CHAPTER 11

The Development of Vocational and Technical Education in Ireland, 1930–2015

Marie Clarke

Introduction

This chapter traces the development of vocational and technical education in Ireland from its introduction in 1930. Technical education was formally introduced into the education system in 1899. The development of vocational and technical education was closely linked to economic and social change. For most of the period, vocational and technical education was under valued both in terms of its contribution to education and to the economy.

Vocational Education: The Initial Years

Prior to independence, Irish GDP per head was at a similar level to that in Denmark and Austria and was ahead of France and Sweden. Ireland's position remained positive throughout the 1930s until the 1950s when a gap emerged between Ireland and other European states. Ireland lagged behind—and the country experienced a difficult period of economic recession accompanied by high levels of emigration.[1] This was as a result of poor economic policies, the lack of foreign markets for agricultural produce and a failure of industrial policies to generate an expanding economy.[2]

M. Clarke (✉)
University College, Dublin, Ireland

B. Walsh (ed.), *Essays in the History of Irish Education*,
DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-51482-0_11

A distinctive social structure existed in Ireland during the first 30 years of the Irish State, which was dominated by small farm holdings and characterized by late ages of marriage, high proportions not getting married, high marital fertility and high levels of emigration.[3] Rural Ireland controlled the social structure of the country and was marked by differences in class and status between kinship groups.[4] The state and the Roman Catholic Church promoted the traditional structures of rural life in Ireland.

The numbers of people engaged in agriculture fell relatively slowly between the 1920s and the 1940s.[5] Emigration increased rapidly during the 1930s, with two major consequences. It led to a diminished demand domestically for Irish industrial or agricultural products, and it ensured that the vested interests in the country would remain immune from government intervention. World War II did not change things very much in Ireland. It reinforced the policy of self-sufficiency, and, because of the inevitable shortages of fuel, raw material and semi-manufactured goods of all kinds, any significant industrial advance was virtually ruled out. Emigration increased substantially during the war, as young people were attracted to work in wartime Britain. Until the late 1950s, the Irish economy moved along in the same fashion as it had done since 1932, although after World War II, the government and the country tried to readjust. Industry lacked raw materials, fuel and capital equipment. There was increasing demand for manufactured goods of all kinds, and the long wage freeze during the war had built up great pressure for pay increases in all sectors of the economy. The end of the 1950s witnessed the beginnings of economic recovery and the start of government engagement with economic planning. The first plan entitled the *First Programme for Economic Expansion* was published in 1958 and the *Second Programme for Economic Expansion* was published in 1963.[6] This led to an increasing emphasis on the relationship between the economy and education.

The Introduction of Vocational Education

In the new Free State, primary, intermediate and technical education had little in common.[7] The Department of Education had limited power over the management of primary or secondary schools which remained vested in the clergy of various denominations, with the state merely paying the salaries of national schoolteachers and offering building grants for secondary schools. The Department of Education exerted influence through the control of curriculum and by operating an inspection system to ensure

that minimum teaching standards were maintained.[8] In Ireland during the 1920s, there was little demand for a workforce skilled in industrial technology. Those technical schools, which had been created under the Technical Instruction Act 1899, were located almost exclusively in towns and cities. In 1924, 65 technical schools catered for 22,800 students, the vast majority of whom were part-time day or evening students.[9]

A number of interests shaped perceptions about vocational education in Ireland in the context of the economic, political and social circumstances of the period. Different views about the role of technical instruction were expressed in Dáil debates and in the submissions made by various interest groups such as the Farmers Party, the Labour Party and the industrial lobby, members of Technical Instruction Committees and representatives from the Department of Industry and Commerce to the *Commission on Technical Instruction,* which published its report in 1927.[10] The Commission recommended a new system, which targeted three categories that required separate provision. The development of full time continuation education was recommended for those aged between 14 and 16 years who did not attend secondary schools; the development of full-time continuation education was recommended for county borough areas, the major cities and rural areas. Technical education was viewed as training for specific apprenticeships or jobs. Higher technical education was regarded as a separate category, which catered for managers and for the training of teachers.[11]

Continuation Education in Vocational Schools

The Vocational Education Act introduced in Ireland in 1930 created a binary education system at second level. Continuation education was defined in the act as:

> education to continue and supplement education provided in elementary schools and includes general and practical training in preparation for employment in trades, manufactures, agriculture, commerce, and other industrial pursuits, and also general and practical training for improvement of young persons in the early stages of employment.[12]

The main purpose of the continuation education scheme was to provide vocational instruction for 14 and 16 year olds who had left primary or secondary school.[13] Under Section 31, the newly established Vocational

Education Committees (VECs) were required to consider representations made by people in the catchment areas who had educational experience or were involved in trades and manufacturing.[14] Membership of the committees also consisted of local politicians. With reference to the rural schools, a memorandum issued by the Department of Education in 1931 stated that: 'everything that would tend to make a rural school urbanised or abstract in its aims should be avoided'.[15] The memorandum suggested that local VECs develop a system of education suited to the particular needs of respective areas.[16] This marked the introduction of secondary vocational education into the Irish education system in addition to the existing well-defined secondary school system.

