, technical colleges, and Regional Technical Colleges (RTC). The divide between what was seen as the academic higher education and vocational training became the focus of the European Court of Justice in the Gravier case, the Court ruled that any course at any level, including higher education, which prepared the student for a particular occupation, came within the definition of vocational training.

Within the area of certification and qualifications, the NCEA was providing certification for the courses provided in the technical colleges in the third level sector. No national certification was available for vocational education and training under either DES or DJEI. This is despite the European Council Resolution which established the funding for the

VPT/PLC programme stating that Member States will ensure that "training programmes lead to recognized certification and that systems of certification provide the maximum flexibility" (European Council, 1983, II). The vocational schools and, indeed, the AnCo training centres, availed of primarily UK based certification bodies, such as City and Guilds. The absence of certification was beginning to emerge as an issue in the mid-1980s in Ireland, within the European context of the mobility of workers and the comparability of qualifications.

The administration of FET remained organisationally unchanged during this period, despite numerous references to the need for intermediate tiers in education. Within the education policy domain, the resistance of the Catholic Church in particular to intermediate/regional structures in education was very powerful and ultimately dominant. However, a combination of the recessionary pressures in the economy, and the very difficult state of the national finances, did contribute to the preparatory work on regionalisation and rationalisation proposals which materialised in the 1990s.

At the end of this first period the drivers of all government policy were the economic recession and the state of the national finances. Within DES, in the absence of any specific policy for FET, the development of the PEC and VPT programmes was driven by the high youth unemployment, and facilitated by the availability of ESF funding. The absence of policy in this area, however, could not be describes as a barrier to the development as it could equally have facilitated the level of innovation seen at VEC level with the only boundaries being the requirements of ESF funding, and the funding criteria set out in DES communications. The reduction in the capacity of vocational schools to respond to the need for vocational training over the previous decade certainly hindered the development of these programmes. This was certainly the case when compared with the situation in the AnCO training centres.

The active labour market policy arena remained the preserve of the DJEI. While being the national authority for ESF funding, EEC policy had an impact on policy direction, by virtue of the funding being received. The European Council resolution also states that "vocational training policies in the Community in the 1980s will be developed generally as…an instrument of active employment policy" (European Council, 1983, I). The influence of the OECD was well documented in this area also. The pending implementation of the Single European Market was creating a context for policy convergence in the future. The convergence of education and training from separate to a single entity had been evident in the policy discourse within the skill formation dimension of active labour market policy since the 1960s. The European Court of Justice ruling in the Gravier case not only increased the horizontal convergence of education and training, but also the vertical convergence of VET and higher education.

Within broader European labour market policy, and in particular, the policy objective of facilitating the mobility of workers, the issue of the comparability of qualifications, or the mobility of qualifications, began to emerge towards the end of this first time period. As with the rationalisation measures in DES sphere in the 1990s, the policy debate on a new qualifications system began in this first time period.

<u>1987-1995</u>

The second period of the study, from 1987 to 1995, spans the beginning of social partnership to the beginning of the Celtic Tiger in the mid-1990s. This period, which fortuitously coincided with an upturn in the global economy, is characterised by improving economic performance, falling unemployment, and the arrival of immigration. This period marked the beginning of the third FDI phase which Barry (2007) identifies as the "global high-tech boom" (p.264). Within education and training, the 1990s marked a period of unprecedented consultation, development and reform, both at the international and national levels. The rate of increase in enrolment levels slowed considerably compared to the first period. Senior

cycle in post-primary increased by 25%, VPT increased by 15%, while higher education increased by 42% over this eight year period. On the training side the opposite trend is evident. The number of registered apprenticeships continued to fall over this period and the volume of training decreased by some 16%. Given the activation objective of training, less training would obviously needed to meet that objective during a period of falling unemployment.

It was also during this period that the purpose of FET began to change slightly, relative to HE, with the references to the economic imperative of FET being reduced matched by a corresponding increase for higher education. In the first social partnership agreement, there are no references to either FET or HE in relation to economic development or competitiveness. However, HE is mentioned in relation to workforce development. Within DES, the purpose of the further education part of FET was broadened with the establishment of VTOS and Youthreach in 1989 (INT8). In the area of apprenticeships during this period a review was conducted and a proposal for a new standards-based apprenticeship formed part of the social partnership agreement in 1991.

The 1990s was a decade of consultation, development and reform in education. In turn, the level of reform provoked tensions between multiple actors. At the European level the Maastricht Treaty was passed in 1992 giving the EU competence in the field of education policy as well as training. This was followed by the White Paper on *Growth, Competitiveness and Employment* (European Commission, 1993), which linked economic, employment, and education and training policies. Two more white papers on Social Policy, and Education and Training followed in the next two years in advance of the European Year for Lifelong Learning in 1996. These contributed to the context for the initial debates about the need for a national certification system for vocational education and training in Ireland. While the NCEA had operated at third level, there was a gap in the FET arena under DES. In 1991, a new national agency, the National Council for Vocational Awards, was established. The Culliton

Report in 1992 commented on the absence of a national certification system as an issue to be addressed, and referred to what it saw as the inappropriateness of UK based certification to the Irish labour market. A review of the Irish education system by the OECD (OECD, 1991) was influential at the time and referred to the need for intermediate tiers within the administrative structures.

The Green Paper also contained a proposal for a national certification body to incorporate the NCEA and the nascent NCVA. This was not progressed because, as a number of the policy actors confirmed, the amount of development required, not to mention the lack of agreement within the relevant stakeholders, in particular, DES and DJEI made the proposal impractical at that time (INT5, INT8). The learning outcomes approach to vocational training of the early 1980s in Britain was seen as a way for governments to monitor student learning rather than education 'delivery' – a shift from inputs to outputs making 'value for money' more measureable. This learning outcomes approach was adopted by the NCVA and eventually became the standard approach for assessment systems and national frameworks of qualifications including in Ireland.

The discredited Keynesian policies of the 1970s and 1980s were increasingly being replaced with the monetarist approach to economic planning. This approach also emphasised less regulation and government intervention in the market. On the international stage employment policy shifted from employment to employability, in which responsibility for addressing unemployment shifted from the government to the individual. Each person was responsible, through lifelong education and training, to maintain their own employability. Lifelong learning policy became the banner for reform of education and training systems but in the direction of providing more opportunities for people to maintain their employability. The post-Maastricht publications referred to earlier contain this policy tone. At this time the OECD published its *Job Study* (OECD, 1994) in which it reaffirmed its commitment to active labour market policies. With a distinctly neo-liberal tone, the link between education and training and

employment was reaffirmed. Unemployment was seen as a 'brake' on economic growth. In the same year the European Council produced the Essen Guidelines on employment policy, which ultimately led to the European Employment Strategy later in the decade. The convergence of education and training, both within active labour market policy, as well as the qualifications arena, began to emerge more clearly, particularly under the banner of lifelong learning. This would reach a climax in Ireland with the Qualifications Act in 1999.

The final theme of regionalisation and rationalisation of administration in FET also began to emerge in this period. The establishment of FÁS in 1988 from the amalgamation of the three legacy executive agencies was a major event under this theme in this period. Within the VEC sector, another significant event took place. In 1992 the Regional Technical Colleges Act, and the Dublin Institute of Technology Act, separated the technical colleges from their parent VECs. This event caused a great deal of tension between the VECs and DES. At the same time within the broader consultations on education policy, the issue of Regional Education Councils had resurfaced. These events were viewed from within the VEC sector as being evidence of an anti-VEC sentiment within DES (INT9, INT11). Further education, in the first half of the 1990s, continued to operate in the absence of any central policy direction, other than the governance requirements of ESF funding. A second national dimension to further education provision emerged in 1993 when the NCVA started to provide certification for PLC courses. The developments in the qualifications area were showing signs of convergence but, as was the case with FÁS, the developments in this time period laid the ground work for the events in the next period. Access and progression were identified as prominent issues within the policy documents with regard to the theme of certification and qualifications. A former senior official concurred with this view (INT2). Progression from further education courses into higher education programmes was also a prominent element of this debate. This is consistent with the evidence for the policy documents and the views expressed by the policy actors (INT2, INT9, INT11).

The issue of a national certification body was revisited in the White Paper on Education in 1995. TEASTAS was established on an *ad hoc* basis in 1995 and operated for 3 years. It was the first attempt at national coordination in this arena. The proposal to establish TEASTAS was, at the time, politically ambitious given that this was the first time all of the parties met together. In the end agreement among the parties proved not to be possible so the Minister ended TEASTAS' operations and proceeded with legislation. As one policy actor states, "the only thing everyone was agreed on was they were opposed to TEASTAS" (INT2). The White Paper saw the first use the term 'further education'. This Paper also contained a proposal for a Further Education Authority, which had similarities to SOLAS, but without training. This proposal was not progressed at the time due to government policy which was opposed to establishing more agencies (INT8).

Events at a European level had an influence on Irish policy developments. The Maastricht Treaty of 1992 gave the EU a competence in education policy. This was in addition to its influence on the debate concerning a national certification system so as to facilitate the mobility of Irish workers to other Member States (INT2). The developments at EU level also strengthened the policy link between education and training, economic development, and employment. The banner of lifelong learning came to the fore during this period, particularly in the context of employability. The OECD was also prominent, with the proposals in the *Jobs Study,* in the area of active labour market policy. The EU, with the Essen Guidelines of 1994, was preparing the ground for the European Employment Strategy in 1997.

Education and training continued to convergence to a single entity, particularly under the banner of lifelong learning. Indeed, lifelong learning draws no distinction between education and training. This convergence is also evident in the developments within the qualifications arena. The establishment of the NCVA to provide certification for courses in further education, alongside the NCEA certifying technical higher education, provided a breadth to the state system. Extending NCVA certification to

the sectoral training bodies, such as CERT and Teagasc, progressed somewhat over the 1990s despite the opposition of the TUI in particular (INT2). The establishment of TEASTAS, following the proposal in the 1995 White Paper, was politically ambitious given the nature of the relations between all the parties involved. The leadership of DES officials, and the Minister for Education, in maintaining the momentum towards the national qualifications system, despite the inability to achieve agreement among the parties, is noteworthy and could be considered to a driver of this policy development (INT2, INT5). Ownership of the new qualifications system was the subject of a "turf war" (INT1) between DES and DJEI which ultimately DES won. At this time a former senior DJEI official described relations between the two departments as "poor" (INT12).

Within the administration sphere, the establishment of FÁS in 1988 was a significant convergence event with the amalgamation of three legacy bodies. The 1990s also saw a heightening of tension between the VECs and DES around the separation of the technical higher education colleges from VEC management. This period also witnessed the launch of the Strategic Management Initiative (SMI), also referred to as Irish NPM (Hardiman and MacCarthaigh, 2011). As with other policy initiatives, the impact of NPM within the policy documents was not evident until the next time period. While seen as a reform plan focused on the civil service, it did have a somewhat cascading effect through the wider public service (INT7).

1996-2007

This penultimate time period of the study examines the period from 1996 until 2007. This period covers the economic boom of the Celtic Tiger years until the end of social partnership. During this period economic growth was at record levels. Unemployment was below 5%, the size of the labour force was increasing, and skills shortages were high on the agenda. Within education and training this period witnessed a fall in senior cycle enrolments of 7%, while higher education increased by 45%, and further education by 53%. FÁS training, during this period, experienced a modest

increase in volume of some 8%. A combination of the roll-out of the new standards-based apprenticeship, as well as the boom in the construction sector combined to significantly increase the number of registered apprentices. A former senior FÁS official confirmed that the apprenticeship programme had become the driver within FÁS at the time (INT4). This virtually exclusive focus on one programme left FÁS exposed in terms of its diminished capacity to respond to the subsequent unemployment crisis which followed the financial crash in 2008 (INT4).

The shift in the purpose of FET which had emerged in the last time period accelerated during this time. The stated purpose of FET and HE began to diverge with HE becoming dominant in the economic domain and FET in the social inclusion, including activation. A former DES official confirms that labour market matters became dominated by HE (INT8). This period also coincides with the inclusion of the Community and Voluntary Pillar in the social partnership process. The publication of the first National Anti-Poverty Strategy in 1997 highlighted the link between educational disadvantage, unemployment, and poverty. In a time when further education was regarded as a "side show" (INT8) within DES, a former DES official identifies the Community and Voluntary pillar as the biggest supporters of FET within the social partnership process (INT8). Skills for social inclusion were increasingly becoming the remit of further education with this period having the highest frequency of references to social inclusion across the entire study.

In the labour market arena there was evidence of a shift in the government's approach from one of seeking full employment to one of employability. The first reference to employability in the policy documents was in the White Paper on Human Resource Development (Department and Employment, 1997). Skills for those in employment, or workforce development, were a significant issue during this period. Given the very favourable employment situation, skills for activation, which remained the sole preserve of FÁS, understandably received a lower priority. This White Paper was also the first time the phrase 'knowledge economy' was used in a

government policy document in Ireland. At this time, particularly among the high-tech FDI companies, the issue of skills shortage was to the fore. Following a recommendation within the White Paper, the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) was established in 1997. Given the specific issue to which it responded the Group had a HE bias. While one of the policy actors, a former member of the Board of EGFSN, did not think it was still the case, four other actors who were also current or former members of the EGFSN Board, agreed that there was still a HE bias present (INT4, INT5, INT7, INT11, INT12).

In the EU arena the developments initiated in the last period came to fruition, with the passing of the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997 and the launching of the European Employment Strategy. This required Member States to develop National Employment Action Plans (NEAP). A former senior DJEI official stated that the EU was very influential in the area of labour market and employment law in Ireland (INT12). The EU continued to be influential within the lifelong learning policy space, especially in the context of employability. Lifelong learning continued to be the locus for convergence between education and training, but also between education and training, economic development and employment. In Ireland this convergence went further with the developments in the qualifications space.

Having suspended the operation of TEASTAS, the Minister for Education, Mr Micheál Martin, proceeded down the legislative route. During the preparation phase for the legislation, there were two main elements of the system to be established. Firstly, there was the certification system and, secondly, there was the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). It was in relation to the NFQ, in particular, that developments in Ireland outpaced those in other EU Member States. The qualifications system and the NFQ in particular, provided an environment in which significant institutional and organisational convergence took place. Vertical convergence occurred between FET and HE. For the first time both sectors were on the one framework using the same 'language' in terms of learning outcomes. The horizontal convergence occurred particularly in FET, where

for the first time in Irish legislation, education and training was defined as a single entity in law. The NFQ was launched in 2003. Further tension between some of the actors arose during the process of placing legacy awards on the framework. This process, which was based on a "pragmatic best fit" (INT8), proved highly political. The placement of the apprenticeships on the framework provoked a level of contention that became public. The construction sector unions, and in particular, the electricians union, were very forceful in their demand to have some apprenticeships at level 7, i.e. ordinary degree level (INT2, INT8). FÁS were supportive of this position but, following an evaluative process, all apprenticeships were placed at level 6 (INT2, INT8).

The 1999 Qualifications Act provided a legal definition of further education and training, albeit in terms of what it was not rather than what it is. The Act was also the first time that all forms of FET, from education, industrial training and apprenticeship, as well as from the various sectoral training bodies, had been brought together within the one system. For many of the parties involved, it was the first time they had met, and the framework provided a common collaborative space. On its establishment FETAC inherited the four certification processes already in place, and continued to operate them under the FETAC banner. Discussions on the need to rationalise these began during this period but were not implemented until the next. Similarly, the rationalisation of the three bodies established under the Act into one was a topic of informal discussion that began in 2005 (INT2, INT5). As with other initiatives, their implementation took place in the next time period.

Relations between some of the qualifications bodies, however, were somewhat strained, particularly, between HETAC and NQAI. One senior DES official suggested that the loss of previously held autonomy was a significant contributor to the tension (INT5). In the FET sector, relations between FETAC and FÁS were very challenging (INT6). From FETAC's perspective, FÁS were resistant to change, particularly over the loss of their autonomy in relation to certification (INT2). On the other hand FÁS were

of the view that the changes being made were contrary to the needs of the labour market and divergent with occupational profiles (INT4). Interesting, one policy actor with experience in the qualifications area identified the absence of occupational standards groups as a weakness in the development of the qualifications system (INT2). This view hardened with the development of the Common Awards System, an issue which will be addressed in the next section. With regard to the NFQ, HETAC were seen as being more interested in the European scene, particularly the Bologna process and the European Quality Assurance Network (ENQA) (INT2). FETAC were very supportive of the NFQ. A view expressed by a former senior official point is that HE did not need the structure it provided as much as the FET sector did (INT2).

In Europe there were further convergence pressures emerging with the adoption of the Lisbon agenda. This was the first time education and training had been placed centre stage in European policy. Under the Lisbon agenda, the Copenhagen process in VET and the Bologna process in HE, initiated cooperative approaches in the areas of quality assurance and a credit system. Both of these European processes converged with the launch of the European Qualifications Framework in 2008. Because of the developments in Ireland in the field of qualifications frameworks, Irish officials, and in particular, Ms Barbara Kelly from FETAC, were very influential in the development of the EQF (INT2). Indeed, a former senior official was of the view that Ireland's advances with the NFQ were facilitated by the fact that the country's qualification system was very much in a developmental phase – a green field site (INT2). In other Member States, where the systems are more established and, therefore, more embedded, implementing changes in this area would be more complex and take place at a slower pace (INT2).

Within public administration the impact of the SMI, launched in 1994, was evident in the policy documents, with this period displaying the highest frequency of references to NPM concepts. The Public Management Act of 1997 enshrined the NPM approach in legislation and placed an obligation

on government departments and state bodies to produce strategy statements. The rate at which executive agencies were established was significantly higher through the 1990s than at any time in the history of the state. Within the education and training arena, the proposals on Regional Education Councils, initiated during the previous period included the establishment of these bodies alongside the VECs was deemed unworkable by a former senior DES official (INT8). Following a change of government, this proposal was not implemented, although there was a minor reduction in the number of VECs from 38 to 33 in the late 1990s involving the incorporation of five town-based VECs into their respective county based VECs. The Vocational Education (Amendment) Act of 2001 was enacted within this period. It focused on delineating the governance structures within VECs by separating what were termed reserved and executive functions. The view of one former CEO of a VEC is that this Act placed greater onus on the executive to drive the new structures (INT9). This former CEO went on to suggest that the Act was partly due to "the raft of employment legislation" at the time (INT9).