While the Department of Education did not prescribe curricular programmes in its initial years, it highlighted the different expectations of urban and rural schools. The Department defined the rural continuation school as:

> rural continuation education should be directed towards securing a contented life in rural areas with employment in agriculture or rural industries, and should check as far as possible the constant drift of youth from the country to the town.[17]

The urban continuation school had the following focus:

> In the larger urban centres, there were general courses in which the primary education of the pupil was continued and extended and some forms of handwork taught, as well as courses in which a bias was given towards employment in trade or commercial or domestic occupations.[18]

Pupils were generally 14 years old before they could enter a continuation school. In practice, there was little uniformity in the educational attainments of these students. In the early years, a typical rural continuation school catered for 22 boys and 26 girls. The girls received instruction in Domestic Economy with Hygiene and Sick Nursing for 13 hours per week out of a total of 27 hours. The boys spent 14 hours per week at Woodwork, Elements of Agricultural Science, Plan Drawing, Mensuration and Accounts Keeping, out of a total of 28 hours.[19]

Courses in rural schools were slow to develop. VECs were given autonomy to decide timetables, subjects of instruction, duration of courses, fees, and examinations in accordance with the needs of local areas. In

smaller rural areas, due to a lack of accommodation or teaching staff, only one group of students could be successfully taught.[20] In some cases VECs ran courses for either girls or boys in alternate sessions, this was also as a result of a lack of availability of teachers.[21]

In 1942, the Department of Education issued Memorandum V 40, which set out the rationale of continuation education with more precise guidelines.[22] It specifically included religious studies as part of the courses offered and a greater emphasis was placed on the Irish language.[23] This marked the completion of the primary and experimental stage of the continuation education schemes started under the Vocational Education Act of 1930.[24] As Hyland has pointed out, the memorandum outlined that the main purpose of the continuation courses was to:

> prepare boys and girls, who have to start early in life, for the occupations which are open to them. These occupations, in general require some sort of manual skill and continuation courses have therefore a corresponding practical bias.[25]

It was further stated that:

> the nature of the continuation courses in any centre must be closely related to economic conditions in the neighbourhood.[26]

Memorandum V 40 referred to a sample of occupations identified in the 1936 Census of Population. The census classified occupied males and females aged 14 years and over in each occupational group. The occupational groups were Agriculture, Makers of Food, Makers of Apparel; Workers in Wood, Metal Workers, and Builders. Less than one fifth of women (17%) were involved in these activities. Women dominated in areas such as professional occupations, domestic service, and clerks and typists.[27] Memorandum V 40 used a sample of occupations from that census where there was a clear emphasis on occupational training that reflected a gendered workforce.[28]

Different programmes were offered in urban and rural continuation schools. The Junior Day Technical Course (two years) for boys was orientated to skilled manual work.[29] The Day Junior Commercial Course (2 years) for boys was focused on Mathematics and Book-keeping and was scheduled for 28 hours per week. The Day Junior Technical course (2 years) for girls was primarily focused on Domestic Economy and

Household Management and the Day Junior Commercial Course (2 years) for girls in city schools focussed on short hand, typing and commercial arithmetic. Both courses were timetabled for 28 hours per week. In rural schools the Junior Rural Science Course was directed at boys who intended to take up farming and was scheduled for 25 hours per week. The Junior Domestic Science Course offered to girls in rural schools was primarily practical in orientation. Individual practical training was given to each girl in the principles and practices underlying various household duties and processes. The intention was that girls would receive training in the skills necessary to manage and run a home successfully or be prepared to work in areas such as textiles, laundry work and hotel work. Cookery, Needlework and Art were taught for ten hours per week. Six hours per week were devoted to semi-practical subjects such as Domestic Science, Household Science, Laundry and Household Management. The remaining ten hours was devoted to the continuation subjects Arithmetic and Accounts, Irish, English and Geography, Religious Instruction and Physical Education.

The Irish Technical Education Association—the representative body of the VECs—lobbied throughout the 1950s for the introduction of a nationally monitored examination in continuation education. Vocational education had a negative image, and it was felt that the introduction of a state examination would redress this perception. The examination was intended for students who had completed a two-year course in a whole-time day vocational continuation school. In 1947, the Day Group Certificate examination was held and it continued annually.[30] The introduction of this examination gave the Department of Education more control over the curriculum. It specified the syllabus and through the examination it set the standard. Students entered the Group Certificate examination by presenting a combination of subjects, which had to take account of a compulsory core and additional subjects from what the schools offered.

Irrespective of size and location all schools offered the core subjects, which were Irish, English, woodwork, domestic economy, typewriting, mechanical drawing, commercial arithmetic and commerce. Other subjects that formed part of the Day Group Certificate were: metalwork shorthand, mathematics, rural science, magnetism and electricity, other science subjects, commercial geography, art and continental languages. The range of subjects offered was dependent on the size of school. Smaller schools were unable to offer a full range of subjects. In most schools students could not exercise choice in relation to subjects.[31]

By 1953, there were 200 VEC schools nationwide providing whole-time continuation education of which 90 served the rural population. During the 1950s a number of bills were passed in the Oireachtas to provide extra funds to maintain and extend VEC schemes.[32] In 1950, 11 VECs had reached the maximum income allowed under existing legislation and a further 23 could not expand due to a lack of resources.[33] In 1953, the Vocational Education Amendment Bill tried to address the financial inequities between rural and urban areas. Areas with low rating valuations were at a significant disadvantage, as the local rates produced small amounts of money, and as a result, the matching state grant was also small. The 1950s witnessed a series of financial cut-backs, in 1956–1957 and in 1957–1958, a 6% reduction in the state grant to VECs was imposed.[34]

At the start of the 1960s, the number of vocational schools had increased to 308 providing various forms of vocational education, including four colleges and four other centres devoted exclusively to technical and commercial education, three schools of art and three schools of music. Forty-nine schools were used exclusively for evening courses. Whole-time day continuation courses were provided in the remaining 245 schools; in addition these centres provided evening classes for adults and a number provided part-time day technical education for apprentices. Occasional courses, mainly adult education, were provided in a further 416 centres, in temporary accommodation served from the nearest school.[35] The vocational schools provided a range of courses for post-primary students; various elements of technical education, adult education and some advisory community service. Continuation education was the biggest activity that took place in vocational schools. Technical education in the smaller schools was a marginal activity. Adult education took the form of evening classes, which was provided in nearly all schools.

Bonel-Elliott has made the point that, at the beginning of 1963, there were two types of post-primary schools in Ireland. There were private fee-paying academic secondary schools offering an academic curriculum, which prepared pupils for the Intermediate Certificate, the Leaving Certificate, and entry to university and to the professions. There were also the vocational schools, which catered for continuation education, culminating in the Group Certificate, after two years' study and technical education. In 1963, only 52% of young people aged 15 and 25% of young people aged 17 were at school, and about one-third of all pupils who left the national school system had received no second-level education whatsoever.[36]

Education and the Economy: New Perspectives

Educational thinking focused on the role of education in economic development. The two were regarded as being closely interlinked, and the main emphasis of government policy was placed on developing technology and related skills. However, this was a difficult goal to achieve. In 1961, the OECD had arranged the Washington Policy Conference on 'Economic growth and investment in Education'. Ireland participated in this conference and volunteered for a coordinated examination of the Irish education system. The survey team that worked between 1962 and 1965 concentrated on a number of issues.[37] They considered the lack of educational statistics available in Ireland regarding the system and devised methods of securing the relevant data pertinent to their inquiry. They examined manpower needs in the short term and the availability of resources to achieve them. Differences in education participation in the various socioeconomic groups and in different geographical areas were also examined.[38] This work was conducted within a context where it was generally acknowledged that existing school provision was not adequate to meet the needs of the school-going population.

In 1962, the Minster for Education, Patrick Hillery, set up a committee of civil servants (subsequently known as the Duggan Committee) from the Department of Education to study the education system. Two recommendations emerged from the work of this committee concerning the development of a comprehensive education system and the introduction of Local Education Councils.[39] The report concluded that a set period of post-primary education, reasonably well-planned and adequately provided for, was a national necessity from a social and economic point of view. The committee recommended that the school leaving age be raised to 15 years initially, and that after a period of 10 years it should be raised to 16 years. The authors of the report were unhappy with the divide between vocational and secondary schools and concluded that the distinction should disappear and a common programme of study be provided over three years in both the secondary and the vocational schools. These schools would be known as Junior Secondary Schools. One weakness of the system was the absence of a link between secondary and vocational schools.[40] In order to put vocational schools on an academic and social par with secondary schools, Minister Hillery announced that the two-year course in vocational schools would be extended to three years and that a wide Intermediate Certificate course would be offered by both secondary

and vocational schools.[41] It was also announced that a Technical Leaving Certificate would be introduced and that new educational institutions called regional technical colleges would be developed to boost technical education and align educational provision with training needs.[42] The immediate adoption of the Intermediate Certificate and subsequently the Leaving Certificate course by vocational schools paved the way for a high degree of convergence in the second-level curriculum.[43] Most vocational schools continued to provide the full range of technical subjects and to orient their pupils (disproportionately the children of less skilled manual workers, small farmers and the unemployed) towards whatever opportunities were available to them. Compared with secondary school pupils, more vocational school pupils were forced to complete their schooling earlier and to enter the lower end of the labour market where they bargained less effectively with fewer and lower level educational credentials.[44] The introduction of the Common Intermediate Certificate and the Leaving Certificate into the vocational schools ensured they would continue to play a central role in Irish education. While there would be protracted disagreements among VECs and the Catholic Church surrounding the introduction of community schools and VEC controlled Community Colleges during the 1970s, nevertheless the reforms of the 1960s had provided a much more level playing field for VEC schools. The VEC schools also developed a range of other educational activities, particularly in the adult education sector.

Adult Education

The VECs, from their inception, continued the work of the Technical Instruction Committees with reference to adult education provision. VECs were linked to rural organisations such as Muintir na Tire[45] (founded in 1937)[46] and Macra na Feirme[47] (founded in 1944).[48] Extramural courses, provided by the universities, in vocational schools made an important contribution to the development of adult education in Ireland during the 1940s. University College Cork introduced a two-year part time diploma course in Social and Economic Science in 1946. UCG and UCD introduced similar courses in 1949. Apart from their own varied Adult Education programmes, VECs provided classes in a number of different areas and in conjunction with other organisations, such as the Health Boards. Where finance allowed, classes were provided for patients and staff in local hospitals.

During the 1950s, education for adults fell into three main categories: training in practical subjects like Woodwork, Metalwork and Domestic Science; instruction in theory subjects like, Irish, Bookkeeping and Maths, and cultural and social activities, which included Drama, Choral singing, lectures, debates and meetings. Classes in practical subjects were usually conducted on two evenings per week and were of two hours duration. These classes usually took place from mid-September to the end of March. Most of the projects undertaken in these classes were home based.