2008-2014

The final period of this study commences at the beginning of the Great Recession, covers the Troika years, and concludes with the establishment of SOLAS in 2013 and the launch of the first ever FET Strategy in Ireland. During these years Ireland, like many other countries throughout the industrialised world, experienced significant economic and fiscal difficulties. Driven by a sense of national emergency, and with the level of resources available decreasing significantly, a programme of major public sector reforms was initiated. Unlike the difficulties of the 1980s, as a consequence of a combination of obligations under European Treaties and agreements, the Irish government had only two policy options available to address the economic challenges – reduce public spending, and labour market reforms (Regan, 2013). The early part of this period also saw the collapse of the social partnership process, which many in government had seen as having contributed to the spending excesses of recent years

(INT12). During this period, public spending was significantly curtailed. Unemployment rose sharply, and emigration increased. Within education and training, enrolments increased in senior cycle of post-primary by 10%, in higher education by 21%, and further education, primarily the PLC course, enrolments increased by some 13%. Training within FÁS however, collapsed by 43% of its volume. The number of registered apprentices, reflecting the collapse of the construction industry, also declined sharply. Correspondingly, the number of redundant apprentices increased significantly.

During this period, the divergence in purpose between FET and HE increased, with skills for economic development and competition becoming the exclusive preserve of higher education, while skills for social inclusion and activation were seen as the purpose of FET. Activation was also a purpose attributes to higher education in response to the number of people with high skills who became unemployed. These references were almost exclusively referring to the Springboard labour market activation programme, which focused a great deal on skill conversion courses. Providing skills for those in employment was seen as a purpose for both FET and HE. However, the divergence in the stated purpose between FET and HE was reversed in the FET Strategy when FET was positioned as re-engaging with the economic imperative within the provision of intermediate skills.

The early part of this period witnessed a expenses scandal involving senior FÁS executives the outcome of which was FÁS being seen as a toxic brand (INT3, INT4, INT7). In the 2009/2010 period a new Director-General was appointed, and a new Board took up duty. Mr Paul O'Toole took over the helm of FÁS in 2009, at a very difficult time. However, one policy actor describes his appointment as a positive development in terms of its relations with other bodies – "it changed things dramatically" (INT2). Despite the on-going difficulties FÁS was experiencing at the time it had two major tasks – put an activation response in place for the unemployed, and address the issue of the large number of redundant apprentices (INT4, INT6). A

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former senior FÁS official observes how, despite the apprentices being their employees, employers stepped back and looked to FÁS to take responsibility for the redundant apprentices (INT4).

In 2008 the government, as part of its cost cutting measures involving the "bonfire of the quangos" (INT7), announced the amalgamation of the three certification bodies with the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB). While the informal discussions had commenced in the last time period, the government's decision accelerated the process (INT2, INT5) and QQI was established in 2012. In 2010 the government announced its decision to amalgamate the 33 VECs into larger geographic units. 2010 also saw one of the most significant periods of organisational and institutional changes in the history of education and training in Ireland following the government decision to transfer responsibility for the training function of FÁS to the renamed Department of Education and Skills (DES). Responsibility for the employment services function of FÁS was transferred to the renamed Department of Social Protection (DSP). The impact of these decisions was to expand the activation function that had previously been the sole preserve of FÁS courses, to all FET courses, all of which were now under the policy direction of DES. The Sweeney Report (2013) was evidence of this extension of the activation function to courses, such as the PLC courses, that were never designed as employment measures. Equally, no adjustments were made to these courses to accommodate this new function. As expected these courses were criticised in the Sweeney Report for having little impact on the activation of the long-term unemployed. A former DES official was critical of this report saying that it did not provide the proper context for its analysis (INT8).

In January 2011, the Troika arrived in Ireland and was followed by a change of government in February 2011. The high unemployment figures were a major driver of the skills agenda at this time. The Troika's focus on the government's approach to activation was seen as a major driver of this agenda (INT3, INT4, INT6, INT7, INT9). In July 2011, the Minister for Education and Skills Mr Ruairi Quinn announced the disbanding of FÁS,

the establishment of SOLAS, and the establishment of 16 Education and Training Boards from the VECs and the FÁS training centres. Within DSP, the roll-out of a new 'one-stop shop' was implemented called 'Intreo' commenced. Through this infrastructure, unemployed people could be referred to education and training courses in the ETBs or higher education institutions providing courses under the Springboard initiative. However, as the economic situation began to improve, and unemployment levels decreased, the priority position of DSP within the skills agenda did not change. This was the subject of negative comments from some of the policy actors (INT4, INT9, INT10, INT11). One policy actor expressed regret that skills policy had been seen as a part of activation policy rather than the other way around (INT10). A former CEO of an ETB was critical of the DSP in terms of their implementation of the referral protocols, and described the department as somewhat dysfunctional in this regard (INT11).

The convergence of education and training was, in effect, completed with the decision to transfer policy responsibility for training to DES in 2010. This event saw the language in the policy documents to shift towards references to 'skills'. During the economic boom times of the previous time period, skills shortage was the prominent skills issue. The first National Skills Strategy in 2007 (EGFSN, 2007) was developed within a skills shortage context. "In simple numerical terms, the Irish economy is likely to need 950,000 extra new workers between 2006 and 2020. This demand will be met through the young school leaving cohort, through increased participation, and continuing to attract inward migration" (p. 2). During this current recessionary period references to future skills have the highest frequency. However, while the FET sector are now members of the EGFSN Board, and more attention is being given to intermediate skills, a higher education bias remains evident in its deliberations (INT4, INT11, INT12).

With the amalgamation of the certification bodies announced and under way, a rationalisation process commenced within FETAC of the four legacy certification processes into a single Common Awards System (CAS). While this was the logical next step in the evolution of the system, this

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process attracted some mixed comments. One of the key drivers of this process was the higher education sector. They were receiving applications for students with an array of awards under the FETAC banner and there was a lack of transparency (INT2). However, the process was seen by a former CEO of a VEC as homogenising course provision – there was little difference between courses (INT9). A former senior FÁS official, who had viewed the FETAC approach to certification as a divergence from the occupation profiles in the labour market saw the CAS process as increasing this divergence (INT4). The establishment of QQI in 2012 completed a major step in the convergence of the certification and qualifications system in Ireland. However, the continued existence of the two sets of level 6 has maintained the division between FET and HE. This was identified by a number of actors as a piece of work in need of attention (INT9, INT11).

All of these organisational amalgamations were part of the Public Service Reform Plan (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, 2011). Published at the beginning of the Troika Years, it was informed by the OECD review of public administration in Ireland (OECD, 2008) (INT13) which highlighted the need for a more integrated approach to public administration. Evidence of this approach is clear in the increased references to the integration of services in the policy documents. The principle of evidence-based policy making also increased in importance and was cited by a senior SOLAS official as a key element in the development of the FET Strategy (INT6). The reform process also witnessed a shift in the management of results, from the outputs approach of SMI, to an outcomes approach. Such an approach places more emphasis on the outcome for the citizen rather than just the outputs of the organisational process.

In 2013, the Education and Training Boards came into being. Following the passing of the Further Education and Training Act, 2013, SOLAS was established and began operations in October 2013. This was the culmination of a series of events, starting with the government's decision in 2010 to transfer responsibility for training to DES and the subsequent

creation of Skills Division, which led to an increased level of institutional, organisational, and policy coherence in FET in Ireland. One of the first tasks SOLAS had to complete was the production of a FET Strategy. While a great deal of work had taken place in the consultation process on the establishment of SOLAS, a new process of engagement with all stakeholders commenced (INT4, INT6, INT9). In combination with the research report from the ESRI (McGuinness et al, 2014) and the international benchmarking exercise, the draft of the FET Strategy was submitted to DES at the end of March 2014. The Minister for Education and Skills accepted the Strategy without amendment and it was launched as government policy in May 2014. As the first FET Strategy published in Ireland a number of the policy actors took the view that, following the "amalgamation of 20 years of thinking" (INT11), it was about setting a direction for the next phase of development. It was an "enabling strategy to address things over time" (INT5) and represents the concluding boundary for this study.

6.5 Part 4 - Findings

This final part of the chapter will present the findings from this case study based on the results tabulated in Appendix 7. It will begin by setting out the purpose of the research and restating the research question. This will be followed by the presentation of the findings of the research. This part concludes with an identification of the three key themes to emerge from the case study which will be examined in more detail in next chapter.

Chapter Five describes the purpose of this case study as seeking to gain a clear understanding of how the FET institution and organisations reached the current point in their development, and why this particular institutional and organisational configuration was arrived at. As such, the research question for this study is:

> What were the key drivers, barriers and/or facilitators, both national
> and international, which influenced the developmental trajectories of

further education and training institutions in Ireland from 1973 to 2014?

It is clear from the evidence presented that, as FET matures in Ireland, there has been an increasing level of institutional and organisational convergence over the period of this case study. In the discussion of the evolution of the purpose of FET and the four research themes identified in the literature, this convergence trend is evident within each thematic area and also in the interconnectedness between the themes. The four themes can be seen to be having a nested or cascading relationship with each other. Human Capital Theory (HCT), which came to prominence both in Ireland and internationally in the 1960s, has been increasingly influential in education and training policy. This theory, which sees the government spending on education and training as an investment, has led to education and training being increasingly seen as inextricably linked to the economy and the labour market. Combined with the active approach to labour market policy (ALMP) proposed by such bodies as the OECD, the context for the evolution of skill formation policy at all levels had been established. Within the HCT and ALMP context, the qualifications achieved upon completion of a FET programme are a proxy for the skills that have been developed. These qualifications have currency within the labour market. Therefore, the EU's policy of freedom of movement of workers in the 1980s implied a corresponding requirement for recognition of qualifications across different Member States. The development of the qualifications system in Ireland is firmly placed within this context. Developments in the certification and qualifications domain have led to a consequential convergence of education and training into a single entity, in particular, under the banner of lifelong learning. This convergence of function across all of the thematic areas, in addition to the NPM developments within public administration, has led to a corresponding convergence of form in the regionalisation and rationalisation of the public administration of FET.

<u>Economic Drivers</u>

In conducting a case study of FET from a skill formation perspective, it is to be expected that major issues affecting the economy and, by extension, the labour market will be identified as drivers of FET. The findings of this study are no different in this regard. The time period of the study is 'book-ended' by two significant recessionary periods. Each of these recessionary periods witnessed a significant increase in activity within the FET space, associated in particular, with a particular sense of national crisis, significant constraints in state finances, and high unemployment. The third time period coincided with the time a strong economic growth in Ireland, the so-called Celtic Tiger years. From a skill formation perspective this period was associated with skill shortages within the high technology sector of FDI companies in particular, and an increased demand for higher education graduates. It is interesting to note however, that enrolments in both the further education dimension of FET (primarily the PLC programme) and in HE increased steadily over the period of the case study with the peaks and troughs of economic activity having little or no discernible impact on enrolment patterns. However, participation rates in the training side of FET, including apprenticeships, witnessed changes in line with the nature of economic activity.

The findings relating to the international drivers, barriers, and facilitators are presented first, followed by those at a national level. As shown in Appendix 7, the international actors have been identified as making a positive contribution, as either a driver or facilitator, to the development of FET in Ireland, with one exception identified below. On the other hand, the barriers to FET development over the course of this case study have been shown to be exclusively from within Ireland. The increased incidence of the difficult relations between key stakeholders being identified as barriers to developments coincided with the increasing level of reform proposals during the second and third periods. The 32 findings of this research are set out below.

International Drivers, Barriers and Facilitators

1. From the results tabulated in Appendix 7 it is clear that the European Union has been both a driver and a facilitator of developments in FET in Ireland, particularly within the themes of ALMP, and certification and qualifications. Consequentially, the EU is also shown to have been influential in the convergence of education and training, particularly in lifelong learning policy. The impact of this influence can be seen in the ideational change in the belief of DES officials in relation to certification and qualifications in the early 1990s.

2. The OECD is also identified as a highly influential facilitator of developments in the education and training field. This influence predates Ireland's membership of the EU and was discussed in Chapter Four. The influence of the OECD is shown to be particularly strong in the themes of ALMP, public administration, and education and training policy in general. There is also a great deal of similarity between EU and OECD policies given that all 28 EU Member States are also members of the OECD.

3. However, within the final period of this case study the EU is identified as a barrier. This is due to the impact of there being only two policy options available to the Irish government as a consequence of the cumulative restrictions of the EU Treaties. While the label of 'barrier' is used it would be more appropriate to describe this situation as a restriction.

4. ESF funding is identified as a significant facilitator of developments in FET in Ireland. ESF facilitated the largest expansion of FET participation in the first time period as compared to the other three. It provided a national structure for the administration of FET within DES in the absence of any national system. However, the absence of any national FET policy led to questions being raised as to whether ESF funded programmes were responding to the needs of the Irish labour market or simply meeting the funding criteria of the ESF.

5. During the final period of this study the Troika is identified as both a driver and facilitator of developments within FET in Ireland. In particular, the Troika is seen as a strong driver of the government's reform of the activation processes. While its influence is evident in the ALMP theme in particular, the Troika Years facilitated an increased pace and volume of reforms which would otherwise have taken considerably more time to achieve and would have been the subject of opposition from various interests.

National Drivers, Barriers and Facilitators

6. Having accepted the merit of the EU's influence in the area of certification and qualifications during the first period of the study, DES officials are identified as drivers of the developments in the 1990s in particular which culminated in the 1999 Qualifications Act. The role played by the officials was crucial to the conclusion of this phase of development given the strong contestation evident among numerous actors, especially between DES and DJEI.

7. Prior to the government decision of 2010 to transfer responsibility for training to DES, four government departments had responsibility for different elements of FET. The absence of a single policy department for FET is seen as a significant barrier to development, and having a retarding effect.

8. The absence of coherence across the four government departments involved in FET is seen as having been exacerbated within DES by the absence of a national policy for FET until 2014. In addition, a fragmented administrative structure within DES upon which to base such policy development is identified as a significant barrier to the evolution of the FET sector.

9. A history of policy neglect, the low level of regard for FET within DES, and underinvestment in vocational and technical education dating back to

the establishment of the VECs in the 1930s, resulted in a perpetual lack of capacity within the VEC system to respond to the economic crises in the 1970s and 1980s, and again in the Great Recession. The impact of this underinvestment on the capacity of the VECs is seen as a significant barrier to development.

10. In the 1970s and 1980s, the key difference between the responses of DES and DJEI to the need for training could be identified as one of capacity. DJEI had an executive agency for training in AnCO with its network of training centres. DES had no executive agency in this area but did have the network of VECs whose schools, due to the process of displacement of the vocational curriculum by the more academic Intermediate and Leaving Certificate curricula, had reduced capacity. In essence, within DJEI, the issue was the type of training to be delivered, while in DES the issue was not only the type of training to be delivered but also how it could be delivered.

Purpose of FET

11. While associated with objectives of social inclusion and activation, the purpose of FET over the course of this case study, which primarily had an economic objective in the first time period, is increasingly seen as having an almost exclusively social imperative. HE on the other hand is increasing regarded as having an economic imperative. In the final time period, HE also has an activation objective due to the high number of highly skilled people among the unemployed.

12. The 2014 FET Strategy reverses this divergence in the stated purpose of FET with FET being repositioned as re-engaging with the economic imperative in the provision of intermediate skills.

Active Labour Market Policy

13. Skills for activation had been predominantly an objective of FET provision under DJEI through its executive agency AnCO, and later, FÁS. However, following the government decision in 2010 to transfer responsibility for training to DES, this activation objective is effectively transferred to all FET provision under DES. FET programmes, originally designed as part of the school-to-work transition, are now effectively given this additional activation objective without any corresponding modification to the programme structure or resourcing. This has had a diluting effect of the capacity of the system.

14. The high unemployment numbers and the focus on the reform of labour market activation placed DSP in a priority position within the skills agenda during the Troika Years in particular. However, when the unemployment number began to decreased, this position did not change. Skills policy was seen as part of activation policy rather than activation being seen as a subset of skills policy.

15. The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, established in 1997 in response to skills shortages in high tech FDI companies, is seen as maintaining a strong HE bias even after the government's decision in 2010.

Certification and Qualifications

16. The absence of a national qualifications system for FET programmes until 1993 is identified as a barrier to development of FET. It was the EU policy of mobility of workers, and the consequential need for comparability of qualifications, which are shown to have been the drivers behind the establishment of the NCVA in 1991.

17. While EU policy is seen as the driver for acceptance of the need for a national qualifications system in Ireland, the resultant ideational change on the part of DES officials led to these officials becoming the drivers of this

initiative in Ireland. This drive by DES is identified as crucial to the ultimate implementation of the system given the level of contestation among the key stakeholders.

18. The establishment of the national qualifications system and the national framework of qualifications are also seen to have been driven internally by the FET sector. The value of the structure such a system would provide, as well as the demand from FET students for access to HE, were key issues in this debate.

19. The 1999 Qualifications Act, which established the national qualifications system and the national framework of qualification (NFQ), is identified as a significant convergence event within post-secondary education and training. Horizontal convergence occurred with FET with the establishment of FETAC. Vertical convergence occurred between FET and HE through the NFQ. The convergence of the four legacy certification processes within FETAC into a single Common Awards System completed the horizontal convergence process with the certification of FET.

20. The EU's Lisbon Strategy, including the Bologna and Copenhagen processes, witnessed horizontal and vertical convergence processes at a European level in the areas of quality assurance, assessment credit transfer systems, and the comparability of qualifications through the EQF. These processes clearly positioned the convergence processes in Ireland within a European context.

21. While Ireland was behind in the development of the qualifications system, the undeveloped state of the system facilitated developments in Ireland, particularly in relation to the NFQ, outpacing EU initiatives. Subsequently, Irish officials played a key role in influencing developments in relation to the EQF.