The training received was useful to people in their everyday working lives but securing accommodation for these classes was always a problem, especially in areas where no school already existed. Irish was a popular subject in evening classes. During the 1950s, adult education activities of an informal type developed. Many evening groups produced plays throughout the country and competed at Drama Festivals, which were held nation-wide. VECs also received requests from organisations to provide classes for their members.

Towards the end of the 1960s, government attention turned towards the adult education sector. Aontas[49] was founded in 1969, and the subsequent work of this organisation reflected the diverse nature of the sector. In 1973, a report entitled *The Committee on Adult Education* was published. The report pointed to significant under-funding in the area. In 1984, *The Report of the Kenny Commission on Adult Education "Lifelong Learning"* was published, which recommended the establishment of a National Council for Adult Education.

In the 1970s, VECs appointed Adult Education Organisers (AEOs) to facilitate a more structured approach to adult education provision.[50] Many other government departments were involved in adult education provision other than the Department of Education and the sector in general was uncoordinated.[51] In 1986, the Educational Opportunities Scheme was introduced on a pilot basis that targeted people aged 24 years and over who were unemployed for a year. This was replaced in 1989 with the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS), which targeted the unemployed who were over 21 years of age to return to education. Many of these programmes were run in vocational schools. The Back to Education Initiative was established in 2002 to provide part-time courses for young people and adults, targeting those with less than upper secondary education and/or in receipt of a social welfare payment. In the late 1990s, Irish education witnessed the publication of a series of green and white papers on various aspects of education. Within the adult education

sector, two papers were published, the Green paper *Adult Education in an Era of Life Long Learning* (1998) and the White paper *Learning for Life* (2000). The White paper emphasised economic development but also stressed social and community goals.[52]

The community education sector also witnessed considerable growth from the 1980s onwards and VECs played an important role in this area. Community education was funded through a range of sources, including local area partnerships, community development programmes and by the Department of Education through the VECs. The Adult Literacy and Community Education Scheme (ALCES) is funded through the allocation of tutor hours and/or small grants to community groups, through VEC Community Education Facilitators (CEFs).[53] The National Adult Literacy Programme, with the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) as the executive agency, is delivered through VECs, FÁS and community/voluntary groups.[54] The development of the further education sector in Ireland has its origins in the vocational education sector.

Further Education

From the 1970s onwards, a more focused vocational education programme was developing as a response to the needs of the long-term unemployed. In 1976, the Education Ministers of the European Community discussed the transition of young people from education to work. As a result of these discussions, vocational preparation and pre-employment schemes for young people were developed. In September 1977, Pre-Employment courses were offered at senior cycle in vocational schools for young people unable to find work. Career Foundation courses, developed in consultation with employers, were introduced into vocational schools in 1980. The widespread introduction of Vocational Preparation and Training Programmes in 1984 enabled vocational schools to develop one- and two-year programmes at both post-Junior and post-Leaving Certificate level. They became known as VPT1 and VPT2 courses. The VPT1 programme began as a self-contained one-year whole-time programme. It was designed as preparation for work and as a basis for entry into a further year of vocational training. The VPT2 programme largely evolved into what became known as PLC courses.[55]

Post Leaving Certificate Courses (PLCs) were formally recognised in 1985. This sector became one of the main purveyors of a complex array of vocational qualifications awarded by bodies ranging through the City and

Guilds, the Business and Technician Education Council (BTEC) and the National Council for Vocational Awards (NCVA). PLC courses cover a range of disciplines such as Art, Craft and Design, Business, Social Studies, Childcare, Leisure and Tourism, Media and General Studies. The courses met a need in educational provision that had not been previously catered for. It was the student market rather than immediate industrial or commercial needs that determined course development at PLC level.[56] The sector suffered from poor investment and a lack of progression opportunities.[57] The National Council for Vocational Awards provided certification for the sector from 1991 to 1999 when the 1999 Qualifications Act established the National Qualifications Act Ireland (NQAI) and subsumed the NCVA into the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC). This Act gave legislative status to the sector. Most of the further education sector was located within the VEC schools and a number of issues that prevented development of the sector were identified in the McIver Report, which was published in 2003. These included lack of recognition for the area, barriers to provision, a more coherent focus with reference to management and buildings, facilities and student services. The majority of the recommendations made in this report were not implemented at the time, as they would have required significant resources and the political will to invest in this sector was absent.[58] In 2012, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) was established as a new integrated agency, replacing the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC), the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC), the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) and the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB). QQI is responsible for the maintenance, development and review of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). It is also the body in charge of quality assurance of further and higher education and training (including English-language provision) in Ireland. In addition, QQI validates programmes and makes awards for certain providers in these sectors.

In 2013, the vocational education system underwent a complete reorganisation. Under the Education and Training Act, the VEC system was reconfigured into 16 newly established Education and Training Boards.[59] The Further Education and Training Act was passed in 2013, which established An tSeirbhís Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna (SOLAS), a new further education and training authority called SOLAS that replaced FÁS. The role of this organisation is to oversee funding, planning and coordination of a wide range of training and further education programmes.[60]

SOLAS was mandated to work closely with other groups such as the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) to help identify skills gaps, point to weaknesses and duplication in existing provision, and link courses more closely to both the needs of the individual and the labour market.[61] With the disbandment of FÁS, its apprenticeship function, as set out in the Industrial Training Act of 1967, was transferred to SOLAS.