22. The establishment of QQI in 2012 completed the organisational convergence within the qualifications system. While the subject of informal

discussions from 2005 among the three bodies established under the 1999 Act, it was the government decision in 2008 at the onset of the financial crisis to amalgamate the three bodies with the IUQB which accelerated this process.

23. A number of the policy actors raised questions about whether there has been a divergence between the qualifications system and the occupational profiles in the labour market, thus questioning whether the qualifications system is 'fit-for-purpose'.

Convergence of Education and Training

24. References to education and training as a single entity began within the emergence of active manpower policies in the 1960s. This is seen to have been facilitated further through ESF funding of training programmes. The provision of ESF funded training in the 1970s and 1980s, within both DES and DJEI, was the beginning of a convergence between education and training across the departmental divide.

25. The EU Maastricht Treaty, which gave competence to the EU in both education and training policy arenas, and the subsequent EU White Papers, established the policy framework within which the connection between education and training and employment would be given increasing prominence. The convergence of education and training is seen to have been particularly evident with the emergence of lifelong learning policies in respect of employability in the mid-1990s.

26. Employability and lifelong learning appeared in Irish government policy documents, particularly from DJEI, at this time. This coincided with the European Employment Strategy in 1998.

27. The impact of the convergence of education and training is most evident within the qualifications arena. The 1999 Qualifications Act defines education and training as a single entity for the first time. The

qualifications system and the NFQ created both horizontal and vertical convergence trajectories in Ireland, which were in line with developments under the Bologna and Copenhagen processes at a European level.

28. The consistent barrier to the convergence of education and training in Ireland and the development of a coherent FET policy is seen to have been the division of responsibility for FET between DES and DJEI. This division, which persisted since the early 1930s, was removed in 2010 when the government decided to transfer policy responsibility for FÁS training to DES.

Regionalisation and Rationalisation of Public Administration in FET

29. DES is identified as the consistent driver of the development of intermediate administrative tier within the education system in Ireland. The principal barriers to this initiative have been the educational interest groups, particularly, the Catholic Church.

30. The Education and Training Boards are regarded by many of the policy actors as the manifestation of this desire by DES for an intermediate tier. While the ETBs do not currently have responsibility for the administration of all education and training within their areas, the legislation allows for the extension of existing responsibilities in the future.

31. The contraction in the state finances brought about by economic recession is a driver of public service reform. In such circumstances a review of the current array of executive agencies is commonly conducted. In times of crisis, opportunities for reform are presented but not always seized. In the 1970s and 1980s, proposals to amalgamate the VECs are advanced but not implemented. FÁS emerges from the amalgamation of three bodies within the manpower arena. In the Great Recession, significant reforms occurred within the FET space which were the culmination of proposals dating back, in some cases, to the 1990s.

32. The OECD is shown to be influential in the field of public administration with its 1991 review of education contributing to the debates in education in the 1990s, and the 2008 review of public management informing the Public Service Reform Plans in 2011 and 2014. The OECDs review of activation programmes in Ireland in 2009 informed the developments in activation policy.

This concludes the presentation of the main findings of this case study. The final section of this chapter will conclude the discussion and present the key themes that have emerged from this research for further examination in the next chapter.

6.6 Conclusion and Emergent Themes

The discussion in this chapter was divided into four parts. The first part gave an overview of the economic and social. Part Two provides an overview of the education and training context for this case study. Part Three followed with the presentation of the results from the analysis of the two data sources for this study based on the themes which emerged from the literature review as set out in Chapters Three and Four. The first set of results presented the qualitative document analysis of the 32 government policy documents. This was followed by the analysis of the interviews of 13 senior policy actors in the FET arena. In the final section of this part of the chapter the results of this case study were validated through a triangulation process. The findings from this research were presented in the fourth part of the chapter. The concluding section below will identify three themes which have emerged from this case study. These themes will be discussed further in the next chapter.

There are three key themes which have emerged from the findings of this case study. Firstly, there is a need to take a 'skill regime' approach to the skill formation system in Ireland. This broader perspective would ensure that the skill formation institution of the state is placed within the landscape of interconnected institutions. In particular, given the recent reforms within

FET, its relationship with the post-primary, adult education, and higher education sectors within the education and training system, as well as within social protection, are key elements of this broader perspective.

A second key theme, which cascades from the skill regime theme above, is institutional complementarity. In borrowing this concept from the Varieties of Capitalism model discussed in Chapter Three, the focus here is the quality of the interconnectedness between the different elements of the skill regime. This is of particular interest given the level of institutional and organisational change which has taken place in FET, particularly since 2010. In other words, as the new institutional configuration becomes more consolidated, there needs to be a focus on optimising, as much as possible, the degree of institutional complementarity between the sub-institutions of the skill formation institution, or skill regime in Ireland. The absence of a concern for this issue in the past has led to a fragmentation and disjointed approach to skill formation.

The final key theme to emerge is that of the capacity of the FET sector, specifically that of the ETBs. Clarke (2014) has highlighted the importance of local capacity for the successful implementation of macro-policy. The reforms since 2010 have addressed many of the issues in relation to institutional and organisational coherence. There is also an increased coherence at the policy level through the FET Strategy. However, the legacy of policy neglect and underinvestment has meant that the FET system, and the ETBs in particular, which remains situated primarily within the post-primary school system, lack the capacity to sufficiently respond to the demands of macro-policy within skill formation. These three key themes will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

7 DISCUSSION

7.1 Introduction

This case study focuses on the evolution of FET within the skill formation arena in Ireland from 1973 until 2014. 1973 marked Ireland's membership of the EEC which was the landmark event in the evolution of what is known as Further Education and Training today. Some 41 years later, following the establishment in 2013 of the Ireland's first National Further Education and Training Authority, SOLAS, the launch of the first FET Strategy in 2014 is also a significant landmark date, and marks the end point of this case study. In this study, FET is placed within the broader skill formation domain so as to reach the fullest possible understanding of the policy landscape within which FET exists. The stated purpose of the FET Strategy is to provide a roadmap "to realise the vision of a world-class integrated system of further education and training in Ireland". Consequently, this study places developments in Ireland within an international context. While there are similarities between countries in the factors that influence skill formation, each country presents an individual context within which developments take place. The research question for this case study sets out to identify the drivers, barriers, and facilitators which impacted on the developmental trajectory of FET in Ireland. The theoretical framework chosen for this research is historical institutionalism. The literature review of the international context and the Irish context until 1973, sees four themes emerge which provide the analytical frame for the analysis of the results. Given the fragmented nature of FET provision for much of the period in question, the number of consistent sources of data was limited. Two primary data sources were identified – published government policy documents, and interviews with senior policy actors with extensive experience in the FET arena. The triangulation of the results from the qualitative analysis of the documents and the interviews produced 32 findings and three emergent themes.

The focus of this chapter will be a critical analysis of the findings set out in the last chapter within the context of the theoretical framework for this study, namely, historical institutionalism, and will consist of three sections. Firstly, the evolution of the FET institution in Ireland from 1973 to 2014 will be discussed within a historical institutionalist framework. This discussion will identify the degree of path dependency in the developmental trajectories during this period. The particular modes of institutional change will be identified and discussed within the context of the time.

The second section of this discussion will examine the state of the FET institution in Ireland in 2014 at the end of the case study. In particular, given that much of the institutional and organisational configuration is very recent, the degree of institutional consolidation and institutional complementarity will be discussed. This section will conclude with an examination of the new configuration of the FET institution in Ireland within the international context. In particular, this section will conclude with a discussion on whether this new configuration has set the FET institution in Ireland on the path to being 'world-class' as envisioned in the FET Strategy.

The final section of the chapter will examine the three emergent themes identified at the end of the last chapter. Firstly, the development of FET in Ireland as part of the skill formation system requires a broader perspective than has been the case heretofore. In particular, with Ireland being described as a "third level society" (Sweeney, 2013, p.12) any discussion of skill formation in Ireland must include both FET and higher education as two parts of a broader skill formation system. This entails adapting Busemeyer's (2009) concept of a skill regime for the Irish context. A model for the Irish Skill Regime will be proposed.

The second theme to emerge for the findings is closely related to the first, i.e. optimising the degree of institutional complementarity within the Irish Skill Regime. Borrowing this concept from the 'Varieties of Capitalism' model discussed in Chapter Three, this discussion will critically analyse the

degree of interconnectedness and synchronicity between the institutions that constitute the skill regime in Ireland. Within this complementarity, what might be called the calibration of the skill regime from a policy priority perspective will also be discussed in this section.

The final theme to emerge from the findings is one of capacity. Given the historical legacy of neglect of vocational education and further education, both at a policy and resourcing level within the VEC sector in particular, the issue of a capacity deficit within the FET system to respond to policy demands has emerged from the findings. This study will conclude that this legacy of neglect has resulted in a persistent capacity deficit in the FET system in Ireland.

7.2 FET and Institutional Genesis, Continuity, and Change in Ireland

In 1973, when Ireland joined the EEC, FET was characterised by fragmentation and disconnection. The three areas of FET provision at the time, namely, VECs, AnCO, and the various sectoral training bodies, operated to a large degree in isolation from each other. FET programmes were provided by state funded organisations under the policy direction of a number of government departments. As public funds were being expended by public servants, legislation was in place. Provision within the VEC sector, both in vocational schools and Regional Technical Colleges (RTC), was governed by the Vocational Education Acts 1930-1970. In AnCO, industrial training, including apprenticeship, took place within the parameters of the Industrial Training Act of 1967. Provision in the sectoral training area, such as, agriculture, tourism, fisheries and forestry, took place under a number of Acts identified in Appendix 8. The path dependent developmental trajectories in the three FET constituencies are also clearly evident in Appendix 8. In 1973, from an institutional perspective, this range of provision consisted of a number of sets of rules, i.e. parchment institutions. Within the FET arena, the level of disconnect between the three broad areas was such as to make the identification of a single FET

institution, namely a set of rules which affects people's behaviour and enforceable by a third party, problematic at this time.

As the 1970s progressed there was an increasing focus on training. In particular, high unemployment among young people across EU Member States at the time resulted in the European Council passing a resolution concerning the preparation of young people for work (European Council 1976b). This resolution states that Member States will implement "pilot projects and studies to assist in the evaluation and development of national policies in respect of…[six] priority themes" (Section III, para 1). In particular, Member States committed to take account in developing national policies of:

> "The development of curricula and teaching methods providing
> appropriate preparation for working life at all stages of general
> education and vocational training, and promotion of closer links
> between these two types of education" (Section II, para 1(a)).

Through the provision of ESF funding to support this resolution, the EEC provided a single European level institution, formed by the coalition of the nine national leaders in the European Council, within which individual Member States would operate. It was a matter for each country to determine, given the particular features of their education and training system, how this resolution could be enacted. In Ireland, the national authority for ESF funding at this time was DJEI which dispersed funds to other government departments. Consequently, with the translation of the European level rules for the ESF funding into the Irish education and training system it could be argued that this was the genesis of a single institution for FET provision across multiple government departments. Within the policy responsibility of each government department, the implementation of these new rules would be further mediated by the corresponding legislative framework. Within DES, for example, this legislative framework was provided by the Vocational Education Acts. Accordingly, a new post-compulsory programme, called the Pre-

Employment Course (PEC), was established in 1978 and designated as 'continuation education' under this legislation (Department of Education, 1978). While the original definition of continuation education referred to education provided on completion of primary school, the designation of the PEC required a redefinition of what constitutes continuation education:

> "What is necessary…is to re-define continuation education in the light of the changed educational, economic and social circumstances of the country. Pre-employment courses…constitute an element of such redefinition" (p.5).

The PEC was also available within Community and Comprehensive Schools which were not covered by the VEC Acts. The absence of legislation in Irish post-primary education, other than the VEC Acts, meant that the Circular Letters issued by DES provided a "leaflet law" (Ryan and Unwin, 2001, p.104) framework for PEC provision outside of the VEC sector. The PEC evolved into the VPT (Department of Education, 1984c), later to become known as the PLC programme, which was described as the principal school to work transition course in Irish education (OECD, 1991). The mode of institutional change here is layering. Rather than modify the existing rules for senior cycle a new set of rules was added in 1978 to the existing rules governing the upper-secondary cycle of post-primary education. In the mid-1980's the rules governing the structure for post-primary courses were amended to include VPT courses (DES Circular Letter M85/85). By 1988 this restructuring suggested a stratification of the senior cycle into an academic stream (Leaving Certificate) and a vocational stream (VPT courses). This could be seen as an apparent reversal of the trend towards comprehensive education initiated some ten years earlier when the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate programmes were opened up to vocational school students in 1960s:

> "The VPT courses following Junior Cycle are not designed for pupils who intend to progress to a Leaving Certificate course" (DES Circular Letter M8/88, para 9).

The end of the 1980s saw the rationalisation of executive agencies under DJEI. Following proposals in the White Paper on Manpower Policy (Department of Labour, 1986), AnCO, the National Manpower Service, and the Youth Employment Agency were amalgamated to form a single National Training and Employment Authority, FÁS. This institutional change is an example of bricolage where a new institution was established from combining existing institutional principles and practices into a new arrangement.

The area of certification and qualifications witnessed significant institutional change over the period of this study. In the 1970s and 1980s the National Council for Educational Awards (NCEA), established on an *ad hoc* basis in 1972, was the only state agency providing national certification. Put on a statutory footing in 1979, the NCEA provided certification for courses in the RTCs and technical colleges managed by the VECs. Under the legislation the NCEA made awards on the basis of attaining the required standard following the completion of a course of study in an approved educational organisation, such as an RTC. This was in keeping with practice at European level where comparability of qualifications was based largely on the duration of the course (European Council, 1985, 1989). In the area of industrial training, the 1967 Act gave AnCO the authority to "apply or make arrangements for the application of tests…[to ascertain] the attainment of persons…and award certificates of the attainment of…standards" (Section 9(2)(d)). UK-based certification such as City and Guilds was used by AnCO during this period. National certification for the VPT/PLC courses was not available until 1993 when the NCVA commenced making awards, some 15 years after the PEC commenced. Combined with the stratification of the upper secondary cycle of post-primary, this has echoes of the introduction of original continuation education courses in 1930s.

During the 1990s the area of certification and qualifications witnessed significant levels of institutional change. Following the outcome of

discussions within DES, involving key stakeholders, the NCVA was established on an *ad hoc* basis in 1991. The genesis of this institution was driven by developments in Europe and it developed in parallel to the NCEA. The establishment of NCVA signalled the beginning of a horizontal convergence process within FET provision with its stated intention of extending certification for the PLC courses to sectoral training (NCVA, 1992). The establishment of TEASTAS in 1995, and constituting NCVA and NCEA as sub-committees, increased the level of convergence by introducing a vertical dynamic between FET and HE. The establishment of TEASTAS can be seen as institutional bricolage as it involved existing institutions. However, the inclusion of TEASTAS itself as the overarching coordinating body introduced a "new idea" (Campbell, 2004) to the configuration and as such constitutes institutional translation. Hence the mode of change in this instance is a blend of bricolage and translation.

While the establishment of TEASTAS introduced an element of vertical convergence, the approach taken to certification differed between the two bodies. As mentioned earlier, NCEA certification was based largely on the duration of the course in a recognised educational establishment. On the other hand, NCVA certification, which commenced in 1993, was based on a modular approach to awards design and the identification of specific learning outcomes demonstrated by the learner (NCVA, 1993). The shift to learning outcomes increased during the 1990s and also represented a shift in the locus of certification from the educational establishment to the learner. This was formalised in legislation in the 1999 Qualifications Act which describes awards in terms of a learner's achievement:

> "…an award which is conferred, granted or given by an awarding body and which records that a learner has acquired a standard of knowledge, skill or competence" (Section 2).

This Act also copper fastened the TEASTAS configuration into law with TEASTAS becoming NQAI, NCEA becoming HETAC, and FETAC taking on responsibility for the certification processes of NCVA, FÁS, CERT, and

Teagasc. This shift from certification based on course duration in an educational establishment to that based on learning outcomes, particularly in the transition from NCEA to HETAC, is an example of institutional displacement in which one set of rules is replaced by another. While NQAI and HETAC were to a large extent a renamed version of an existing organisation, FETAC was a new body which subsumed NCVA's operations in its entirety, as well as responsibility for the certification process for three other FET providers. While the establishment of TEATAS was a blend of institutional bricolage and translation, the establishment of the statutory bodies under the 1999 Act was a formalised continuation of the previous *ad hoc* institution. TEASTAS was also charged with establishing a national qualifications framework (Department of Education, 1995) and this was formalised in Section 7 of the Act. Therefore, while the bricolage process was evident in the establishment of TEASTAS, the institutional change resulting from 1999 Act could be characterised as institutional translation where the 'new idea' is added to an existing institutional practice, namely, the qualifications framework. FETAC on the other hand, by way of its establishment consisting of the rearrangement of existing principles and practices, constitutes an instance of institutional bricolage.

A process of institutional bricolage was also evident in the instances of institutional and organisational divergence when the RTCs and the Dublin Institute of Technology separated from their parent VECs to form stand-alone entities (Regional Technical Colleges Act, 1992; Dublin Institute of Technology Act 1992). Unlike the establishment of FÁS and FETAC, which involved the creation of a single entity from exiting institutional principles and practices, in the case of the RTCs and DIT, the rearrangement involved the separation of institutional principles and practice from the VECs. Just as bricolage can involve existing institutional elements being combined to form a new institution (combination bricolage) so too it can involve the separation of elements of existing institutions to form new ones (separation bricolage). While somewhat counter intuitive, this meets the criteria for bricolage.

In 2001, NQAI, HETAC, and FETAC began operations. A period of institutional and organisational consolidation commenced. NCEA, an established organisation renamed as HETAC, experienced relatively little disruption to its operations. The requirement to report to the NQAI, however, was a new development. FETAC on the other hand faced a much greater challenge. Not only was it a new organisation, it was the first time that the FET sector in Ireland had a single national agency. The institutional consolidation process which followed involved the key stakeholders in the FET sector meeting, in many cases for the first time, and also thinking of each other as part of a single sector for the first time. The diversity and fragmentation amongst the elements of the FET sector led to the structure provided by FETAC becoming highly significant in strengthening FET as an institution within the skill formation space. The vertical convergence process between FETAC and HETAC was further strengthened by the launch of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) in 2003.