Apprenticeship Education

Under the 1930 Vocational Education Act, VECs were given responsibility for the provision of technical education for specific apprenticeships and positions. This was accompanied by the introduction of the Apprenticeship Act, which was passed in 1931. This legislation did not provide for an officially regulated country-wide system of compulsory instruction, instead apprenticeship training relied on the willingness of employers to release apprentices to courses offered by VECs. Outside of the large cities, the absence of adequate school provision inhibited apprenticeship education. The 1950s witnessed a renewed focus on training. The 1931 Act was repealed by the 1959 Apprenticeship Act, which established the National Apprenticeship Board with the power to require employers to send apprentices to courses. A number of proposals were suggested with reference to uniform training standards. Yet, apprentices did not avail of the education provided. In 1961 just over a third (5774) of the 15,323 apprentices in the state attended apprenticeship courses run by vocational schools,[62] and just over 10% of provision in vocational schools focused on technical and apprenticeship education.[63] Tables 11.1 and 11.2 illustrate the data.

The National Apprenticeship Board did not have sufficient regulatory power to compel apprentices to take education courses. Tensions also existed about the status of an apprentice, whether they should be viewed as employees or students.[64] Whole-time higher technical education was confined to the cities; in the four colleges in Dublin and the technical institutes in Cork and Limerick. Concerns were expressed in the *Investment in Education Report* that two Dublin colleges had developed to such a point that apprentice courses would be excluded and that they would become colleges of technology only.[65]

In 1963, The Council for Education, Recruitment and Training (CERT) was set up to coordinate education and training for the hotel, catering and tourism industry. The 1967 Industrial Training Act set up

Table 11.1 Vocational schools—percentage of teaching hours by type of day course, 1962/1963

	All areas	*County Boroughs (including Dublin)*	*Dublin City*	*Scheduled Urban Areas*	*Counties*
Type of course	*(%)*				
Continuation	69.6	45.4	44.9	76.5	79.8
Whole time technical	4.6	11.7	13.1	–	1.9
Apprentice	4.2	9.4	11.7	2.4	1.9
Part-time technical	2.5	8.1	7.8	0.8	0.2
Part V	0.8	2.8	–	–	–
Other	1.6	0.9	0.6	3.2	1.8
Total Day	83.3	78.3	78.1	82.9	85.6

Source: *Investment in Education—report of the survey team*, (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1966) Pr. 8311, p.295

Table 11.2 Vocational schools—percentage of teaching hours by type of evening course, 1962/1963

	All areas	*County Boroughs (including Dublin)*	*Dublin City*	*Scheduled Urban Areas*	*Counties*
Type of course	*(%)*				
Apprentice	1.8	4.6	5.3	2.7	0.4
Technical and Commercial	8.4	11.4	13.9	6.7	7.2
Technological and Professional	0.8	2.5	2.5	0.3	0.1
Other	2.9	3.2	0.2	7.3	2.4
Total evening	13.9	21.7	21.9	17.0	10.1

Source: *Investment in Education—report of the survey team*, (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1966) Pr. 8311, p.295

AnCO (An Comhairle Oiliúna), which was funded by grants from government and, after 1973, from the European Social Fund. This body assumed responsibility for training within industry, training centres and apprenticeship. FÁS was established in 1987 under the Labour Services Act to consolidate the work of AnCO, the Youth Employment Agency and the National Manpower Service. In 1973, one year off-the-job train-

ing for apprentices was introduced with apprentices spending their first year in an AnCO training centre, thereafter combining on-the-job training with attending day release or block release courses in the Regional Technical Colleges.[66] In 1976 the apprenticeship period was reduced from 5 to 4 years. In 1992, it was reorganized around competency-based standards with a modular structure. Work experience was funded by the employers and education provision was funded by the State. In 1992, the *Culliton Report on Industrial Development* recommended that FÁS resources should focus on training for those in employment rather than the unemployed.[67]

The OECD (1995) in its survey of the Irish economy argued that Ireland fared particularly weakly in terms of the low emphasis placed on vocational education and training (when compared to many other EU countries). A review of provision of vocational education and training in Ireland was undertaken by the OECD in 2010.[68] The national qualifications framework, a well-structured apprenticeship system and the range of provision at post-secondary level were identified as positive aspects of the Irish system. The report identified a number of challenges to the sector, which included the prevalence of literacy and numeracy difficulties; the paucity of career guidance services, a lack of teacher education opportunities for instructors and an absence of data about the sector. The range of occupations where apprenticeship opportunities were available was considered gender biased in favour of males.[69]

In the period 2006–2012, the number of new entrants into the apprenticeship system declined from 8306 to 1434. There was a slight increase in registrations in 2011 and 2012.[70] In 2013, apprenticeship programmes continued to be provided for approximately 1700 new registrants, and more generally, for an existing apprentice population of 9000 at various stages of both on and off-the-job phases of their apprenticeship. The population of redundant apprentices (made redundant during their training) was 2600 at the end of 2012 (56% were in construction-related trades while 21% were in the electrical trade). A number of new initiatives were introduced and this ensured that a significant cohort of this redundant apprentice population completed their apprenticeship.[71] In May 2013, the Minister for Education and Skills announced a wide-ranging review of apprenticeship education in Ireland. An Apprenticeship Council was established in 2014, with a remit to investigate the expansion of apprenticeships into new sectors of the economy.