The 2010 to 2014 period witnessed an unprecedented level of institutional and organisational change in Ireland. In 2010, the Government decided to transfer policy responsibility for the training element of FÁS from DJEI to DES. The Government also decided to transfer policy responsibility for the employment services element of FÁS operations to the Department of Social Protection. Accordingly, policy responsibility for all of FÁS' operations rested with two government departments. In both cases, institutional bricolage took place. The government also decided at this time to amalgamate the 33 VECs into 16 – a rationalisation that DES had been seeking for quite some time. As the 16 would consist of a rearrangement of the 33 existing VECs, this decision constituted a process of institutional bricolage. Following a change of government in February 2011, it was decided to disband FÁS and to create a new National Further Education and Training Authority, SOLAS. Shortly thereafter the FÁS training centres were to be amalgamated with the 16 new entities among the VECs to create Education and Training Boards (ETBs). It is arguable that within the ETBs

the Training Centres have been administratively placed within the post-primary sector.

These changes also signalled a significant change in the purpose of the FET courses previously under DES (DES-FET), especially the PLC programme. As mentioned earlier, the PLC courses were designed as school-to-work transition courses and were not part of labour market activation, until FÁS courses. However, when responsibility for training was transferred from DJEI to DES in 2010, the purpose of FET courses formerly under DJEI (DJEI-FET), and that of DES-FET courses were amalgamated and, in effect, the activation objective was extended to all DES-FET courses. As shown in Chapter Six, the deliberate policy neglect (INT8) within DES contributed to the purpose of DES-FET programmes shifting away from the economic to the social imperative without any change to the rules governing these programmes. This is a case of institutional drift. The effective extension of the activation objective to DES-FET programme was evidenced in the Sweeney Report (2013) on the impact of FET programmes on the long-term unemployed. The rules for PLC courses to include activation as an objective did not change until 2013. Such a change of purpose, without a corresponding change of the rules, constitutes a case of institutional conversion.

FÁS employment services operations were transferred to the Department of Social Protection (DSP). DSP's approach to activation involving the Intreo 'one-stop-shop' introduced the mutual-obligation dimension, or workfare, to the payment system. This new approach consisted of a rearrangement of existing institutional elements plus 'new ideas', namely, mutual obligation. This new configuration is a blend of institutional bricolage and translation. Indeed, the disbandment of FÁS into three elements to become part of three new organisations, namely, SOLAS, ETBs, and Intreo, involves the rearrangements of the elements of FÁS into three new institutions and thus constitutes a case of bricolage (separation).

The decisions to establish SOLAS and the ETBs were implemented in 2013. While SOLAS retains some functions of FÁS, additional dimensions have been added such as the preparation of a strategy and providing funds for FET in the ETBs. As the Higher Education Authority (HEA) does for the higher education sector, so SOLAS does for FET. Therefore, it can be said that the Further Education and Training Act 2013, in establishing SOLAS, created an institution and an organisation which consisted of a rearrangement of existing institutional principles and practices as well as the inclusion of 'new ideas'. In other words, the FET Act involved a blend of institutional bricolage and translation.

Change was also taking place in the qualifications arena during this period. In 2012 Qualifications and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) was established following the amalgamation of NQAI, HETAC, FETAC, and IUQB. As all four institutions and organisations existed previously the establishment of QQI is an instance of institutional bricolage. However, Part 5 of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 included a new area of responsibility in monitoring the quality of English as a Foreign Language programmes thus constituting an instance of institutional translation.

The number and modes of institutional change in FET over the time period of the case study are collated in Table 7.1. It is interesting that within FET the number of change events has increased over time, with the most frequent mode of change clearly being bricolage. Including the change events where it is blended with translation, bricolage occurred in 11 of the 19 change events in the case study. These events coincide with the public reform programmes, particularly during the 2008-2014 period. Given that bricolage involves the rearrangement of existing institutional principles and practices, path dependency has been a strong feature of institutional change in this study. The ETBs, for example, have a strong connection to the VECs established in the 1930s.

Table 7.1   Modes of Institutional Change 1973-2014 by general state of
            the Economy

Mode of Change	Recession	Recovery	Growth	Recession	Total
	1973-1986	1987-1995	1996-2007	2008-2014	
Genesis	√	√	√		3
Layering	√				1
Drift				√	1
Conversion				√	1
Displacement			√		1
Bricolage		√√	√	√√√√	7
Translation			√		1
Bricolage & Translation		√		√√√	4
Total	2	4	4	9	19

7.3 Further Education and Training in 2014 - a 'World Class' Institution?

7.3.1 National Context

From its infancy in the 1970s, the elements of the FET institution have
converged over the 41 year time period to a point where a FET institution is
clearly identifiable. The government decision in 2010 to transfer
responsibility for training to DES led to the establishment of Skills Division
within the Department. Headed up by an Assistant Secretary General, this
Division is now on the same footing within departmental structures as
Higher Education Division. Indeed, as mentioned in Chapter Six, sharing a
Principal Officer post has led to increasing collaboration between these two
divisions. Having established the administrative structure for the
development of FET within DES, the establishment of SOLAS and the
ETBs followed shortly thereafter. Although happening in parallel, the
establishment of QQI in 2012 completed the parchment FET institution

which now consists of three principle pieces of primary legislation – the
FET triangle:

1. <u>Further Education and Training Act, 2013</u>: This Act established
    SOLAS as an executive agency under DES to coordinate FET policy
    developments and funding. SOLAS is also charge with the
    development of the FET Strategy.

2. <u>Education and Training Boards Act, 2013</u>: This Act established a
    regional infrastructure for the delivery of FET programmes.

3. <u>Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act,
    2012</u>: This Act established a single executive agency for
    qualifications and quality assurance, QQI.

These three Acts provide the legislative framework for FET in Ireland.
However, they are not yet all-encompassing of FET provision and further
improvements are required. Compared to the situation in 1973, significant
improvements have been made. From the introduction of ESF funded
programmes the green shoots of a FET institution in Ireland can be
identified. The emergence of an identifiable FET institution could be first
seen in the area of certification and qualification. Indeed the developments
in this area of the institution are ahead of others insofar as the Qualification
Act of 2012 encompasses all elements of FET provision, namely, FET
provision within the ETBs, in the non-ETB post-primary schools, and the
sectoral training area. Indeed, from its inception the qualifications system,
as envisioned in the early 1990s, included the VEC, non-VEC FET, and
sectoral training provision. The establishment of FETAC included the
industrial training dimension of FET, provided primarily by FÁS. In other
words, FETAC provided certification for all FET provision. This continues
to be the case under QQI. However, the establishment of Skills Division in
DES in 2010 did not include policy responsibility for sectoral training.
Equally, the FET Act, 2013, does not include responsibility for policy
coordination and funding for sectoral training in SOLAS's remit, even

though an amount of sectoral training provision takes place within the ETBs. This deficit is recognised with advisory committees established within SOLAS. However, this deficiency, at the policy level within DES and at the policy and funding coordination level within SOLAS, has resulted in sectoral training being excluded from national FET policy and the FET strategy. Accordingly, the FET Strategy (SOLAS, 2014) can be accurately described as a *mostly* national FET strategy.

A significant gap within the funding element of SOLAS is the absence of a capital budget for FET. Prior to 2010, DES-FET was part of post-primary and dependent upon the post-primary capital budget. However, this has ultimately proven to be inconsistent in its availability with colleges of further education (CFE) being arbitrarily excluded from post-primary capital funding programmes during the Great Recession. In effect FET provision operates within the post-primary sector but has not been integrated within it. Unlike the *Berufsschulen* in Germany, the Further Education Colleges in the UK, and the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) Colleges in Australia*,* what are known as Colleges of Further Education in Ireland are, in fact, post-primary schools staffed with post-primary teachers delivering FET courses. Until such time as a College of Further Education is designated within legislation or by regulation as a separate entity from a post-primary school, and a FET teacher is contractually separated from the post-primary teacher, with due regard for the contractual anomalies with instructors in the former FÁS Training Centres, the work to establish FET as the 'fourth pillar' of the Irish education system will be incomplete. At the end of this case study, the three principle Acts provide the legal framework from the completion of the work. However, while the establishment of the 'fourth pillar' is within sight, the current situation could best be described as a three pillar education system – primary, post-primary, and higher education, with FET as the 'fourth pillar' being, metaphorically, the 'adult child still living at home' with its post-primary parent and looking for a way to move out on its own.

This study ends some seven months after the establishment of SOLAS, and some ten months after the establishment of the ETBs. Consequently, it is too early in the consolidation phase of the FET institution to make a determination as to the likely success of these reforms. However, it would be reasonable to conclude that at this point in the reform process, a FET institution in Ireland is clearly identifiable and is of sufficient strength in terms of stability and enforcement (Levitsky and Murillo, 2009). The degree of fragmentation which characterised the FET arena for the bulk of this case study has been significantly reduced. An important dimension to this institution is the establishment of SOLAS as the national body for FET with the remit to promote the values of FET (FET Act, Section 7(1)(b)). Accordingly, if a FET perspective is required at a national level, such as on policy development committees, SOLAS is now the body to be consulted. This in itself is a significant milestone in the evolution of FET. However, for SOLAS to be the National Further Education and Training Authority, its remit needs to be extended to include the sectoral training dimension of FET.

7.3.2 International Context

The FET Strategy has the stated purpose of providing a roadmap "to realise the vision of a world-class integrated system of further education and training in Ireland". Chapter Three presented a review of skills formation within an international context. Within the framework of the 'Varieties of Capitalism' (VoC) model, Ireland is designated as one of the six LME within the OECD. Busemeyer (2009) describes the differences between CMEs and LMEs, from a skill formation perspective as "the variation between the 'portability' of skills" (p. 377). In complementing the highly fluid labour markets of LMEs, skill formation systems tend to emphasise the provision of general skills (Hall and Soskice, 2001). Hall and Soskice observe that the education and training systems of many LMEs tend to emphasise "certification in general skills rather than the acquisition of more specialized competencies" (p.30). However, the LME designation within VoC represents a cluster of economies which have similarities but also

differences. Busemeyer and Trampusch (2012) present a typology of skill formation systems in advanced industrial economies based on the degree of public commitment to vocational training and the degree of involvement of firms in vocational training. LMEs are shown to have low ratings in both categories. Busemeyer and Schlicht-Schmälzle (2014) refine this typology to present an extensiveness of the VET system. As shown in Chapter Three (Figure 3.1), Ireland has the lowest rate of public commitment to VET among the 15 European countries included in this study. The authors draw particular attention to the low participation rate in VET in Ireland. Busemeyer (2009), in analysing the variety of skill formation systems in CMEs, sees the VoC approach to distinguishing between 'general' and 'specific' skills as only a first step and insufficient to explain the variety of skill formation systems. Vossiek (2015) makes similar observations in relation to LMEs. Busemeyer is critical of the VoC approach, in his discussion on skill formation within CMEs, for paying insufficient attention to the issue of an authoritative system of certification. The value placed on the certification of programmes within the labour market depends on the 'value' it has with employers in signalling the skill level of potential staff and hence the degree of 'authority' the certification system has achieved. As discussed in previous chapters, the degree of portability of skills within a labour market is connected to the corresponding level of risk of unemployment manifest in the social protection system.

Historically, as discussed in Chapter Four, the skill formation system in Ireland emerged from the nineteenth century when Ireland was a colony of the British Empire. While the trajectory of institutional development in Ireland has been shown to have a great deal of similarity to that in Britain, the rise of neo-liberal ideology and the associated monetarist approach to economic policy, saw a divergence in this developmental trajectory in the 1980s. Weishaupt (2011) identified this divergence in relation to developments in the welfare state.

Estevez-Abe et al. (2001) differentiated between LMEs in relation to the level of employment protection provided within each country (see Table 7.2). Ireland is shown to have the highest rating of the LMEs.

Table 7.2   Index of Employment Protection in LMEs within the OECD (Source: Estevez-Abe, Iverson, and Soskice, 2001, p.165)

Country	Index of Employment Protection
Ireland	0.36
Canada	0.30
New Zealand	0.29
Australia	0.27
United Kingdom	0.25
United States	0.14

By way of comparison with CMEs, Sweden had the highest rating of the index of employment protection at 0.94 with Germany second at 0.86. However, while comparative studies of welfare state systems (Esping-Anderson, 1990) have identified three clusters among advanced industrial economies, the NESC (2005) describes the welfare state in Ireland as a "hybrid" of the elements of these three clusters. This would suggest that the skill formation system in Ireland calibrated to the welfare state would be different from that in the UK given the rating in this index.

The VoC model has shaped the agenda for much of the discussion within the comparative political economy discourse for more than a decade. Within its framework, significant contributions to the knowledge of different approaches to skill formation systems have emerged (Thelen, 2004; Busemeyer, 2009, Busemeyer and Trampusch, 2012; and Busemeyer and Schlicht-Schmälzle, 2014). However, within the LME cluster of countries, there has been a paucity of research in the difference between skill formation systems, with some exceptions (Vossiek, 2015). The importance of higher education within skill formation in LMEs has received little attention within the VoC literature. This is a significant omission in

the relation to Ireland which is described as a "third level society" (Sweeney, 2013, p.12).

A second area to receive insufficient attention, not only within the LME cluster, but also the CME group, is the differentiation between small and large economies. Hall and Soskice (2001) describe the six countries to be categorised as LMEs, namely, the USA, UK, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and Ireland, as being "among the large OECD nations" (p.19).

Table 7.3   Population of Six LME Countries
Source: www.stats.oecd.org – data for 2012.

Country	Population (000's)
United States of America	314,112
United Kingdom	62,859
Canada	34,880
Australia	22,728
Ireland	4,585
New Zealand	4,408

Clearly, in population terms, Ireland and New Zealand are significantly smaller than their four LME counterparts (see Table 7.3), with the three largest, USA, UK, and Canada, being members of the G7 group of nations. According to the World Bank (2016), half of the world's sovereign states have a population below 6.3m. Armstrong and Read (2003) observe that there has been a neglect of the contributors to growth unique to smaller states in the mainstream literature. While there is no agreement in the literature as to what constitutes a 'small state' (Armstrong and Read, 2003) there are a number of characteristics that distinguish smaller states from their larger counterparts. Buckley (2016) identifies four such dimensions:

1. A small domestic market;
2. Lack of natural resources;
3. Sectoral specialisation; and,

4. Openness to trade. (pp. 3-4).

Smaller states, because of their increased dependence on imports to meet domestic demand, are correspondingly more vulnerable to international circumstances such as financial crises. Consequently, Buckley states that "small states can be regarded as *structurally different* to other larger states" (p. 5). He goes on to observe that the constraints manifest in a smaller state can lead to a corresponding increase in the priority of skill formation:

> "The appeal that human capital development can have for a smaller state becomes evident when it is unable to generate significant investment in physical capital due to market size constraints" (p. 5).

While further discussion of the issue of smaller states is beyond the scope of this study, it could be a fertile area for further research. However, the differentiation between smaller and larger states presents a dilemma in comparing the skill formation systems within the LME group. Equally, a comparison between smaller LME states leaves one option, namely, to compare Ireland and New Zealand. This would involve comparing an EU Member State with a non-EU country which raises further questions in terms of validity.

Therefore, in sum, within the international context, the FET institution in Ireland in 2014 can be seen to have many of the key elements required for coherence in policy development and implementation within any public policy arena, namely, a coherent policy infrastructure at national level in Skills Division in DES, an executive agency, SOLAS, to coordinate policy implementation and funding, and a structure for policy implementation, namely, the ETBs. Within FET, in particular, a national agency for quality assurance and certification, QQI, is also in place. In this regard the FET institution in Ireland is on the right road to becoming 'world-class'. However, as highlighted earlier, there are still restructuring issues outstanding before this vision can be fully realised. Indeed, the national body representing the Principals and Deputy Principals of the Colleges of

Further Education in Ireland, the FET Committee of the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD-FET) warns that the failure to reform the Colleges of Further Education will result in the failure the FET strategy (NAPD, 2014).

The final section of this chapter focuses on the three themes to emerge from the findings of this research. Firstly, there is a need to take a broader approach to skill formation policy. Secondly, within this broader perspective the quality of the interconnectedness or complementarity between the sub-institutions needs to be optimised. Thirdly, the success of national policy will depend on local capacity to deliver.

7.4 Emergent Themes –the Skill Regime, Complementarity, and Capacity

7.4.1 Skill Regime Perspective

It is clear from this study that the approach adopted by successive Irish governments to policy development within education and training has been predominantly too narrow in its focus. Policy initiatives have primarily concentrated on the specific area of the system in question with little or no reference to those adjacent to it. It has led, in FET in particular, to a perpetuation of the fragmented approach that characterised this policy area until recent times. This narrow approach is akin to using a 'SatNav' (Satellite Navigation or GPS) device to find your way in that you only see a narrow piece of the map, when in fact you need to look at the whole map. The development of a comprehensive skill formation policy must include all elements of the arena.

As discussed in Chapter Three, Busemeyer (2009) proposes a skill regime approach to policy development within the skill formation space. He states:

> "The use of the concept of skill *regime* rather than merely talking
> about a skill or training system is supposed to capture the existence

of institutional complementarities. Hence, skills regimes are conceptualised as an interconnected set of institutions in vocational education and training, industrial relations and labour market and welfare state policies that shape the incentives of workers and firms to invest in different kinds of skill formation and thus impacts on the overall profile of a given economy" (p. 387, emphasis in the original).