The Development of Higher Technical Education

The system of technical training that had developed in Ireland was based on the craft apprenticeship model inherited from Britain. There was no steady demand for technicians in any one industry, few firms seemed disposed to co-operate with vocational education committees. One of the major problems with Irish technical education lay in obtaining the support of industry for the establishment of courses. In 1964 the OECD published a report on the *Training of Technicians in Ireland*. The report did not generate much discussion when it was first published.[72] The Commission on Higher Education established in 1960 was mandated to make recommendations in relation to university, professional, technological and higher education generally.[73] It did not make its report until 1967. The report recommended the establishment of a Technological Authority, which would provide technological education and training, research and service, and information including testing and standards. The commission acknowledged that there was a shortage of trained technicians in industry and that this deficiency had to be remedied. These recommendations were not implemented. In 1963, out of the 1607 students enrolled on full-time technical courses, 1383 were in the technical schools and colleges of the major cities of Dublin, Cork and Limerick. By the 1960s, higher technical courses were being distinguished from the bulk of technical instruction by the designation 'third level', which implied that their students had already progressed successfully through two lower levels of schooling.[74] The regional technical colleges, as originally proposed in 1963, were not intended to become third level higher education colleges. They were viewed as places through which the Technical Leaving Certificate would be offered. This proposal was dropped in 1967. In 1966 the Minister for Education Donogh O'Malley, established a Steering Committee on Technical Education, the report was published in 1967.[75] It set out a broad role for the new regional technical colleges nine of which were opened in 1970. The RTCs operated under the Vocational Education Acts from 1970 until 1992 as special sub-committees of the Vocational Education Committees.[76] The development of regional technical colleges was of great interest to politicians who wanted these colleges located within their own constituencies.[77] In the early years it was envisaged that almost a third of students in the regional technical colleges would be at Senior Cycle or Advanced Senior Cycle level and almost half would be

apprentices. However, the setting up of An Comhairle Oiliuna (AnCo) the industrial training authority in 1967 took responsibility for training apprentices. Private secondary schools and vocational schools retained their role as providers of senior cycle education. This context resulted in the colleges becoming third-level institutions.[78]

The National Council for Educational Awards was established in 1972, which provided academic validation and acted as the examining and awards body for the sector. The focus of these colleges moved towards skills-based vocational and technical training in areas such as business, engineering, electronics, science and food technology but also containing from an early time elements of music, art, languages, media studies, social science and child care.[79] In 1972, an institute of higher education was opened in Limerick. This institute was established to provide higher level technical education above the standard of the Regional Technical College system. A second national institute of higher education was opened in Dublin in 1980. Both these institutes were granted university status in 1989.

Throughout the 1980s, the technological colleges and institutes grew in terms of student enrolment. During this period the technological sector sought an end to its connection with the VEC committees.[80] In 1992, the regional technical colleges and the Dublin technical colleges, which since 1978 had been designated as the Dublin Institute of Technology, severed links with the VECs and their governing bodies would be appointed by the Minister for Education and budgetary control would come under the aegis of the Department of Education. Students from the skilled manual group formed a higher percentage of entrants to the regional technical colleges and to the Dublin Institute of Technology. Students from the higher professional families were underrepresented in these colleges.[81]

From the 1990s, various acts were passed with reference to the technical education sector. These included: Vocational Education Acts (1930; Amendment Acts, 1936; 1944; 1970; 2001); Dublin Institute of Technology Act (1992); Regional Technical Colleges Act (1992); Regional Technical Colleges Amendment Acts (1994, 1999) and the Institutes of Technology Act (2006). The regional technical colleges were upgraded to Institute of Technology status (Institute of Technology Act 1998). Additionally, they were given delegated authority to confer their own awards.[82] The Institutes of Technology Act (2006) further amended

the law with respect to the institutions and set out the autonomy of Institutes of Technology.

The Institutes of Technology (IoTs) offer programmes at levels 6–9 of the national framework of qualifications. Some institutes such as Dublin, Waterford and Cork also offer level 10 programmes. The programme types include; apprenticeship, undergraduate programmes leading to higher certificate awards, Ordinary Bachelor degrees, Honours Bachelor degrees and postgraduate awards, both taught and by research, leading to Masters and Doctoral degrees in a wide variety of subjects. Institutes provide a comprehensive range of apprenticeship programmes and industrial focused continuous professional development courses. Most institutes have schools of Science, Engineering, Construction, Technology and Business. In addition, many of the institutes have developed special programmes in areas such as Humanities & Languages, Paramedical Studies and Healthcare, Art & Design, and Tourism.[83] Table 11.3 lists the 14 institutes of technology and the year they opened.