With its emphasis on VET, Busemeyer's concept of a skill regime would be insufficient for Ireland. As a "third level society" (Sweeney, 2013, p.12), the inclusion of higher education sector would be imperative. Equally, the status of the Leaving Certificate as a gateway qualification also warrants the inclusion of post-primary education in Ireland's case. Through the access, transfer and progression dimension of the National Framework of Qualifications, the element of FET not directly connected to the labour market, namely, adult education must also be included. Finally, an important element of active labour market policy, since first proposed in Ireland in the 1960s, is skills forecasting, which is also referred to as labour market intelligence. In Ireland, this dimension of ALMP has been the responsibility of the Expert Group of Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) and the Skills and Labour Market Research Unit (SLMRU) in SOLAS. Combined with the information provided by the state enterprise developments agencies, e.g. Industrial Development Authority (IDA), and Enterprise Ireland (IE), the development of skills policy, including a Nationals Skills Strategy (EGFSN, 2007; Department of Education and Skills, 2016a) makes a significant contribution to the Irish Skill Regime. Therefore, the model of skill regime proposed by Busemeyer (2009) has been adapted so as to be applicable to Ireland.

In Figure 7.1 a model for the Irish Skill Regime is presented. Just as Finegold and Soskice (1988) highlighted the two-way nature of the relationship between the education and training system and the economy, this model for the Irish Skill Regime represented the two-way nature of the relationships between the different institutions within the Regime. The

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concept of institutional complementarity within the VoC model provides a conceptual framework for these relationships. This will be discussed in greater detail below.

Figure 7.1   Irish Skill Regime
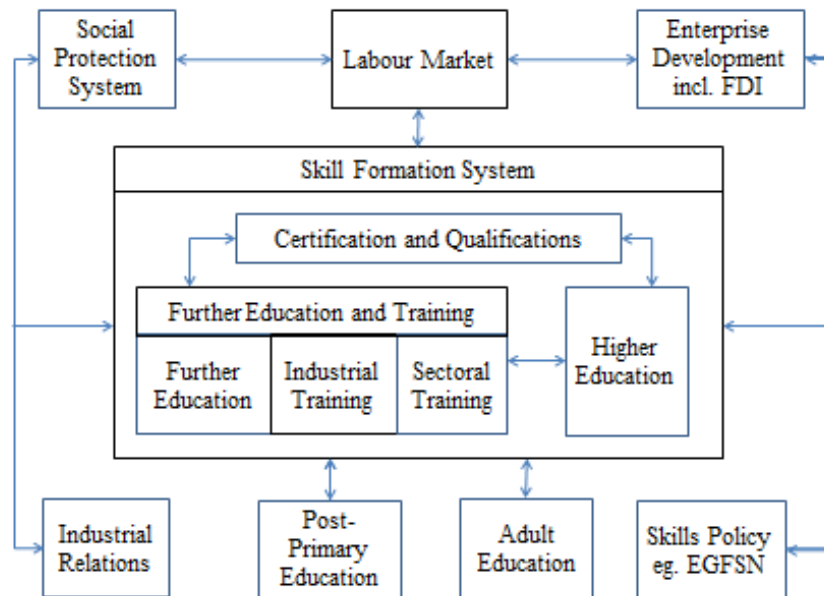
Key: FDI: Foreign Direct Investment; EGFSN: Expert Group on Future Skills Needs

7.4.2 Institutional Complementarity within the Irish Skill Regime

The model of the Irish Skill Regime presented in Figure 7.1 identifies the presence of the relationships between the different institutions. However, just as within the VoC model, the quality of these relationships or the degree of institutional complementarity within the regime will determine its overall effectiveness. In Chapter Three, the concept of institutional complementarity within the VoC model was presented. The differences in the degree of complementarity between the macro-institutions of the state are seen to confer competitive advantage on one country over another. This concept can be equally applied to the degree of complementarity between the institutions within a country's skill regime. While the particular

institutional configuration of the skill regime can differ between countries, it is the degree of complementarity within each regime that will confer competitive advantage. It is the degree of institutional complementarity within the Irish Skill Regime that will determine if it is indeed 'world-class'.

So what is meant by complementarity? In Chapter Three, Hall & Soskice (2001) follow Aoki and state that "two institutions can be said to be complementary if the presence (or efficiency) of one increases the returns from (or efficiency of) the other" (p.17). Crouch (2005) identifies two dimensions to the coherent interconnectedness of institutions, namely, similarity and complementarity. Similarity is taken to mean that institutions with similar properties tend to be found together and that actors use similar institutional solutions in the different spheres of activity. Crouch identifies the Weberian concept of *Wahlverwandschaft,* or effective affinity, to describe this process in which institutions from different parts of society converge to a 'best fit' arrangement through cognitive and social processes. Crouch sees the second dimension, complementarity, as the opposite to similarity in that one institution makes up for the deficiencies of another. Deeg (2005) adds a third dimension to the coherence between two institutions, namely, synergy. According to Deeg, "this form of coherence embodies the mutually reinforcing effects of compatible incentive structures in different sub-systems" (p.24).

Within the Irish Skill Regime, the complementarity in the identified relationships between the institutions has the additional dimension of access, transfer and progression pathways between a number of the institutions. Not only is there inter-institutional complementarity in place but also students move from one area of the regime to another - from post-primary to FET or higher education, from FET to higher education, from unemployment (social protection) to FET or higher education, and from either FET or higher education into the labour market. This additional dimension builds on Deeg's synergy dimension of complementarity above so that these pathways seek to achieve the optimum degree of institutional

synchronicity at the process level so as to ensure that students travelling these pathways are as free from any barriers or obstacles as possible.

From this study, the two pathways which draw particular attention are between FET and higher education within the qualifications system, and between the qualifications system and the labour market. Progression from FET to higher education has been a central aim of qualifications policy since the vocational qualifications framework put forward by the NCVA in 1992 (NCVA, 1992). The FET Strategy (SOLAS, 2014) states that it is government policy to have 10% of new entrants to higher education in 2016 coming from FET. However, a conference held in November 2016 to discuss this issue heard that FET students face significant barriers in progressing to higher education and that there was a lack of transparency in the process (O'Brien, 2016).

The pathway from FET and higher education, through the qualifications system, to the labour market has also been highlighted in this study. Some of the policy actors express the view that there has been a divergence between the design of qualifications and the occupational profiles in the labour market. Rather than the content of courses being determined by the needs of the labour market, it is the requirements of the qualification system which are the dominant influence. One policy actor observes that the absence of occupational standards groups as part of the development of the qualifications system was a significant omission (INT2). The possible mismatch between the qualifications system and the skills needs of the employers is a serious cause for concern and merits further examination.

In Chapter Three political economies were seen as dynamic rather than static entities, continually responding to both national and international developments. From a complementarity perspective it was seen that a change in one institution could result in a corresponding change in another. Hall (2007) describes political economies within the VoC framework as "institutional ecologies" continually adapting and evolving in response to an ever changing environment. Equally, the Irish Skill Regime can be seen to

be such an 'institutional ecology'. With the Skill Regime responding to the ever-changing needs of the economy, different economic conditions require a different response. As was shown in Chapter Six, during recessionary times, activation of the unemployed was a priority, while during periods of economic growth addressing skills shortages was the dominant issue. For the relationship between the skill regime and the labour market to be at its optimum, the supply of skilled labour at all levels should be in balance with the demand within the labour market. As discussed in Chapter Six, this is not the case in Ireland given the high level of over-education in the Irish labour market. Indeed, the prominent position of the Department of Social Protection and activation policy is identified by one policy actor (INT10) as being disproportionate and observes that activation should be seen as part of skills policy rather than the other way round. The dominance of higher education within the labour market, which has contributed to over-education, is also possibly disproportionate. This is reflected in the higher education bias within the EGFSN identified by a number of the policy actors. This imbalance suggests that what might be referred to as the calibration of the skill regime from a policy priority perspective needs to be a more dynamic attribute of the Irish Skill Regime.

The Irish Skill Regime, similar to all other institutional 'ecologies', consists of a complex web of power relationships. Morgan (2005) argues that, while institutions with a state are the outcome of political processes, societal values and priorities are embedded in these institutions. As Morgan (2005) observes:

> "The complexity of this idea of institutional complementarity is exacerbated further by consideration of the issue of the social space within which the institutions exist" (p. 429).

He argues that the actors within the institutional ecology are often concerned with status and the power of their relative position. While they may have been satisfied with the level of returns within the institutional ecology, a change may alter this view. Morgan states:

"What in the past was seen as an acceptable institutional settlement which brought about an adequate level of returns for key groups in society may, as a result of…change, come to be perceived differently by some groups, for example, as a barrier to them getting their 'fair share'…Such groups can start to change their allegiance to the dominant set of complementarities" (p. 428).

Recalibrating the Irish Skill Regime so as to include FET would clearly be at the expense of a reduced dominance of higher education. This has political implications within a 'third-level society'. However, taking a skill regime perspective of skill formation, and seeking to optimise the institutional complementarity of the Irish Skill Regime, would be a significant contribution to achieving the goal of a 'world-class' FET institution. This would be greatly aided by completing the outstanding reforms mentioned earlier. The final theme that emerged from the findings of this research is that of capacity.

7.4.3 The Capacity Deficit

The reforms that have taken place in FET in Ireland in recent times have laid the foundation for the development of a strong FET institution within the Irish Skill Regime. Within the context of developments at a European level, the establishment of the Skills Division in DES, and the establishment of SOLAS and QQI, provide a national framework for the future development of FET. The establishment of the ETBs as a network of regional providers facilitates the delivery of FET programmes. However, the success of skill formation policy in general and FET policy in particular, will depend on the capacity of the ETBs to implement the policy objectives. As Clarke (2014) states "what matters to macro policy outcomes is local capacity" (p.200). Given the legacy of neglect which has characterised the VEC sector since its inception, and given the deliberate neglect of further education within DES where it was seen as a "side show" (INT8), a state of under-development of the sector is not unexpected. The capacity of the

VEC system to respond to the policy demand at particular times, such as, high youth unemployment in the 1970s, was significantly curtailed. In 2012, the Minister for Education and Skills, Mr Ruairí Quinn stated that further education had been treated as a back water of the education system (Quinn, 2012). This continual neglect has led to a situation where FET in Ireland has suffered from a persistent capacity deficit. Consequently, to move the 'Cinderella' from the 'back-water' to 'world-class' will require a conscious decision by government to bring forward a significant programme of not only financial resources but also significant regulatory and contractual restructuring. A senior DES official who participated in this study states:

> "I think the nature of what we do in further education and training, how we do it and what we do will be radically different in ten years' time" (INT5).

Only time will tell whether this is rhetoric or reality.

7.5 Conclusion

Over the period of this case study of the evolution of FET in Ireland 19 incidents of institutional change occurred involving all seven modes of change identified in Chapter Two. Institutional bricolage was the most frequent mode of change accounting for 11 of the 19 events. By 2014 the FET institution had achieved parchment status consisting of three principle pieces of legislation. However, the Further Education and Training Act, 2013 in particular was identified as failing to complete the jurisdiction of SOLAS to include the sectoral training area. Within the context of the developments at a European level, the establishment of the Skills Division in DES in 2010, and the subsequent establishment of SOLAS and QQI as executive agencies of DES completed the national infrastructure for FET. The regional network of ETBs provides the vehicle for the delivery of FET programmes across the country. However, the retention of Colleges of Further Education as post-primary schools, staffed by post-primary

teachers, has been identified as a barrier to the completion of the establishment of the FET as the 'fourth pillar' of the Irish education and training system. Within the international context, the complexity of achieving a valid comparator for the Irish FET system was critically analysed. While the VoC distinction between CME and LME was a first step, the additional characteristic of state size presented further difficulties in achieving valid comparisons. However, the post-2010 structural reforms have laid the foundation for achieving the goal of a 'world-class' FET system.

Three themes emerged from the findings of this research. The first theme looked at the narrowness of approach which has characterised policy development in skill formation heretofore. Based on Busemeyer's concept of a skill regime, a model for the Irish Skill Regime was proposed. While this model identified the inter-institutional relationships within the skill formation space, the second theme focused on the quality of those relationships, namely, the degree of institutional complementarity within the Irish Skill Regime. Two particular relationships within the Skill Regime attracted particular attention in the research. Firstly, the progression pathway from FET to higher education was identified as lacking transparency and presenting significant barriers to FET students wishing to progress to higher studies. Secondly, the alignment of the qualifications system with the needs of the labour market was also identified. In particular, the use of qualifications by employers within the recruitment process was identified as an area which would merit further research.

The final theme to emerge from the findings was that of the capacity of the FET system. Following a legacy of neglect of the VEC system since its establishment and the subsequent low regard for further education within DES, this cumulative neglect and underinvestment have resulted in a persistent capacity deficit within the FET system. Notwithstanding the need to address the remaining structural reforms referred to above, there is an urgent need for positive discrimination in funding for the FET system so as to bring it up to par. Continued failure to do so will result in a failure to

achieve 'world-class' status for FET in Ireland as set put on the FET Strategy.

8 CONCLUSION

8.1 Introduction

This research was inspired by the significant level of change that occurred within FET in Ireland since 2010. It seeks to understand how and why this particular stage in development was arrived at and, with the ambition of being a "world-class integrated FET system" (SOLAS, 2014, p.3), were the proposals heading in the right direction.

The rationale for having a strong FET sector in any industrialised country includes the provision of appropriately skilled workers at the intermediate skill level thereby reducing the extent of over-education in a labour market such as in Ireland. However, Busemeyer (2015) examines the place of the VET system within the context of the links between education and the welfare state. In particular, he argues that there is a link between the strength of VET system and the patterns of social inequality in society. He contends that the institutional design of education and training systems, which have emerged in the post-Second World War period, were the result of political choices made during what he terms "the critical juncture of the post-war decades" (p.253). In particular he argues:

> "The partisan balance of power would…decide whether VET was to
> be integrated into the general secondary school system (the social
> democratic path) or keep its status as a separate and distinct
> educational track (the Christian democratic path). Where VET
> declined, the brunt of post-secondary education was channelled into
> academic higher education…(the liberal-conservative path)" (pp.
> 253-254).

Busemeyer concludes that:

> "Levels of socio-economic inequality are significantly lower in
> countries with well-established VET systems, since the VET system

opens up access to well-paid and secure employment for those in the lower half of the skills distribution." (p. 254).

Consequently, the benefits of having a 'world-class' FET system in Ireland are both economic and social. Having accepted that such a system is desirable, its institutional and organisational configuration, while having similarities with other countries, must be bespoke to the particular circumstances in Ireland. This research has critically analysed how the current configuration was arrived at and has pointed a way forward. The remainder of this chapter will outline the contributions of this research to knowledge, identify two areas for future research, and conclude with some final observations on the way forward.

8.2 Contribution of this Research to Knowledge

As this is the first doctoral research study into FET policy in Ireland it is in itself a major contribution. The study also makes a significant contribution in terms of the approach to research design through the use of a methodology more commonly associated with the field of political science in a study of further education and training policy. A second contribution of the approach to research design is the breadth of the skill formation arena in Ireland covered by the study. While the primary focus of the study was FET, the other elements of the skill formation arena, namely post-primary education and higher education were juxtaposed at appropriate times. This approach is uncommon in the literature.

The learning from this study makes a contribution to the area of policy development within skill formation in general and FET in particular. Firstly it places current developments in their historical and political context. In so doing, subsequent policy developments can be better informed. It is also clear from this study that the approach to policy development taken by the Irish government to date is predominantly too narrow. The development of skill formation policy must include all elements of the arena. The model for the Irish Skill Regime proposed in this study, with its focus on institutional

complementarity and the calibration of the Skill Regime from a policy priority perspective, provides a framework for the future development of not only FET but the entire post-secondary skill formation system, namely, FET (including sectoral training) and higher education.

8.3 Further Research

As with all research, examining any area will often provoke further questions to be answered. This research is no different. As mentioned earlier the possibility of a mismatch between the qualifications system and the skills needs of the employers gives serious cause for concern. However, should such a mismatch exist, there may be a number of causes. This research suggests two particular areas that would merit further examination both of which relate to the qualifications system. The first area is the structural design on the qualifications currently in use in FET in Ireland, and secondly, the use of qualifications by employers in the recruitment process for new staff.

It is important to distinguish between what is meant by the terms 'certification' and 'qualification'. Certification is from within the education and training domain and is an award bestowed upon the learner following the demonstration of the achievement of a standard of learning. A certification becomes a qualification when it is an expression of the knowledge, skills and competence required by an employer for the purpose of performing a particular occupation. The degree of alignment between a qualification and the requirements of a particular occupation is what gives the qualification currency in the labour market, or more particularly, with employers. A key function of the qualifications system in any country is to mediate the demonstration of the learning outcomes within the education and training domain, or skill formation system, with the occupational requirements of the labour market (Allais, 2014). As such it would be important that not just the content of the qualifications but their overall design are in keeping with specific requirements of the Irish labour market.

As a Member State of the EU, there is a strong interconnectedness between skill formation policy in Ireland and that of the EU. However, as shown in Chapter Three, there are as many approaches to skill formation policy in the EU as there are Member States (Menz, 2005). While there are some similarities, each country's approach to skill formation is unique. Consequently the qualification system which is charged with mediating the skill formation system with the labour market must be similarly so designed. While the NESC (2005) has described the Irish approach to the welfare state, or social protection system, as a hybrid of the three primary approaches in Europe, the question of the most suitable approach to skill formation in Ireland has yet to be given appropriate attention. The current design has evolved in response to historical forces, industry certification from the UK in particular, prevalent in the Irish labour market, and the constraints of the post-primary school system dating back to the Pre-Employment Courses in 1978 within which FET continues to operate. It is not inconceivable that a hybrid of the skill formation approaches in Europe could be most suitable in Ireland. An in-depth review of the most suitable design for the FET awards in Ireland, which could be appropriately placed on the continuum of Rauner's two qualification scenario, would be a valuable addition to the body of knowledge within skill formation in Ireland.

The second area for further research is that of the use of qualifications in the recruitment practices of employers. A recent survey of employers' view of the Irish FET and higher education system asked employers about their level of awareness of the NFQ and its involvement in their recruitment of staff (Department of Education, 2015). The responses from employers indicated:

> "Of those organisations [61%] who heard of the NFQ, just over one-third (36%) had referred to it during their recruitment process. Large organisations were most likely to refer to it during their recruitment process (47%) than their smaller counterparts. Although 64% of mid-sized employer organisations (51-250 employees) had

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heard of the NFQ, only 22% had referred to it during their
recruitment process" (p.25).

None of the figures quoted exceed 50% of employers using the NFQ in their
recruitment. Added to the views of the senior policy actors quoted in
Chapter Six, there would seem to be a case for further research in this area.

8.4 Future Direction

In Chapter Seven a number of deficiencies in the FET parchment institution
were identified, including the need to extend DES responsibility for FET,
and SOLAS's remit accordingly, to include sectoral training. Separating
Colleges of Further Education and the FET teacher's contracts from their
current position with the post-primary sector would complete the
establishment of FET as the fourth pillar of the Irish education and training
system.

Since the end of this case study in 2014 a significant development within
the skill formation space has been the establishment of a National and
Regional Skills Architecture (Department of Education and Skills, 2016a).
A key element of this architecture consists of a National Skills Council,
which has an oversight role, and nine Regional Skills Fora (RSF). The
purpose of the RSF is describes by DES as follows:

> "These will provide a vehicle for close co-operation at Regional
> level between education and training providers and enterprise,
> between the different education and training providers themselves
> and with the involvement of other government departments/agencies
> a local link with the implementation of other strategies such as the
> Regional Action Plans for Jobs and Pathways to Work" (Department
> of Education and Skills, 2016a, p. 111).

This development, which involves a broad spectrum of stakeholders in the
skill formation space, is in line with the concept of the Irish Skill Regime

proposed in the previous chapter. A greater involvement of employers in the skill formation system is to be welcomed and in line with international best practice. At the RSF level, each Forum is to be chaired by an industry representative, in line with its industry-led configuration. This is also in line with the industry-led approach to the development of the new apprenticeships.

However, a number of the policy actors who participated in this research were of the view that employers in Ireland have a poor record of engagement with the skills agenda. From an institutional theory perspective, given that an institution is a set of rules agreed by a coalition of stakeholders which are enforced by a third party, it could be argued that the institutions in place to date were designed in such a way as to have insufficient returns for employers to engage to the requisite level. Equally, the question of sanctions for employers, or indeed, education and training sector, who fail to meet their commitments, is as yet unanswered. From an employers' perspective, the engagement with the skill formation system must provide positive returns for their commitment to be maintained. The underpinning concept of a national skills architecture is to optimise the supply of suitably qualified workers on an ongoing basis. This includes the anticipation of changing labour market needs. Such a system responds to the medium and long-term needs of the economy rather than short-term issues. For the collaborative engagement between employers and the skill formation system to succeed, all parties need to develop a shared understanding of what is to be achieved and how it can be done. Rather than an employer-led approach, or indeed, an education and training-led approach, success will ultimately depend on employers being better informed about how the skill formation system can respond, as well as education and training providers being better informed about the employers' circumstances in recruiting suitably skilled staff. Nevertheless, at present, institutional consolidation continues apace.

8.5 Conclusion

Significant strides have been taken towards establishing a properly established FET sector in Ireland. However, the task is not yet complete and more work remains to be completed if the FET sector is indeed to become 'world-class'. It would be a concern that as the Irish economy improves the urgency to implement the remaining reforms will dissipate and momentum will be lost. It took the economic crises of the 1970s and ESF funds to drive the establishment of the FET institution within DES with the Pre-Employment Courses of 1978 which ultimately became the PLC courses. It required the economic crisis of the Great Depression to create the environment for the creation of Skills Division, SOLAS and the ETBs. It is the hope of this writer that it will not take another economic crisis to finish the job.

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10 APPENDIX 1 SOURCE DOCUMENTS

Primary Source Documents

Government Policy Documents

1. 1978   White Paper - National Development 1977-1980
2. 1979   White Paper - Programme for National Development 1978-1981
3. 1980   Investment and National Development 1979-1983
4. 1982   The Way Forward. National Economic Plan 1983-1987.
5. 1984   Building on Reality 1985-1987
6. 1987   Programme for National Recovery
7. 1991   Programme for Economic and Social Progress
8. 1994   Programme for Competitiveness and Work
9. 1997   National Anti-Poverty Strategy
10. 1998 Partnership 2000
11. 2000 Partnership for Prosperity and Fairness (2000-2003)
12. 2003 Sustaining Progress. Social Partnership Agreement 2003-2005
13. 2006 Towards 2016. Ten-Year Framework Social Partnership Agreement 2006-2015
14. 2008 Towards 2016 Review and Transitional Agreement 2008-2009
15. 2008 Building Ireland's Smart Economy – A Framework for Sustainable Economic
16. 2010 The National Recovery Plan 2011-2014
17. 2013 A Strategy for Growth. Medium-Term Economic Strategy.

Department of Education and Skills – Policy Documents

18. 1980 White Paper on Educational Development
19. 1984 Programme for Action in Education 1984-1987
20. 1995 White Paper on Education. Charting our Education Future.

21. 2000   White Paper on Adult Education
22. 2014   National Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019, SOLAS

Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation – Policy Documents

23. 1984   White Paper on Industrial Policy
24. 1986   White Paper on Manpower Policy
25. 1997   White Paper of Human Resource Development
26. 2007   Tomorrow's Skills – Towards a National Skills Strategy
27. 2012   Action Plan for Jobs
28. 2013   Action Plan for Jobs 2013
29. 2014   Action Plan for Jobs

Department of Social Protection – Policy Documents

30. 2012   Pathways to Work. Government Policy Statement on Labour Market Activation

31. 2013   Pathways to Work. 50 Point Plan to Tackle Long-Term Unemployment.

Department of Public Expenditure and Reform – Policy Documents

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Secondary Source Documents

Government Policy Advice Documents

33. 1975   NESC Comments on the OECD Report on Manpower Policy in Ireland.
34. 1976   Green Paper – Economic and Social Development 1976-1980
35. 1978   Green Paper – Development for Full Employment (June)

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37. 1982   NESC Report No 64 – A Review of Industrial Policy (Telesis Report)

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41. 1990   NESC Report No 89 A Strategy for the Nineties: Economic Stability and Structural Change.

42. 1992   Report of the Review Group on Industrial Policy (Culliton Report)

43. 1993   Employment through Enterprise – the response of the Government to the Moriarty Task Force on the Implementation of the Culliton Report (Moriarty Report).

44. 1993   NESC Report No 96 A Strategy for Competitiveness, Growth and Employment

45. 1994   NESF Report No 4 Ending Long-Term Unemployment.

46. 1996   NESC Report No. 98 Strategy into the 21st Century

47. 1997   NESF Forum Report No 11. Early School Leavers and Youth Unemployment

48. 1998   Partnership 2000. Inclusion, Employment & Competitiveness

49. 1999   NESC Report No 105 Opportunities, Challenges and Capacities for Choice

50. 2002   NESF Forum Report No 24. Early School Leavers.

51. 2003   NESC Report No 111 An Investment in Quality: Services, Inclusion and Enterprises

52. 2005   NESC No 114 Strategy: People, Productivity and Purpose

53. 2008   NESC Report No 117 The Irish Economy in the Early 21st Century

54. 2009   NESC Report No 118. Ireland's Five-Part Crisis: An Integrated National Response

55. 2011   NESC report No 123. Supports and Services for Unemployed Jobseekers: Challenges and Opportunities in a Time of Recession

56. 2012   NESC Report No 125. Promoting Recovery and Employment in Ireland.

57. 2013   NESC Report No. 135. Ireland's Five-Part Crisis, Five Years On: Deepening Reform and Institutional Innovation.

58. 2014   NESC Report No. 137. Jobless Households: An Exploration of the Issues.

Department of Education and Skills – Policy Advice Documents

59. 1992   Education for a Changing World - Green Paper in Education

60. 1993   NESC Report 95. Education & Training Policies for Economic and Social Development.

61. 1994   Report of the National Education Convention

62. 1998   Green Paper on Adult Education

63. 2000   Report of the Review of Department's Operations, Systems and Staffing Need (Cromien Report)

64. 2003   Report of the Steering Committee to the PLC Review established by the Department of Education and Science (McIver Report).

65. 2008   Draft agreement re FET teachers

66. 2011   A Consultation Paper on the establishment of a new Further Education and Training Authority.

67. 2012   Action Plan for SOLAS - The new Further Education and Training (FET) Authority

68. 2013   Review of Apprenticeship Training in Ireland

69. 2013 A Strategic Review of Further Education and Training and the Unemployed (Sweeney Report)

70. 2014   Further Education and Training in Ireland: Past, Present and Future, ESRI.

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71. 1997   Tomorrow's Skills – Towards a National Skills Strategy, Expert Group on Future Skills Needs.

72. 2000   Forfás Enterprise 2010: A New Strategy for Enterprise in Ireland in the 21st Century

73. 2003   Report of the Task Force on Lifelong Learning

74. 2003   Review of Industrial Performance and Policy

75. 2010   Review of Labour Market Programmes, FORFÁS

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77. 2011   ESRI Renewal Series Paper 1. What Can Active Labour Market Policies Do?

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78. 2012   A Review of Department of Social Protection Employment Support Schemes, DSP.

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79. 1993   EU White Paper – Growth, Competitiveness, Employment. The challenges and ways forward into the 21st century.

80. 1994   EU Commission White Paper on European Social Policy – A Way Forward for the Union.

81. 1995   EU White Paper on Education and Training. Teaching and Learning – Towards the Learning Society

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82. 1974   OECD Review of Manpower Policy in Ireland

83. 1991   OECD Review of National Policies for Education: Ireland

84. 2009   Activation Policies in Ireland. OECD

85. 2010 – Learning for Jobs. OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training

86. 2012   OECD. Better Skills, Better Jobs, Better Lives. A Strategic Approach to Skills Policies.

87. 2014   Ireland's Action Plan for Jobs: A Preliminary Review. OECD

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88. 2010 (Dec)   IMF Ireland Request for an Extended Arrangement

89. 2011 (May)   IMF Ireland. First and Second Review Under the Extended Arrangement and Request for Rephasing of the Arrangement

90. 2011 (Aug)   Third Review Under the Extended Arrangement

91. 2011 (Nov)   Ireland: Letter of Intent

92. 2011 (Nov)   IMF Ireland. Fourth Review Under the Extended Arrangement and Request for Rephasing of the Arrangement

93. 2012 (Feb)   IMF Ireland. Letter of Intent.

94. 2012 (Feb)   IMF Ireland. Fifth Review Under the Extended Arrangement.

95. 2012 (May)   IMF Ireland. Letter of Intent.

96. 2012 (May)   IMF Ireland. Sixth Review Under the Extended Arrangement

97. 2012 (Aug)   IMF Ireland. Letter of Intent.

98. 2012 (Aug)   IMF Ireland. 2012 Article IV and Seventh Review Under the Extended Arrangement.

99. 2012 (Aug)   IMF Ireland. Selected Issues.

100.   2012   IMF Ireland. Eighth Review Under the Extended Arrangement.

101.   2013   IMF Ireland. Letter of Intent.

102.   2013   IMF Ireland. Ninth Review Under the Extended Arrangement.

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104.   2013   IMF Ireland. Tenth Review Under the Extended Arrangement.

105.   2013   IMF Ireland. Eleventh Review Under the Extended Arrangement.

106.   2013   IMF Ireland. Twelfth Review Under the Extended Arrangement and Proposal for Post-Program Monitoring.

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Legislation

Acts of Parliament

1. 1876   Elementary Education (Ireland) Act
2. 1882   Intermediate Education (Ireland) Act
3. 1891   Elementary Education Act
4. 1893   Elementary Education (School Attendance) Act
5. 1899   Agriculture and Technical Instruction (Ireland) Act
6. 1900   Intermediate Education (Ireland) Act
7. 1909   Education (Administrative Provisions) Act
8. 1913   Intermediate Education (Ireland) Act
9. 1924   Intermediate Education (Amendment) Act
10. 1924   Ministers and Secretaries Act
11. 1926   University Education (Agriculture and Dairy Science) Act
12. 1928   Forestry Act
13. 1930   Vocational Education Act
14. 1930   University Education (Agriculture and Dairy Science) Act
15. 1931   Agriculture Act
16. 1931   Apprenticeship Act
17. 1931   Sea Fisheries Act
18. 1931   Tourism Traffic Act
19. 1936   Vocational Education (Amendment) Act
20. 1939   Tourist Traffic Act
21. 1943   Vocational Education (Amendment) Act
22. 1944   Vocational Education (Amendment) Act
23. 1946   Forestry Act

24. 1946   Tourist Traffic (Amendment) Act

25. 1946   Ministers and Secretaries (Amendment) Act

26. 1947   Vocational Education (Amendment) Act

27. 1950   Vocational Education (Amendment) Act

28. 1952   Social Welfare Act

29. 1952   Tourist Traffic Act

30. 1952   Sea Fisheries Act

31. 1953   Vocational Education (Amendment) Act

32. 1955   Tourist Traffic Act

33. 1958   Agriculture Act

34. 1959   Apprenticeship Act

35. 1962   Vocational Education (Amendment) Act

36. 1966   Ministers and Secretaries (Amendment) Act

37. 1967   Industrial Training Act

38. 1970   Vocational Education (Amendment) Act

39. 1971   Higher Education Authority Act

40. 1972   National Council for Educational Awards

41. 1972   European Communities Act

42. 1973   Ministers and Secretaries (Amendment) Act

43. 1973   European Communities (Amendment) Act

44. 1977   National Agricultural Advisory, Education and Research
   Authority Act

45. 1977   Employment Equality Act

46. 1977   Ministers and Secretaries (Amendment) Act

47. 1977   Ministers and Secretaries (Amendment) (No.2) Act

48. 1979   Agriculture (An Chomhairle Talmaíochta) Act

49. 1981   Youth Employment Agency Act

50. 1987   Labour Services Act

51. 1988   Forestry Act

52. 1992   Regional Technical Colleges Act

53. 1992   Dublin Institute of Technology Act

54. 1993   Statistics Act

55. 1994   Industrial Training (Apprenticeship Levy) Act

56. 1997 Scientific and Technological Education (Investment) Fund Act

57. 1997 Universities Act

58. 1997 Public Service Management Act

59. 1998 Employment Equality Act

60. 1998 Education Act

61. 1998 Scientific and Technological Education (Investment) Fund (Amendment) Act

62. 1999 Qualifications (Education and Training) Act

63. 2000 Equal Status Act

64. 2000 Education (Welfare) Act

65. 2000 National Training Fund Act

66. 2001 Vocational Education (Amendment) Act

67. 2001 Teaching Council Act

68. 2003 National Tourism Development Act

69. 2004 Equality Act

70. 2004 Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act

71. 2005 Disability Act

72. 2006 Teaching Council (Amendment) Act

73. 2006 Institutes of Technology Act

74. 2007 Education (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act

75. 2009 Labour Services (Amendment) Act

76. 2010 Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act

77. 2010 Social Welfare Act

78. 2010 Social Welfare and Pensions Act

79. 2011 Student Support Act

80. 2011 National Tourism Development Authority (Amendment) Act

81. 2011 Ministers and Secretaries (Amendment) Act

82. 2012 Equal Status (Amendment) Act

83. 2012 Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act

84. 2012 Education (Amendment) Act

85. 2013 Education and Training Boards Act

86. 2013 Further Education and Training Act

Statutory Instruments

According to Section 1(1) of the Statutory Instruments Act of 1947:

> 'the expression "***statutory instrument***" means an order, regulation, rule, scheme or bye-law made in exercise of a power conferred by statute'.

1925

1. S.I. No. 17/1925 - The Intermediate Education Commissioners (Transfer of Functions) Order, 1925

2. S.I. No. 18/1925 - The Intermediate Education Commissioners (Statutory Funds Winding-Up) Order, 1925

3. S.I. No. 22/1925 - The Commissioners of Education in Ireland (Transfer of Functions) Order, 1925

1927

4. S.I. No. 101/1927 - Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction For Ireland (Education) (Transfer of Functions) Order, 1927.

1930

5. S.I. No. 86/1930 - Vocational Education Regulations (No. 1), 1930.

1934

6. S.I. No. 195/1934 - Apprenticeship Act (Hairdressing Trade) Special Order, 1934.

1935

22. S.I. No. 616/1935 - House Painting and Decorating Trade (Constitution of Apprenticeship Committee) Regulations, 1935.

1936

23. S.I. No. 91/1936 - Apprenticeship Act, 1931. Apprenticeship Committee For The Hairdressing Trade (Dublin) Confirmation of Rules Order, 1936.
24. S.I. No. 292/1936 - Apprenticeship Act (Furniture Trade) Special Order, 1936.
25. S.I. No. 293/1936 - Apprenticeship Act (Furniture Trade) Apprenticeship District Order, 1936.

1937

26. S.I. No. 39/1937 - Apprenticeship Act, 1931. Apprenticeship Committee For The Brush and Broom Trade (Confirmation of Rules) Order, 1937.
27. S.I. No. 320/1937 - The Furniture Trade (Constitution of Apprenticeship Committee) Regulations, 1937.

1938

28. S.I. No. 29/1938 - Vocational Education Act, 1930 (Part V) (Registers and Records) Regulations, 1938.
29. S.I. No. 33/1938 - Vocational Education Act, 1930 (Part V) (Statutory Forms) Regulations, 1938.
30. S.I. No. 168/1938 - Apprenticeship Act, 1931. Apprenticeship Committee For The Furniture Trade (Dublin) Confirmation of Rules Order, 1938.
31. S.I. No. 196/1938 - Apprenticeship Committee For The Hairdressing Trade (Dublin) (Confirmation of Rules) Order, 1938.
32. S.I. No. 219/1938 - Apprenticeship Committee For The House-Painting and Decorating Trade Confirmation of Rules Order, 1938.

42. S.I. No. 173/1944 - Vocational Education Act, 1930 (Grants Under Section 53) Regulations, 1944.

43. S.I. No. 344/1944 - Apprenticeship Committee For The Furniture Trade (Dublin) (Confirmation of Rules) Order, 1944.

1945

44. S.I. No. 15/1945 - Apprenticeship Committee For The Hairdressing Trade (Dublin) (Confirmation of Rules) Order, 1945.

45. S.I. No. 42/1945 - Apprenticeship Committee For The House Painting and Decorating Trade (Confirmation of Rules) Order, 1945.