In February 2014, the General Scheme for Legislation on Technological Universities was published by the Government. It outlined the legislative provisions for technological universities, including specifics on a merger amongst Dublin IoTs and more general merger provisions for other IoTs considering applying for re-designation.[84]

Table 11.3 IoTs designated under the RTC Act 1992 as amended 1998

Name	*Abbreviation*	*Opened*
Athlone Institute of Technology	AIT	1970
Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown	ITB	2000
Institute of Technology, Carlow	ITC	1970
Cork Institute of Technology	CIT	1974
Dublin Institute of Technology	DIT	1992
Dundalk Institute of Technology	DkIT	1970
Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology.	IADT	1997
Institute of Technology, Sligo	ITS	1970
Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology	GMIT	1972
Letterkenny Institute of Technology	LYIT	1971
Limerick Institute of Technology	LIT	1993
Institute of Technology, Tallaght	ITT Dublin	1992
Institute of Technology, Tralee	IT Tralee	1977
Waterford Institute of Technology	WIT	1970

Conclusion

Vocational education developed in a piecemeal and disjointed way over the period under review. A number of economic and social reasons contributed to this. The country in its early years was industrially under-developed and was dominated by an agricultural society, where the Catholic Church played a significant role in all aspects of Irish life particularly in the education sector. The 1930 VEC Act marked the first attempt by the state to become directly involved in education provision. This was met with significant resistance from the Catholic Church, which controlled both primary and post-primary schools.

Until the late 1950s there was very little demand for a workforce skilled in industrial technology. Continuation education had a different focus in urban and rural areas. In urban areas continuation education prepared young people for available jobs, in rural areas the preparation was a life on the land. For most of the period, until the education reforms of the 1960s, vocational schools were compared unfavourably to the existing secondary schools. They suffered a negative image and catered for a disproportionate number of the poor compared to their secondary school counterparts. The introduction of the state examination the Group Certificate in 1947 did little to change perceptions. The educational reforms of the 1960s witnessed considerable change and vocational education was incorporated fully into mainstream post-primary provision through the introduction of the common Intermediate Certificate course and in time the Leaving Certificate course. VECs supported the development of adult education through the provision of courses, facilities and resources. In urban and rural areas, adults had the opportunity to develop new skills, and the social aspects of these activities were important. VECs also worked closely with community organisations and were part of the community development and education movements that developed from the 1950s onwards.

The Further Education sector owes much of its origins to the VEC sector. Emerging as a response to long-term youth unemployment the sector provided courses and programmes in a range of diverse areas. However, the sector was not closely aligned to the needs of the industrial or commercial sectors. The area also suffered from a lack of investment and there was little opportunity to progress to other forms of education. The vocational sector was not successful in the area of apprenticeship education. While the 1930 act mandated VECs to provide technical education for specific apprenticeships and positions attendance at such courses was not

compulsory. Even when the Apprenticeship Board was established in 1959 to monitor apprenticeship education only a minority of apprentices availed of the educational opportunities available. Outside of the cities there were too few schools available to provide apprenticeship education.

The development of higher technical education was confined in the initial years to the larger cities. The introduction of the Regional Technical Colleges into the system created a new and dynamic system of higher technical education, which had clear links with developments in the economy. This new dimension to vocational education greatly enhanced a sector which had evolved in disparate ways from the 1930s. Recent policy and legislative changes have sought to bring more coherence to the system, to widen apprenticeship education and develop new technological universities. These proposals and initiatives have highlighted the complexities and challenges that have faced the vocational sector since its inception in 1930.

Notes

1. D. S. Johnson and L. Kennedy 'The two economies in Ireland in the twentieth century', in J. R. Hill (Ed.), *A New History of Ireland VII: Ireland 1921–1984,* (Oxford, 1984), 452–486.
2. C. O'Grada, The Irish Economy half a century ago, UCD Centre for Economic Research, Working Paper Series WP08/18. (Dublin, 2008), 1–20.
3. J. Gray (2014), The circulation of children in rural Ireland during the first half of the twentieth century, *Continuity and Change*, 29, 399–421.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. S. O'Buachalla *Educational Policy in Twentieth Century Ireland* (Dublin: 1988), 60.
8. M. Clarke, (2012) 'The response of the Roman Catholic Church to the introduction of vocational education in Ireland 1930–1942'. *History of Education*, 41, 477–493.
9. Department of Education *Annual Report,* 1924.
10. *Report of the Commission on Technical Education,* (Dublin, Stationary Office, 1927), 41–53, refers to continuation education.
11. Ibid.
12. *Vocational Education Act* 1930.
13. *Vocational Education Act*. Section 31.
14. Ibid.

15. Department of Education, *Vocational continuation schools and classes: memorandum for the information of committees*, 1931.
16. Ibid.
17. Department of Education *Annual Report* 1931–32, P. No. 962, (Dublin: Stationery Office), Part V. 46.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Department of Education *Annual Report 1933–4*, P. No. 1693. (Dublin; Stationery Office), Part V, 58.
21. Ibid.
22. J. Coolahan, *Irish Education, History and Structure,* (Dublin, 1981), 98.
23. M. Clarke, (2012) 'The response of the Roman Catholic Church to the introduction of vocational education in Ireland 1930–1942'. *History of Education*, 41, 477–493.
24. J. Coolahan, *Irish Education, History and Structure*, 99.
25. A. Hyland and K. Milne *Irish Educational Documents Vol. 2.* (Dublin, 1992), 190.
26. Ibid., 227.
27. Government of Ireland (1940) *Census of Ireland 1936, Vol. 2 Occupations,* Table 4 (C), 30 and Table 4 (c) 32. http://www.cso.ie/en/census/historicalreports/census1936reports/census1936volume2-occupations/ (last accessed 22 May 2015).
28. A. Hyland, 'The Curriculum of Vocational Education 1930–1966', in J. Logan (Ed.), *Teachers' Union: the TUI and its forerunners* 1899–1994, (Dublin, 1999), 139.
29. Ibid.
30. J. Coolahan, *Irish Education, History and Structure*, 99.
31. *Investment in Education—report of the survey team*, (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1966) Pr. 83111, 293.
32. The Oireachtas sometimes referred to as Oireachtas Éireann, is the legislature of Ireland. It consists of: the President of Ireland, the two Houses of the Oireachtas: Dáil Éireann (Lower house) and Seanad Éireann (Upper house).
33. Dail Debates, Oct–Dec. 1950, 955.
34. *Investment in Education—report of the survey team*, Pr. 8311, 282.
35. Ibid.
36. I. Bonel-Elliott, (1994) 'Lessons from the sixties: Reviewing Dr Hillery's Educational Reform', in *Irish Educational Studies*, Vol. 13, 20.
37. M. Clarke, 'Educational reform in the 1960s: the introduction of comprehensive schools in the Republic of Ireland'. *History of Education*, 39, (2010), 383–399.
38. M. Clarke, 'Educational reform in the 1960s', 385.