46. S.I. No. 248/1945 - Apprenticeship District (Hairdressing Trade Order, 1945.

47. S.I. No. 249/1945 - Apprenticeship Act (Hairdressing Trade) Special Order, 1945.

48. S.I. No. 338/1945 - Hairdressing Trade (Constitution of Apprenticeship Committee) Regulations, 1945.

1946

49. S.I. No. 313/1946 - The Apprenticeship Committee For The Hairdressing Trade (Cork) (Confirmation of Rules) Order, 1946

50. S.I. No. 374/1946 - Apprenticeship Committee For The Hairdressing Trade (Dublin) (Confirmation of Rules) Order, 1946.

51. S.I. No. 375/1946 - Apprenticeship Committee For The Furniture Trade (Dublin) (Confirmation of Rules) Order, 1946.

1947

52. S.I. No. 18/1947 - Social Welfare (Transfer of Departmental Administration and Ministerial Functions) (No. 1) Order, 1947.

53. S.I. No. 15/1947 - Ministers and Secretaries (Amendment) Act, 1946 (Section 3) (Commencement) Order, 1947. (Establishing the Dept of Social Welfare)

54. S.I. No. 392/1947 - Apprenticeship Committee For The Furniture Trade (Dublin) (Confirmation of Rules) Order, 1947.

1948

55. S.I. No. 66/1948 - Apprenticeship Committee For The Hairdressing Trade (Dublin) (Confirmation of Rules) Order, 1948.

1949

56. S.I. No. 74/1949 - Vocational Education Act, 1930 (Extension of Technical Education) Order, 1949.

57. S.I. No. 237/1949 - Apprenticeship Committee For The Furniture Trade (Dublin) (Confirmation of Rules) Order, 1949.

1950

58. S.I. No. 219/1950 - Apprenticeship Committee (No. 2) For The Furniture Trade (Confirmation of Rules) Order, 1950.

1952

59. S.I. No. 359/1952 - Apprenticeship Committee For The Hairdressing Trade (Dublin) (Confirmation of Rules) Order, 1952.

1953

60. S.I. No. 265/1953 - Apprenticeship Committee For The Furniture Trade (Confirmation of Rules) Order, 1953.
61. S.I. No. 266/1953 - Apprenticeship Committee For The Brush and Broom Trade (Confirmation of Rules) Order, 1953.
62. S.I. No. 267/1953 - Apprenticeship Committee (No. 2) For The Furniture Trade (Confirmation of Rules) Order, 1953.

1955

63. S.I. No. 113/1955 - Tourist Traffic Act, 1955 (Commencement) Order, 1955
64. S.I. No. 270/1955 - Apprenticeship Committee For The Hairdressing Trade (Cork) (Confirmation of Rules) Order, 1955.

1956

65. S.I. No. 50/1956 - Apprenticeship Committee For The Furniture Trade (Dublin) (Confirmation of Rules) Order, 1956.
66. S.I. No. 68/1956 - Apprenticeship Committee (No. 2) For The Furniture Trade (Confirmation of Rules) Order, 1956.
67. S.I. No. 127/1956 - Apprenticeship Committee For The House Painting and Decorating Trade (Confirmation of Rules) Order, 1956.
68. S.I. No. 238/1956 - Apprenticeship Committee For The Hairdressing Trade (Dublin) (Confirmation of Rules) Order 1956.

1957

69. S.I. No. 74/1957 - Apprenticeship Committee For The House-Painting and Decorating Trade (Confirmation of Rules) Order, 1957.

70. S.I. No. 120/1957 - Apprenticeship Committee For The House Painting and Decorating Trade (Confirmation of Rules) (No. 2) Order, 1957.

71. S.I. No. 254/1957 - Apprenticeship Committee For The Furniture Trade (Dublin) (Confirmation of Rules) Order, 1957.

1958

72. S.I. No. 101/1958 - Apprenticeship Committee For The Furniture Trade (Dublin) (Confirmation of Rules) Order, 1958.

73. S.I. No. 114/1958 - Apprenticeship Committee For The Hairdressing Trade (Dublin) (Confirmation of Rules) Order, 1958.

74. S.I. No. 196/1958 - Apprenticeship Committee For The Furniture Trade (Dublin) (Confirmation of Rules) (No. 2) Order, 1958.

75. S.I. No. 209/1958 - Apprenticeship Committee For The Furniture Trade (Dublin) (Confirmation of Rules) (No. 3) Order, 1958.

76. S.I. No. 220/1958 - Apprenticeship Committee (No. 2) For The Furniture Trade (Confirmation of Rules) (No. 2) Order, 1958.

1960

77. S.I. No. 36/1960 - Apprenticeship Committee (No. 2) For The Furniture Trade (Confirmation of Rules) Order, 1960.

78. S.I. No. 41/1960 - Apprenticeship Committee For The Furniture Trade (Dublin) (Confirmation of Rules) Order, 1960.

79. S.I. No. 53/1960 - Apprenticeship Committee For The Hairdressing Trade (Dublin) (Confirmation of Rules) Order, 1960.

80. S.I. No. 75/1960 - Apprenticeship Act, 1959 (Establishment Day) Order, 1960.

1961

81. S.I. No. 230/1961 - Apprenticeship Committee For The Furniture Trade (Dublin) (Confirmation of Rules) Order, 1961.

82. S.I. No. 253/1961 - Apprenticeship Committee (No. 2) For The Furniture Trade (Confirmation of Rules) Order, 1961.

1962

83. S.I. No. 28/1962 - Apprenticeship Act (Designated Trade) (Motor Mechanic) Order, 1962.

84. S.I. No. 29/1962 - Apprenticeship Act (Designated Trade) (Electrician) Order, 1962.

85. S.I. No. 30/1962 - Apprenticeship Act (Designated Trade) (Furniture Trade) Order, 1962.

86. S.I. No. 31/1962 - Apprenticeship Act (Trade of Motor Mechanic) (Apprenticeship District and Apprenticeship Committee) Order, 1962.

87. S.I. No. 32/1962 - Apprenticeship Act (Trade of Electrician) (Apprenticeship District and Apprenticeship Committee) Order, 1962

88. S.I. No. 33/1962 - Apprenticeship Act (Furniture Trade) (Apprenticeship District and Apprenticeship Committee) Order, 1962.

89. S.I. No. 68/1962 - Apprenticeship Committee For The Hairdressing Trade (Dublin). (Confirmation of Rules) Order, 1962.

1963

90. S.I. No. 53/1963 - Apprenticeship Act (Initial Registration Fee) Rules, 1963.

91. S.I. No. 172/1963 - Apprenticeship Act, 1959 (Appointed Day) Order, 1963.

1964

92. S.I. No. 154/1964 - Apprenticeship Act (Designated Trade) (Engineering and Metal Trade) Order, 1964.

93. S.I. No. 155/1964 - Apprenticeship Act (Engineering and Metal Trade) (Apprenticeship District and Apprenticeship Committee) Order, 1964.

1965

94. S.I. No. 117/1965 - Apprenticeship Act (Designated Trade) (Trade of Building and Construction) Order, 1965

95. S.I. No. 118/1965 - Apprenticeship Act (Trade of Building and Construction) (Apprenticeship District and Apprenticeship Committee) Order, 1965.

96. S.I. No. 194/1965 - Apprenticeship Act (Designated Trade) (Dental Craftsman) Order, 1965.

97. S.I. No. 224/1965 - Apprenticeship Act (Trade of Dental Craftsman) (Apprenticeship District and Apprenticeship Committee)

1966

98. S.I. No. 24/1966 - Apprenticeship Act (Designated Trade) (Printing Trade) Order, 1966.

99. S.I. No. 25/1966 - Apprenticeship Act (Printing Trade) (Apprenticeship District and Apprenticeship Committee) Order, 1966.

100. S.I. No. 162/1966 - Ministers and Secretaries (Amendment) Act, 1966 (Appointed Day) Order, 1966

101. S.I. No. 164/1966 – Labour (Transfer of Departmental Administration and Ministerial Functions) Order, 1966.

102. S.I. No. 206/1966 - Apprenticeship Act (Designated Trade) (Printing Trade) Order, 1966 (Revocation) Order, 1966.

111.   S.I. No. 204/1977 - National Agricultural Advisory, Education and Research Authority Act, 1977 (Commencement) (No. 2) Order, 1977

1979

112.   S.I. No. 312/1978 - The Industrial Training Order, 1978.

1980

113.   S.I. No. 190/1980 - National Agricultural Advisory, Education and Research Authority Act, 1977 (Commencement) Order, 1980

1981

114.   S.I. No. 379/1981 - Apprenticeship Act (Designated Trade) (Printing Trade) Amendment Order, 1981.

1982

115.   S.I. No. 16/1982 - Youth Employment Agency Act, 1981 (Commencement) Order, 1982

116.   S.I. No. 84/1982 - Youth Employment Levy Regulations, 1982

1983

117.   S.I. No. 52/1983 - Youth Employment Levy (Amendment) Regulations, 1983

118.   S.I. No. 358/1983 - Education (Transfer of Departmental Administration and Ministerial Functions) Order, 1983

119.   S.I. No. 75/1984 - Youth Employment Levy (Amendment) Regulations, 1984.

120.   S.I. No. 122/1987 - Agricultural Education (Transfer of Departmental Administration and Ministerial Functions) Order, 1987

121.   S.I. No. 53/1988 - Employment and Training Levy (Amendment) Regulations, 1988

122.   S.I. No. 183/1988 - Agriculture (Research, Training and Advice) Act, 1988 (Establishment Day) Order, 1988

123.   S.I. No. 69/1989 - Employment and Training Levy (Amendment) Regulations, 1989

124.   S.I. No. 1/1991 - European Communities (General System For The Recognition of Higher Education Diplomas) Regulations, 1991

2002

2003

2004

2005

2006

2007

2014

11 APPENDIX 2 THEMES, CODING CATEGORIES AND KEY WORDS USING IN THE SEMANTIC CONTENT ANALYSIS.

Theme	Category	Sub-Category	Code/Keyword	Description
Rationalise and Regionalise	Institutional Genesis and Change	Modes of Institutional Genesis and Change	Igen	Institutional Genesis
			Ogen	Organisational Genesis
			Agen	Institutional/Organisational Amalgamation
			Disp	Institutional chnage through displacement
			Layer	Institutional change through layering
			Drift	Institutional change through drift
			Conv	Institutional change through conversion
		Public Service Reform	Reform	Public sector reform
			Regionalise/Rationalise	Rationalising and/or regionalise public services
			MoS/Coord Comm	Minister of State/Committee to Coordinate activity
			Integrated Public Service	Integrated public services, joined-up thinking
		New Public Management	Account	Accountability
			Perform/Mgt	System Performance or perfromance management
			Perform Measure/PI's	Performance measurement, perfromance indicators

Theme	Category	Sub-Category	Code/Keyword	Description
			Targets	Perfromance targets
			Monitor	Monitoring of system performance
			Eval	Evaluation of system performance
			Quality	Quality of system or service, quality assurance
			VFM/Cost Effect	Value-for-money, cost-effectiveness
			Evid Policy	Evidence-based policy
			Evid/Perform Budget	Evidence-based, or perfromance-based funding or budgeting
			Data	Need for data, use of data
			Strategic Plan	Strategic plan
			Business Plan/Process	Business plan and/or business processes
			Service Plan	Service plan
			Governance/Devol	Governance and/or devolved responsibility
Purpose of FET	Skills for the Economy	Economic Development	ECON DEC T	Economic development seen as a purpose of training
			ECON DEV E	Economic development seen as a purpose of education
			ECON DEV HE	Economic development seen as a purpose of higher education
			ECON DEV FET	Economic development seen as a purpose of FET
			ECON DEV E&T	Economic development seen as a purpose of education and training

Theme	Category	Sub-Category	Code/Keyword	Description
			ECON DEV MPP/HR/LM	Economic development seen as a purpose of manpower policy/human resources/labour market policy
			ECON DEV HC	Economic development seen as a purpose of human capital
		Economic Competitiveness	ECON COMP E&T	Economic competitiveness seen as a purpose of education and training
			ECON COMP FET	Economic competitiveness seen as a purpose of FET
			ECON COMP HE	Economic competitiveness seen as a purpose of Higher Education
		Economy Type	ECON Know	Knowledge economy
			ECON Smart	Smart economy
			ECON Innov/Ideas	Innovation/ideas economy
			INFO/Know SOC	Information/knowledge society
		Skills Issues	SHORT	Skills shortage
			MISSMAT	Skills missmatch
			FUTURE	Future skills needs
			Scitech Change	Skills needs of scientific and technological change
		Sectoral Training	SECT-Ag	Skills in agriculture
			SECT-Tour	Skills in touriwm
			SECT-Hort	Skills in horticulture

Theme	Category	Sub-Category	Code/Keyword	Description
			SECT-Const	Skills in construction
			SECT-Fish	Skills in sea fishing
			SECT-Marine	Skills in the marine industry
			SECT-Forestry	Skills in forestry
			SECT-Health	Skills in the health sector
			SECT-Trans & Log	Skills in the transport and logistics sector
		Training for Employed	WF DEV FET/Low Skills	Skills needs of those in employment relating to FET or low skills such as low levels of literacy
			WF DEV High Skills	Skills needs of those in employment relating to high skills
			WF DEV General	General reference to skills needs of those in employment
			Retrain	Need to retrain people in employment. For example, where existing skills are becoming obsolete due to technological change or loss of market share.
			Upskill	Need to raise the skill level of the existing workforce
			Skill+	Need to improve skill levels
			Evolving skills	Evolving skill needs, usualy in the context of increasing technological change

Theme	Category	Sub-Category	Code/Keyword	Description
			LLL	Lifelong learning
		Employer and Education links Course Content	EMPLR School	Links between employers/local industry and schools – usually post-primary schools
			EMPLR FET	Links between employers/local industry and further education providers
			EMPLR HE	Links between employers/local industry and higher education
			ALIGN FET	Align the content of FET courses to the needs of employers
			ALIGN HE	Align the content of HE courses to the needs of employers
			LC Curric Relev	Increase the relevance of the Leaving Certificate curriculum to the needs of the labour market
		Initial FET	IFET	Initial further education and training courses. These are courses taken directly upon leaving school or on attemnpting re-entering the labour market in a another occupational area.
			STW	School to work transition
			APPR	Apprenticeship
			APPR Review	Refview/refrom of the apprenticeship system. This includes the new apprenticeships
			APPR+	Increase the number of apprenticeships

Theme	Category	Sub-Category	Code/Keyword	Description
			HE	Higher education
Certification and Qualifications	Qualification	Qualifications Type	Cert/Qual General	General reference to certification and/or qualifications
			Qual HE	Higher education qualifications
			Qual FET	FET qualifications
			Qual-Sect	Qualifications relating to the areas of sectoral training
	Qualifications System	Attributes	Qual Sys	Qualifications system
			NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
			ATP	Access, Transfer and Progression
			NSS	National Skills Strategy
			RPL/WBL	Recognition of Prior Learning, Accreditation of Prior Learning or Work Based Learning
		International Drivers	Global	Globalisation
			EU	Europeanisation and EU policy
			ESF	EU Structural Funds such as European Social Fund
			OECD	OECD policy advise
			Prog HE	Specific references to progression from FET to Higher Education
Active Labour	Skills for the	Activation	EMPLOYAB	Employability/improve employability skills

Theme	Category	Sub-Category	Code/Keyword	Description
Market Policy and Purpose of FET	Unemployed		ACTIV FET	FET activation courses
			ACTIV HE	HE activation courses
			ACTIV Youth	Activation courses targetting unemployed young people
			LTU	Long-term unemployed
		Social Inclusion	ADULT	Adult education, community education
			Mature	Mature students in higher education
			Basic/Low Skills	Low skills, basic skills, literacyt and numeracy
			EDUC SOC	Education as social policy
			Equality/Equity	Equality and/or equity, inclusion of identified disadvantaged groups
			Access to HE disadv	Access to higher education for underrepresented groups
			2nd Chance	Second chance
			LC Retention	Retention levels to Leaving Certificate
			Educ Disadvan	General references to educational disadvantage
			EARLY	Early school leaving
			SOC INC	Social inclusion

Theme	Category	Sub-Category	Code/Keyword	Description
			Workfare	Workfare – this involves penalising benefit recipients when they are judged to have failed to engage with either FET courses or placement opportunities.
			Active Incl	Active Inclusion
			Learner Needs	Learner needs

12 APPENDIX 3 DOCUMENT DATA CAPTURE SHEET

Document Title: Further Education and Training Strategy 2014-2019

Document Type/Genre: Irish Government Policy

Author: SOLAS

Publication Date: 2014

Page No Chapter Title	Data Extract	Coding Category
p.3 Preface …further education and training in Ireland which will: support economic, development; increase social inclusion; and meet the needs of all learners, communities and employers who engage with FET The FET Strategy is set within a context of Government reform of public services. The FET Strategy also reflects the priorities articulated in the 'Action Plan for Jobs', 'Pathways to Work' and wider policy reform in education. The 'Action Plan for Jobs' is a key component of the Government's integrated response to the unemployment crisis and involves all of Government including the Department of Education and Skills. The education and training system is a core part of the enterprise, development and innovation infrastructure. A key priority for the education and training system, including FET, is to: Address the unemployment challenge and provide targeted skills programmes that support job seekers to re-skill and up-skill for areas where sustainable employment opportunities are emerging.	Econ dev fet Soc inc Learner Reform Integrated PS ACTIV FET Reskill Upskill