39. I. Bonel-Elliott, (1996) 'The role of the Duggan Report (1962) in the reform of the Irish education system', in *Administration,* 44, no.3, 42.
40. B. O Reilly, *Vocational Education and Society in Ireland 1930–1990: A Case Study in the Politics of Education*. (PhD dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1998), 282.
41. Ibid.
42. J. Coolahan, *Irish Education, History and Structure,* 98.
43. See J. Logan, *Teachers' union: the TUI and its forerunners in Irish education, 1899–1994.*
44. Ibid., 291.
45. Muintir na Tire translation as 'people of the country'. It is a national Association for the Promotion of Community Development.
46. S. Dooney, *Irish Agriculture an Organisational Profile,* (Dublin, 1988), 72.
47. Macra na Feirme translation as 'stalwarts of the land'. It is a rural youth organisation.
48. S. Dooney, *Irish Agriculture an Organisational Profile*, 70.
49. Aontas translation 'union' is the Irish National Association of Adult Education.
50. S, McGuinness, A. Bergin, E. Kelly, S. McCoy, E. Smyth, A. Whelan and J. Banks *Further Education and Training in Ireland: Past, Present and Future.* (Dublin, 2014), 1–166.
51. L. Murtagh, 'The Irish Adult Education Policy Process since 1997'. Ph.D. thesis, National University of Maynooth, 2009.
52. B. Connolly, 'Adult and Community Education: A Model for Higher Education' Maynooth: Department of Adult and Community Education Working Paper, 2006.
53. Aontas, *Community Education: More Than Just a Course*, (Dublin, 2010).
54. L. Murtagh, 'The Irish Adult Education Policy Process since 1997', 100.
55. F. Geaney, *The development of Further Education in the Republic of Ireland with particular reference to the role of Vocational Education Committees and comparable models for Further Education in Britain and Germany,* Masters in Education thesis, University College Dublin, 1996, 40–41.
56. Ibid.
57. M. L. Trant, 'The quest for an inclusive curriculum and assessment culture: the national council for vocational awards 1991-2001', *Irish Educational Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 1, (2002), 19–32.
58. S. McGuinness et al. *Further Education and Training in Ireland: Past, Present and Future,* 16.
59. Ibid., 22.
60. Ibid., 20.
61. Ibid., 21.

62. J. Logan, *Teachers' union: the TUI and its forerunners in Irish education, 1899–1994,* 297.
63. *Investment in Education—report of the survey team*, Pr. 8311297.
64. J. Logan, *Teachers' union: the TUI and its forerunners in Irish education, 1899–1994,* 298.
65. Ibid.
66. L O'Connor, (2006) 'Meeting the skills needs of a buoyant economy: apprenticeship—the Irish experience', *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, Vol. 58, No. 1, 31–46.
67. S. McGuinness *et al*, *Further Education and Training in Ireland: Past, Present and Future,* 17.
68. V. Kis, *Learning for Jobs. OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training*: Ireland, (Paris, 2010).
69. S. McGuinness et al. *Further Education and Training in Ireland: Past, Present and Future*, 12.
70. Ibid.,13.
71. Ibid.
72. T. White, *Investing in people: higher education in Ireland 1960–2000*, (Dublin, 2000), 136.
73. Ibid., 42.
74. J. Logan, *Teachers' union: the TUI and its forerunners in Irish education, 1899–1994,* 292.
75. T. White, *Investing in people: higher education in Ireland 1960–2000,* 51.
76. Ibid., 53.
77. Ibid., 58.
78. Ibid., 59.
79. M. Clarke, A. Kenny, A. Loxley, *Creating a supportive working environment in higher education: Country report Ireland* (Dublin, 2015), 1–138.
80. J. Logan, *Teachers' union: the TUI and its forerunners in Irish education, 1899–1994,* 295.
81. Ibid., 296.
82. Under the 1999 Qualifications, Education and Training Act, the DIT became an awarding body in its own right, offering awards from level 6 to level 10 of the National Framework of Qualifications. The other institutes of technology had to apply to the Higher Education Training Awards Council (HETAC) for designated awarding authority. From 2013 both HETAC and FETAC have been replaced by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) http://www.qqi.ie/.
83. M. Clarke et al. *Creating a supportive working environment in higher education: Country report Ireland, (Dublin, 2015),* 20.
84. M. Clarke et al. (2015) *Creating a supportive working environment in higher education: Country report Ireland,* p.21.