Page No Chapter Title	Data Extract	Coding Category
• Modernise and expand the apprenticeship system. • Implement the new structures for FET to deliver higher quality flexible and responsive programmes. The 'Pathways to Work' initiative is another key component of Government response to the unemployment crisis. This initiative focuses on unemployed people; in particular those who are long term unemployed and young unemployed people. The aim is to provide priority access for p.4 unemployed people to relevant labour market opportunities to enhance their job prospects through education and training programmes and work experience. Reform in education is broadly focussed on improving quality, accountability and supporting inclusion and diversity in schools. With regard to higher education and further education and training, reform is focussed on creating the right opportunities for Irish adults. …skills development and wellbeing lie at the heart of the FET Strategy. Employers lie at the heart of skill needs, while the learner lies at the heart of the FET service. The main focus of the Strategy therefore is to provide the following skills through FET: - Skills as a resource for economic growth: - Skills as drivers of employment growth: - Skills as drivers of productivity increase: - Skills and 'smartening' of the economy: p.5 - Skills as a driver of social inclusion and social mobility:	APPR+ Activ FET LTU Quality Account Soc inc Adult Econ dev fet Econ smart

Page No Chapter Title	Data Extract	Coding Category
- Skills as an insulator from unemployment: p.6 Success also depends on ensuring that jobseekers continue to be referred by DSP to the most suitable and relevant education and training programmes. …the FET Strategy will better position FET to more effectively support government policy objectives of increasing employment and reducing unemployment, while also increasing competitiveness and productivity in the Irish economy. …FET will be better positioned to contribute more effectively to the relevant actions in the Government's Medium Term Economic Strategy, as well as to the priorities relating to the Human Capital Investment Operational Programme 2014-2020, supported by the ESF The Strategy is part of a four-strand integrated FET strategic framework. The first strand includes the FET Strategy as well as a companion ESRI study on 'Further Education and Training in Ireland: Past, Present and Future', commissioned by SOLAS as part of the Strategy development process. An overarching Strategy Implementation Plan and a more detailed Operational Plan will set out specific tasks, performance indicators, ownership and timelines to drive the implementation of the FET Strategy, as well as to assist with planning and monitoring progress in that regard. The second strand includes the first-ever integrated Annual Services Plan relating to FET… The third strand is the three-year SOLAS Corporate Plan…	Soc inc Employab Activ fet Econ dev fet Econ comp fet Activ fet EU ESF Strategic plan Perform measure Monitor Service plan

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The <u>fourth</u> strand includes individual five-year Strategy Statements and the Annual Service Plans relating to each of the sixteen ETBs… p.38 The Strategy has been developed at a time when major reforms of public services, including education and the labour market, are on-going. A number of other reforms impacting on FET to date include: • Launch of 'Intreo', (2012) • Planned launch of 'Jobpath', (2014) • The establishment of Quality and Qualifications Ireland, (2012) • The Government's 'Pathways to Work' Initiative, (2012), (2013) • The Government's 'Action Plan for Jobs', (2012), (2013), (2014) • The Government's Action Plan for SOLAS, (2012) • Review of the Apprenticeship in Ireland, (2013) • Introduction of the Government's 'Youth Guarantee', (2014) p.39 <u>Higher Education reform</u> In May 2013, the Minister for Education and Skills announced a major re-organisation of the country's higher education sector. This announcement followed recommendaations made by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) on system reconfiguration, inter-institutional collaborations and system governance in Irish higher education. A new system performance framework is also being put in place by the HEA based on key system objectives and indicators noted by Government. A key element in the oevrall approach will be the implementation of perfromance funing in the sector, One of the key objectives in the Higher Education System Performance Framework is to promote access for disadvantaged groups and to put in place coherent pathways from second level education, from further education, and from other non-traditional entry routes.	Corporate plan Stategy statements Ogen Activ fet Agen Activ fet active he Activ youth Appr review Governance Perform measure Access he

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Integrated strategic planning between FET and HET will play an important role in achieving this objective. In January 2014, the Minister for Education and Skills announced the publication of the Heads of a Bill which will allow for the future establishment of Technological Universities and the mergers of institutes of technology. p.40 <u>Youth Guarantee</u> In considering the allocation of FET places under the 'Youth Guarantee' and 'Pathways to Work', the existing level of places for PLC courses may also need to be taken into account p.41 This FET Strategy sets out the future direction for FET to ensure the provision of 21st century high quality further education and training programmes and services to learners, employees and employers. p.42 The Strategy is intended to provide an overarching framework, within which outcomes-based planning and funding reflect learner and employer needs as well as progressing Government priorities, including the lifelong learning agenda and the National Skills Strategy. p.43 Employers are increasingly engaged in FET education, training and employee development. Employers will have confidence that the further education and training system is capable of meeting their current and future skills needs.	ATP Prog he Agen Activ youth IFET Quality Learners Emplr fet Evid policy Learner Emplr fet NSS LLL Emplr fet Wd dev fet Future

Page No Chapter Title	Data Extract	Coding Category
	Learner, community and employer satisfaction with further education and training is very high. This means learners and employers of FET graduates will be highly satisfied with the quality and relevance of the FET provision and their experience of it, irrespective of whether a publicly funded or private provider was used.	Quality
		Basic skills
	p.44 Literacy and numeracy are being addressed effectively and are not a barrier to participation in FET or in achieving employment, education and training progression outcomes	Atp
		Lll
	The sector promotes and supports 'lifelong learning' for all	
	p.46 Focussed on further education and training as a driver of employment and economic recovery through skill development.	Econ dev fet
	p.49 With regard to external influences on the shape of FET, the European Social Fund (ESF) for example, although now contributing less funding to vocational education and training than in the past, still retains an important influence on government policy.	Esf
	p.50 PLC courses are offered in both second level schools and more specialised further education 'centres' providing predominantly (if not solely) PLC courses. However, while the bulk of PLC courses are taken in specialised further education centres, the operation and control of PLC courses remains within the second level sector, where their administrative, management, staffing and ancillary support structures are those of a second level school.	Ifet

Page No Chapter Title	Data Extract	Coding Category
p.51 **Definition of FET** FET provides education and training and related supports to assist individuals to gain qualifications at Levels 1-6 on the NFQ or equivalent, to attain and refresh economically-valuable skills to access and sustain all types of employment, tackling skills shortages and boosting the future growth and competitiveness of the Irish economy. It provides a range of skills for labour market returners, for those interested in a new career direction, for those wishing to access 'second chance' education, and to prepare school-leavers and others for higher education. FET also plays an important role in helping people to lead fulfilling lives, supporting some of the hard-to-reach individuals and groups to achieve their potential and reducing the costs to society of exclusion.	Quals fet Nfq Employab Short Econ comp fet 2nd chance Stw Prog he Soc inc
p.53 The diversity of the FET provision as outlined above elaborates the essence of the NFQ which, according to the QQI, is designed not only to make learning visible but also, 'to provide the tools necessary to facilitate the expression of learning goals, waypoints and pathways and the documentation of a person's learning paths'.46 More importantly, the **NFQ is meant to provide structured pathways to employment and to further learning, to formalise progression routes** and thus provide patterns of incentives for participation in education and training. Therefore **the NFQ is a key tool that the FET sector**, in collaboration with QQI, DES and the HEA/HEIs, intends to build-on.	NFQ ATP Nfq
p.54 From the definition and description of FET presented above and given the positioning of accredited FET provision on the NFQ, we can say that FET is a distinct and an important sector within the Irish education and training framework. It shares NFQ levels with both the second level and higher education sectors, thus	Equality Qual fet

Page No Chapter Title	Data Extract	Coding Category
	providing access to equality of learning outcomes, certification and progression opportunities for its diverse range of learners	Atp
		Prog he
p.56		Econ dev fet
	Further education and training has been a first choice for many and an alternative route to success for others, often providing an alternative pathway to the worlds of work and higher education.	
		Vfm
p.57		Skill +
	Studies of FE indicate that investment in further education and training can be one of the most cost effective ways of tackling the cumulative effects of learning failure and one of the best ways to remedy past deficiencies. Furthermore, occupation and initial vocational education and training and skills development make up a significant part of FET provision, and this provision has been shown to have significant economic benefits for the individual and the broader society.	Ifet Wf dev fet
		Wf dev fet
		Lll
	p.76 …continuous workplace training and lifelong learning, enabling workers and enterprises to adjust to an increasingly rapid pace of change; anticipating and building competence for future need…	
		Appr review
	p.84 Review of Apprenticeship Training in Ireland The current apprenticeship system dates from the 1990s and is beginning to recover from the recent property crash. A recent review of the apprenticehsip system (January 2014) confirmed the merits of the existing system (and identfied a number of weaknesses also) and recommended that the apprenticeships ahould be expanded to new business and industrial sectors. The Review Group concluded that there is a significant scope to expand exmployer-led apprenticeships at both further FET and HET levels into a wide range of business sectors.	Appr +

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P.88 <u>Issues from ESRI</u>
Installation of a new integrated FET planning model (mechanism) to ensure the relevant employment led provision (PLCs, SSTs, Traineeships, BTEI, VTOS) is informed directly by employers; that it reflects and responds to emerging labour market challenges; and that it is under-pinned by an effective system of labour market intelligence and data infrastructure.
 	
The installation of a new strategic inputs/outcomes-based funding model managed by SOLAS and using measures appropriate to the FET provision in question.
 	
The data infrastructure around FET is weak, particularly by international standards.
 	
p.89 The inconsistency and lack of data has serious implications fro FET policy and practice and needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.
 	
p.91 <u>Active Inclusion</u>
In October 2008, the European Commission published formal policy guidelines for Member States which advocated a three-pillar policy for 'active inclusion of persons excluded from the labour market'. Active Inclusion means enabling every citizen, notably the most disadvantaged, to fullt participate in society, including having a job.
p.92
Active inclusion has three strands and, in practical terms, means:
    1. Adequate income support tagether with help to get a job....
    2. Inclusive labour markets....
	Align fet
	Data
	
	Perform budget
	
	Data
	
	Data
	
	Active inc
	EU

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3. Access to quality services.... The EU Commission also identified a number of key findings of the PIAAC survey, to inform education and training policies which are particularly relevant for progressing active inclusion. p.93 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) ...(Rpl) can play an important role in enhancing employability and mobility. p.95 A new strategic framework for European co-operation in education and training up until 2020, attempts to support Member States in further developing their educational and training systems to enable citizens to realise their potential, as well as ensure sustainable economic prosperity and employability...There are four strategic objectives for the framework, making lifelong learning and mobility a reality; improving the quality and efficiency of education and training; promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship to enable all citizens to acquire and develop skills and p.96 competence needed for their employability and foster further learning; enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training. Community education is a critical access point for many adults who left school early and/or who have personal, familial or communal experience of socio-economic exclusion. ...community education does not reject the current economic reality but empowers people to grow in confidence in their own employability.	OECD Rpl Employab EU Employab Lll Quality Equality Soc inc Adult Early Employab

Page No Chapter Title	Data Extract	Coding Category
p.97 Disbility Strategy persons with disabilities benefit from relevant reaining and education that enable their progression to employment opportunities; ensuring provision of vocational education for people with disabilities by the ETBs		Equality Soc inc Ed disadv
Literacy and Numeracy Strategy p.98 The International Adult Literacy Survey condicted in 1995 and published in 1997 by the OECD, found tat one in four Irish adults had problems with the simplest literacy tasks. p.99 Results from PIAAC 2012 study indicates that levels of literacy and numeracy among teh adult population in Ireland are below the average for countries inlcuded in the study. The integration of basic skills, in particular literacy, into all publically funded education and training provision, insofar as is possible, is Irish government policy and has been recommended in a number of strategy documents, including the National Skills Strategy. The SOLAS FET Strategy agrees with this approach and proposes that literacy and numeracy support should be integrated or embedded in FET programmes, as appropriate.		Basic skills OECD OECD Basic skills NSS
p.102 …there now needs to be an increased focus on the skills of those at work. [It] requires higher levels of education and skills, on-going lifelong learning and up-skilling		Wf dev fet Lll Upskill
p.104 Recognition of Workplace Learning According to the National Qualifications Authority (2001) now QQI, recognition of prior amd experiential learning refers to learning that may have been achieved on a non-formal basis, or perhaps in the workplace.		Rpl Nfq

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The National Framework of Qualifications supports the further development of prior learning recognition as a broad concept that can enable entry to a training or education programme, credit towards an award, or even eligibility for a full award without participating in a formal training or education programme. p.106 Levels from further to higher education in Ireland have increased significantly in recent years. The vast majority of this group enter courses in the Institutes of Technology, however an increasing proportion are entering courses in the universities and other institutions. p.118 The aim is to replace current funding arrangements for all FET proviosn, on a phased basis, with an outcomes-based funding model. p.120 Core Principles underpinning the FET Strategy The role of FET is defined by its vision and mission. In order to realise the vision and the mission of FET and to transform the sector, the following principles underpin the Strategy: • Learner- and employer- centred: Ensure that the learner and employer voice is at the centre of evidence---based decision making. • Evidence-based FET policy and practice: Ensure that robust research and evidence is at the centre of FET planning and funding. • Employment- focussed and actively inclusive: Meet the personal, social and economic needs of learners and employers. • Responsive, flexible, innovative and high quality provision: Promote innovation and identify what works best in FET.	Prog he Perform budget Learner Align fet Evid policy Active inc Quality

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	• Consultative and collaborative with all stakeholders: Foster consultation and collaboration within the FET sector. • Transparent and accountable to all including funders and learners: Embed a culture of transparency and accountability across the FET sector. • Value for money: Informs all decision making with regard to policy and practice without compromising quality. The overall aim of the Strategy is to develop a world-class integrated system of further education and training in Ireland, which will promote economic development and meet the needs of all citizens. The goals are linked to three major themes of relevance, quality, and inclusion, and are intended to lay out the contours of the roadmap for FET… p.121 Strategic Goals 1.Skills for the economy 　i.　Install an appropriate advisory infrastructure to ensure that the relavant provision is informed directly by employers and reflects/respnds to emerging labour market challenges 　ii.　Provide further education and training for a diverse range of individuals with a particular focus on long-term unemployed people and unemployed young people. 　iii.　Implement the new apprenticeship system 　iv.　Provide further education and training for employees supported by a new FET employee development strategy 　v.　Provide further education and training programmes to assist people to start and sustain their own business.	Account Vfm Econ dev fet Align fet Quality Soc inc Align fet Ltu Activ youth Appr review Wf dev fet Econ dev fet

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2. Active Inclusion
  i.   Support Active Inclusion across FET
  ii. Devise and implement a strategy to promote literacy and numeracy across FET
		Active inc
		Basic skills

3. Quality Provision
      i.   Respond to the needs of learners
     ii. Ensure excellence in FET programme development
    iii. Upgrade the guidance service within FET and extend it to all who engage with FET, including employees
    iv. Develop standards for staff qualifications in the FET sector
    v.   Provide effective pathways for FET graduates to Level 7 and 8 within the higher education sector.
		Learners
		Quality
		
		Qual
		Prog he

4. Integrated Planning and Funding
      i.   Implement a new integrated and coordinated FET planning model
     ii. Develop and install a 'fit-for-purpose' data infrastructure to support FET policy and provision
    iii. Introduce performance-related funding (appropriate to thetype of FET provision and defined strategic outcomes).
    iv. Evaluate the effectiveness of all current FET provision.
		Service plan
		Data
		Evid policy
		Perform budget
		Eval

5. Standing of FET
      i.   Promote and provide high quality FET responsive to the needs of industry and learners
     ii. Conduct an economic and social impact study of each ETB.
		Quality
		Eval

13 APPENDIX 4 RESULTS SEMANTIC CONTENT ANALYSIS

14 APPENDIX 5 DEPARTMENTAL NAME CHANGES AND TRANSFER OF FUNCTIONS

Department of Jobs Enterprise and Innovation, and Department of Labour

Source: www.irishstatutebook.ie

Years	Department Name	Statutory Instrument
1922-1977 1966	Department of Industry and Commerce Department of Labour established Functions of Department of Industry and Commerce relating to Labour transferred Functions Department of Social Welfare relating to Labour transferred	S.I. No. 162/1966 S.I. No. 164/1966 S.I. No 214/1966
1977-1980	Department of Industry, Commerce and Energy	S.I. No 306/1977
1980-1981	Department of Industry, Commerce and Tourism	S.I. No. 10/1980
1981-1983	Department of Industry and Energy Department of Trade, Commerce and Tourism	S.I. No. 289/1981 S.I. No 290/1981
1983-1986	Department of Industry, Trade, Commerce and Tourism	S.I. No. 384/1983
1986-1993	Department of Industry and Commerce	S.I. No. 41/1986
1993-1997	Department of Enterprise and Employment Department of Labour amalgamated with the Department of Industry & Commerce to form the new Department. Functions of the Department of Labour transferred to the Department of Enterprise and Employment	S.I. No. 19/1993 S.I. No. 18/1993

1997-2010	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment	S.I. No. 305/1997
2011 - date	Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation	S.I. No. 245/2011

15 APPENDIX 6 MEMBERSHIP OF THE FETAC COUNCIL

Source: Section 13 of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999.

13. (1) The Council shall consist of 18 members.

(2) The members of the Council shall be –

   a) The chairperson of the Council,

   b) The chief executive of the Council,

   c) The chief executive of the Higher Education and Training Awards Council,

   d) Two persons nominated by the Minister [for Education and Science],

   e) Two persons nominated by the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment,

   f) Two persons who, in the opinion of the Minister, are representative of educational or training institutions established and maintained by a vocational education committee,

   g) One person who, in the opinion of the Minister after consultation with the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, is representative of learners participating in programmes of further education and training,

   h) One person who, in the opinion of the Minister after consultation with the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, is representative of employees of providers of programmes of further education and training,

   i) One person nominated by CERT,

   j) One person nominated by Teagasc,

   k) One person nominated by An Foras [FÁS],

   l) One person nominated by the Irish Business and Employers Confederation,

   m) One person nominated by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, and

   n) Two persons nominated in accordance with *subsection (3)*.

(3) Subject to *subsection (1)*, the Council shall nominate as members two persons who have a special knowledge and experience related to the functions of the Council, at least one of whom shall be a person with relevant international experience related to those functions.

16 APPENDIX 7 TRIANGULATION OF RESULTS

17 APPENDIX 8 EVOLUTION OF FET IN IRELAND